Safer Together

monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework

VICTORIA State Government

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

Aboriginal people should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or printed material.

Cover image: *Peter Teasdale*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope of the framework

This document sets out the framework for cross-agency monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) of the Safer Together program. The program brings together agencies with land and fire responsibilities, partners and the community to reduce the risks of bushfires in Victoria. Bushfire management in Victoria is a shared responsibility, and no single government agency, organisation or group alone is responsible.

The purpose of the framework is to enable consistent MER of the Safer Together program to:

- continuously improve the program and its approach to bushfire management
- inform decision-making and future investments
- make investments more transparent and accountable
- help agencies communicate the program's achievements internally and externally.

The scope of the framework is the entire Safer Together program — as a whole program — and MER to determine the effectiveness of the program and its achievements. The framework does not address individual projects within the program; individual projects are responsible for their own MER. Nor does the framework address the full extent of MER and continuous improvement actions — monitoring programs, after-action reviews, lessons management, audits, observations, quality-assurance processes and tracking the implementation of recommendations — that agencies, partners and communities undertake to reduce bushfire risk. However, the framework can link to and draw on data and information gathered through these existing activities, while also contributing its own unique, informative insights.

The framework incorporates:

- the objectives of the program and its four priorities
- the Safer Together program logic and that of its four priorities, which link actions to intended outcomes
- evaluation questions
- the data and information needed to respond to the evaluation questions.

The framework also sets out a continuous improvement pathway, so lessons learned through the evaluation feed back into the program design and ultimately into actions to reduce bushfire risk.

1.2. About Safer Together

Launched in November 2015, the Safer Together program builds on recommendations in the Inspector-General for Emergency Management's 2015 ***Review of performance targets for bushfire management on public land***.

The program's objective is that communities, agencies and partners collaborate to reduce bushfire risk through the delivery of capability building and on-ground projects.

Safer Together has four priorities:

- Community first
- Land and fire agencies working together
- Measuring success
- Better knowledge = better decisions.

Each priority has its own objective, which **Table 1** shows. These objectives were developed to support the MER framework. Each objective aligns with a subquestion of evaluation question 2 — How effective has Safer Together been? — which is further explained in '3.2 Evaluation questions'.

Table 1: Priority objectives

Priority	Priority objectives
Community first	1. Collaborate with communities through appropriate and purposeful approaches to identify shared bushfire risk reduction solutions 2. Improve the community engagement capacity and capability of agencies and partners
Land and fire agencies working together	3. Build the capacity and capability of bushfire management agencies to work together to manage bushfire risk 4. Increasingly integrate partner and community perspectives and activities into our approach
Measuring success	5. Monitor, evaluate and report on the Safer Together program to improve its delivery and provide accountability; establish a strategy for long-term evaluation of the bushfire management and risk reduction approach
Better knowledge = better decisions	6. Knowledge is generated, used and shared to enable improved delivery of bushfire management and risk reduction

Source: *Danielle Leehane*

Table 2: Safer Together program principles

We will take a collaborative, cross-agency approach to everything we do.
We will consider the community and how we can involve it and use its contributions in all aspects of bushfire risk reduction.
Establishing, building and continually strengthening relationships — within organisations, across organisations, with partners and with the community — and networks is essential to the work we do.
Community-based processes are iterative and a long-term investment: • recognising individual community context and history is essential • not all communities are interested in or have the capacity for community-based initiatives • each community will work in its own way, in its own time; 'steps' in the logic may occur in different orders and/or along a different time scale, depending on the particular community.
We will be open about learning from our actions, to continually refine and improve our approaches.

Table 2 shows the five principles that guide the Safer Together program. MER activities should take account of these principles, to the extent they apply to the particular (program or priority) program logic.

The program is undertaking projects under each priority. Appendix 1 explains the projects for 2017–19.

1.3. Approach to framework development and implementation

The framework's development was guided by the following values:

- cross-agency integration and collaboration in developing and implementing the framework is essential
- we will take a participatory approach to evaluation
- evaluation and reporting will be holistic, fit-for-purpose and focused on being used, to ensure essential data and other information is gathered to tell a complete story
- we will have clear, realistic expectations about what can be expected from the program over time and about what the evaluation can show
- we will be open about learning from our actions, and about what has and has not worked, to ensure we continually refine and improve our approach.

A cross-agency staff member, supported by an independent consultant, will lead the implementation of the framework. This will ensure a strong organisational connection while establishing a level of independence, which supports transparency and accountability.

2. Program logic

2.1. Program logic

A program logic sets out a program's vision, objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes. By articulating the logic of the Safer Together program, we can better evaluate whether the program is working as intended.

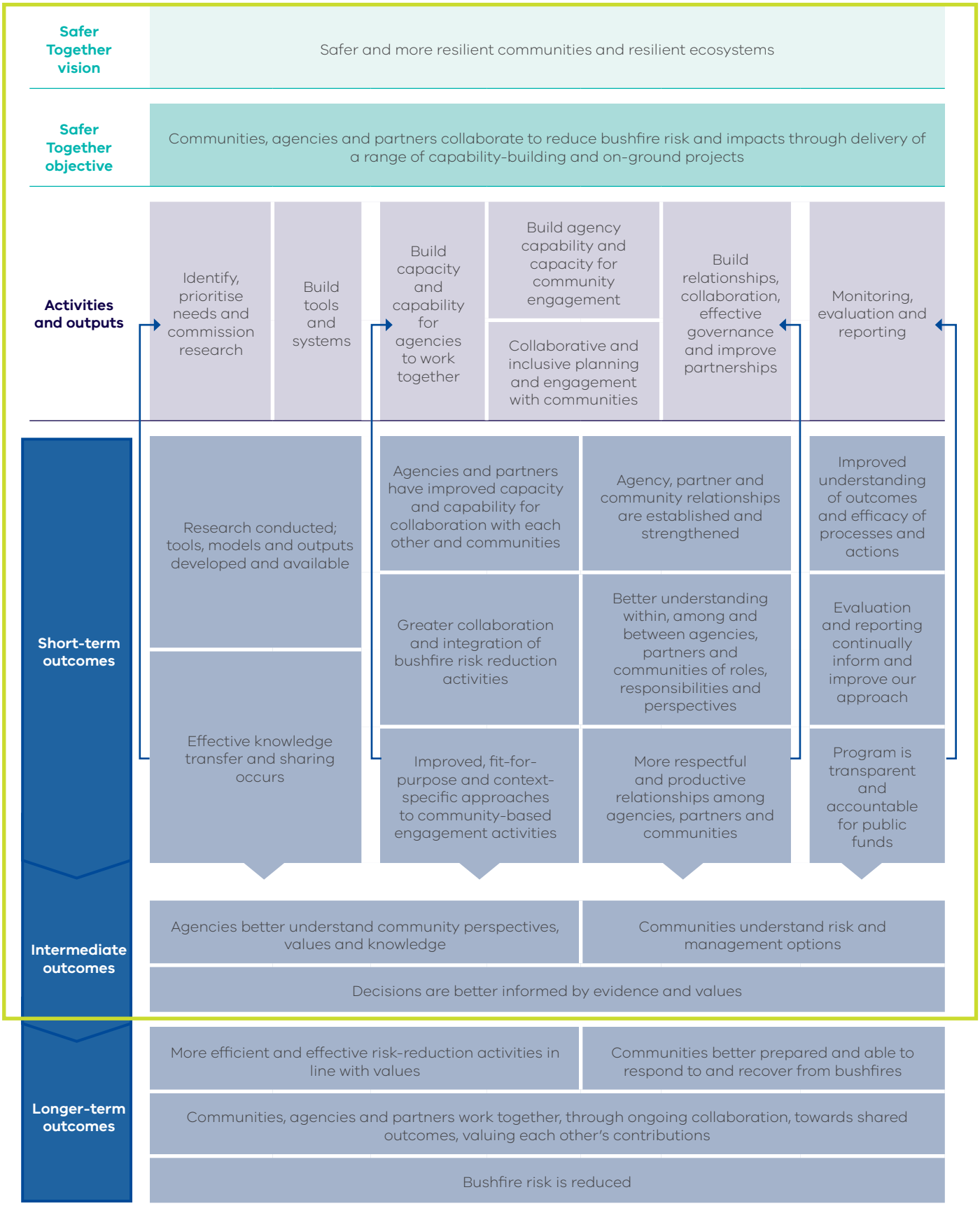
Figure 1 shows the Safer Together program logic. The program logic applies to the whole program, not specifically to the four priorities or the projects under them. In many cases, multiple projects contribute to a particular activity in the program logic and consequently to the outcomes of that activity. Appendix 2 shows the program logic for each priority.

In **Figure 1**, longer-term outcomes are outside the green outline box. The framework does not address longer-term outcomes, because they are also the result of activities outside the Safer Together program: the framework only addresses outcomes that directly result from the program. As the figure shows, the highest-level outcome the framework addresses is 'Decisions are better informed by evidence and values'.

Program logics are 'living' documents which should be updated and should evolve as a program does. Reviewing the program logic in **Figure 1** will be an important evaluation activity.

Source: *Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning*

Figure 1: Safer Together program logic



Note: Arrows indicate the continuous implementation of activities to sustain short-term outcomes, which enables longer-term outcomes to be achieved over time. Everything outside the green box is outside the scope of the MER framework.

Source: *Darren Skelton*

2.2. Key program assumptions

A program logic has underlying assumptions about the changes we expect to happen as a result of our actions. Testing our logic and these assumptions is an important aspect of any program evaluation and can help to improve what we are doing.

The key Safer Together program logic assumptions are:

- agencies and staff are willing and able to work collaboratively
- working more effectively as one fire sector, with our partners and the community, will reduce bushfire risk
- communities want to be involved in decision-making
- research outputs, tools and models can inform decision-making and approaches to reducing bushfire risk
- monitoring and evaluation activities will effectively feed back into our actions and decision-making to improve how we work
- we will value and use data and other information (such as from research, evaluation and the community) to inform what we do and how we work.

The above list of assumptions above is not exhaustive: they are the most-important assumptions to keep in mind and review as part of the evaluation process.

3. Monitoring and evaluation

3.1. What is monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring is the planned, systematic and continuous collection and analysis of data and other information, to track the progress of Safer Together. Data and other information gathered by monitoring contribute to evaluation: the evaluation process integrates it with other data and information collected periodically.

Evaluation for the framework's purposes is defined as 'a planned and periodic assessment of the quality and value of a program, where a judgement is made about the achievement of or progress towards the program's objectives and outcomes[1].' A program — in this case, Safer Together — is a set of planned activities and services, intended to achieve identified objectives.

3.2. Evaluation questions

The framework's evaluation questions align with:

- the purpose and scope of the framework, explained in **Section 1.1**
- the objectives of the Safer Together program and its priorities, explained in **Section 1.2**
- the Safer Together program logic, shown in **Figure 1**
- the Department of Treasury and Finance's (DTF) evaluation questions in 'Attachment 9: Lapsing program requirements' to ***Performance Management Framework for Victorian Government Departments***
- the evaluation domains of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Table 3 shows the framework's five evaluation questions and their subquestions, including their alignment with DTF's lapsing program requirements questions and with the evaluation domains of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These questions, together with the program's objective and logic, should guide data collection and focus the evaluation and any ensuing recommendations.

The subquestions for evaluation question 2 — How effective has Safer Together been? —directly align with the objectives of the program's four priorities, which are in **Table 1**.

1 Markiewicz and Patrick (2016). Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks. Thousand Oaks, California, USA. Sage.

Source: *Belinda Rossack*

Table 3: Evaluation questions and subquestions

Evaluation question / subquestion	PMF[1] question / rationale and scope
1. What is the evidence of a continued need for the program and role for government in delivering this program?	• Aligned with PMF Q1 • Appropriateness, effectiveness domains
a. Is the underlying logic of the program still appropriate, given the changes since the program's inception? b. Are there any gaps in how the program is being delivered (i.e. in the priorities) that would help it to more effectively achieve its objectives and address the need?	• The subquestions can also address the PMF Q1 subquestions: – to what extent does the program address a demonstrable need? – why is this the most appropriate way of addressing the need? • The question includes consideration of the program's ongoing need and whether it has become business as usual.
2. How effective has Safer Together been?	• Aligned with PMF Q2 (progress towards objectives and outcomes) • Effectiveness, impact domains
a. To what extent has Safer Together fostered collaboration with communities to manage bushfire risk using appropriate and purposeful approaches to identify shared solutions? b. To what extent has Safer Together improved the community engagement capacity and capability of agencies and partners? c. To what extent has Safer Together built the capacity and capability of bushfire management agencies to work together to manage bushfire risk? d. To what extent has Safer Together increasingly integrated partner and community perspectives and activities into our approach to reducing risk? e. To what extent has Safer Together monitored, evaluated and reported to improve delivery and provide accountability? f. To what extent has Safer Together generated, used and shared knowledge to improve the delivery of bushfire management and risk reduction? g. What other outcomes have there been from Safer Together?	• Aligned with the objectives of the four priorities, to address whether they and their related outcomes have been achieved

Evaluation question / subquestion	PMF[1] question / rationale and scope
3. How well has the program been delivered?[2]	• Aligned with PMF Q3a & Q3b • Efficiency, impact, appropriateness domains
a. Has the program been delivered within its scope, budget and expected timeframe, and in line with appropriate governance and risk management practices? b. To what extent have partnerships been developed and improved through the delivery of the Safer Together program? c. To what extent has Safer Together been delivered efficiently?	• The subquestions provide the opportunity to examine: – delivery challenges – partnerships / relationships and their role in the program – PMF Q3 subquestions about efficiency and economy of delivery – strengths and opportunities in how the program is delivered
4. What would be the impact of ceasing the program and what strategies have been identified to minimise negative impacts?	• Aligned with PMF Q4 • Sustainability, appropriateness domains
a. To what extent have the Safer Together outcomes (in relation to its objective) become business as usual for agencies? b. What need is there for ongoing support of new relationships with communities and related outcomes and behaviours?	• Focus on: – the long-term sustainability of the program and whether it has become business as usual – the risk of pulling out of community and multi-agency relationships and engagements
5. What lessons are there from the Safer Together program?	• High-level lessons in relation to the program's objectives (not outcomes) • Impact, appropriateness, efficiency, sustainability, effectiveness domains
a. What lessons are there about building the capability of agencies, partners and communities to work together? b. What lessons are there about building the capability of agencies to engage with the community? c. What lessons are there about generating, using and sharing knowledge related to bushfire management and risk reduction?	

Notes

1. Evaluation question in 'Attachment 9: Lapsing program requirements' to *Performance Management Framework for Victorian Government Departments*.
2. Excludes cost-effectiveness / cost-benefit analysis, which is out of scope.

Source: *Chris Medlin*

3.3. Indicators, data sources and collection methods

Table 4 and **Table 5** suggest indicators, data sources and collection methods to address the evaluation questions and subquestions:

- **Table 4** addresses evaluation questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 and their subquestions
- **Table 5** addresses evaluation question 2 and its subquestions.

The indicators suggest both quantitative and qualitative information. In many cases, the evaluation will draw on multiple lines of evidence to respond to an evaluation question rather than just one indicator or method. 'Indicator' is a broad term that includes numerical quantitative data and textual qualitative information useful for assessing progress towards an outcome or the achievement of it.

Table 5 — about how effective the whole program has been — also provides additional guidance for each subquestion by suggesting:

- one or more outcomes
- the frequency of data collection: annual data collection will inform annual reporting, and periodic data collection will be as required for evaluation.

Data collection for all questions in **Table 4** will be periodic, as needed for evaluation.

Table 4: Evaluation questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 and subquestions, indicators, issues, data sources and collection methods

Question / subquestion	Indicators / issues	Data sources / methods[1]
1. What is the evidence of a continued need for the program and role for government in delivering this program?		
a. Is the underlying logic of the program still appropriate, given the changes since the program's inception?	• Underlying rationale (i.e. relating to business case) • Extent to which the objectives have been addressed • Feedback from key stakeholders about changing context and ongoing need • Alignment between program objectives and ongoing need	• Interviews with program staff (project control board and above) • Synthesis of findings from the evaluation (see 5a)
b. Are there any gaps in how the program is being delivered (i.e. in the priorities) that would help it to more effectively achieve its objectives and address the need?	• Extent to which the objectives have been addressed • Alignment between program objectives and ongoing need • Feedback from stakeholders about changing context and ongoing need • Review of program logic	• Interviews with program staff (project control board and above) • Synthesis of findings from the evaluation (see 5a) • Revision of program logic
3. How well has the program been delivered?		
a. Has the program been delivered within its scope, budget and expected timeframe, and in line with appropriate governance and risk management practices?	• Extent of delivery within scope and/or any justification for scope changes • Program budget and expenditure • Program timelines and delivery and/or any justification for changes • Other external factors outside agencies' control • Risk management framework in place and up-to-date • Governance structure in place and evidence of use • Feedback from program staff about the appropriateness of the scope, delivery, resourcing, governance and risk management • Challenges and barriers identified by stakeholders / in documents	• Review of relevant documents (e.g. program plans, governance group minutes / records, budget and expenditure documents) • Interviews with key program staff

Question / subquestion	Indicators / issues	Data sources / methods[1]
b. To what extent have partnerships been developed and improved through the delivery of the Safer Together program?	• Partnerships reported by different levels of the program (organisational partnerships vs priority vs project-level; formal and informal partnerships) • New partnerships vs strengthened partnerships / working relationships • Characterisation of nature of partnerships (e.g. formal / informal, networking, service provision, expertise, embedded)	• Partnership surveys of project/program staff (and stakeholders, to be determined) • Interviews with key program staff • Review of relevant project documents
c. To what extent has Safer Together been delivered efficiently?	• Outputs across the program compared to the financial costs of different activities • Administration costs compared to delivery costs • Observations / feedback of potential efficiency improvements	• Interviews with key program staff • Review of relevant program-level documents and budgets

Source: *Inneke Nathan*

Source: *Karly Learmonth*

Question / subquestion	Indicators / issues	Data sources / methods[1]
4. What would be the impact of ceasing the program and what strategies are there for minimising negative impacts?		
a. To what extent have the Safer Together outcomes (in relation to its objective) become business as usual for agencies?	• Perceptions of project and program staff (within Safer Together) • Perceptions of select, relevant agency staff outside Safer Together • Documentation of processes / structures that will persist (e.g. SOPs, policies)	• Interviews with key program staff • Surveys of project staff • Interviews with select non-Safer-Together agency staff • Review of relevant documents
b. What need is there for ongoing support of new relationships with communities and related outcomes and behaviours?	• Perspectives of project and program staff (within Safer Together) • Evidence from literature as to best practice community engagement, development and behaviour change	• Interviews with relevant program staff • Interviews with relevant project staff (i.e. community engagement projects) • Review of literature

Question / subquestion	Indicators / issues	Data sources / methods[1]
5. What lessons are there from the Safer Together program?		
a. What lessons are there about building the capability of agencies, partners and communities to work together?	• Lessons identified in project / program reporting • Feedback from project and program staff • Synthesis of findings from the evaluation	• Interviews / surveys with program and project staff • Review of relevant documents
b. What lessons are there about building the capability of agencies to engage with the community?	• As above	• As above
c. What lessons are there about generating, using and sharing knowledge related to bushfire management and risk reduction?	• As above	• As above

Note

1. Data collection for all questions will be periodic, as needed for evaluation.

Table 5: Evaluation question 2 — How effective has Safer Together been? — subquestions, indicators, issues, data sources and collection methods and frequencies

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
2a. To what extent has Safer Together fostered collaboration with communities to manage bushfire risk using appropriate and purposeful approaches to identify shared solutions?			
Agency, partner and community relationships are established and strengthened Improved, fit-for-purpose and context-specific approaches to community-based engagement activities Better understanding within, among and between bushfire management agencies, partners and communities of roles, responsibilities and perspectives	• Sample of engagement activities and their level of maturity / quality / appropriateness[1]	• To be determined	• Periodic
	• Agency staff perceptions of relationships and understanding of roles and responsibilities (through time)	• Staff perceptions surveys	• Periodic
	• Examples of community engagement done well; examples where there are opportunities to improve • Case study of community members' perceptions of relationships and understanding of roles and responsibilities in relation to bushfire risk reduction (noting changes over time if relevant)	• Identified through staff perceptions surveys; follow-up collation of examples and case studies	• Periodic
2b. To what extent has Safer Together improved the community engagement capacity and capability of agencies and partners?			
Improved, fit-for-purpose and context-specific approaches to community-based engagement activities Agencies and partners have improved capacity and capability for collaboration with each other and communities	• Sample of engagement projects and their relative level of maturity / quality / appropriateness[1]	• To be determined	• Periodic

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
	• Staff feedback about the efficacy of engagement approaches (engagement team perspectives) • Participation in and feedback about engagement activities (expected or actual # pre- and post-program) • # community requests for engagement	• To be determined	• Periodic
	• Community perceptions of engagement appropriateness and whether their expectations were met (e.g. ability to provide input and affect decision-making, feeling heard, relationships with agencies)	• Community perceptions surveys	• Periodic
	• Examples of community engagement done well • Examples of community engagement occurring	• Staff, community perceptions surveys plus follow-up collation and case study development	• Annual
	• # training events • # participants at events • feedback from participants (trainees) • feedback from project staff / trainers	• Build capacity team	• Annual

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
2c. To what extent has Safer Together built the capacity and capability of bushfire management agencies to work together to manage bushfire risk?			
Agencies and partners have improved capacity and capability for collaboration with each other and communities Greater collaboration and integration of bushfire risk reduction activities	• # of training events • # of participants in events • Feedback from participants (trainees)[1]	• Joint training records	• Annual
	• # of CFA brigades leading planned burns[2] • # of CFA brigades supporting planned burns[2]	• Currently not available, potentially through CFA fire incident reporting in the future	• Annual
	• FFMVic / CFA alignment of training materials / competencies • Description of projects / activities etc. • Governance / management documents about improved systems and processes, integrated documents (e.g. shared doctrine) • Cross-agency and cross-tenure planning documents developed and implemented (e.g. strategic bushfire management planning strategies, joint fuel management plans)	• Document review	• Periodic
	• Feedback from project staff about the efficacy / barriers to / successes of their projects (and down the track key integrated planning processes and fuel management activities)	• Project staff interviews	• Periodic

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
	• Staff perceptions of working collaboratively (e.g. if they feel comfortable, supported, empowered; barriers removed; awareness and understanding of different agencies' perceptions; alignment of organisational cultures including perceptions through time	• Staff perceptions surveys (initially Safer Together program staff, expanding as the approach becomes business as usual)	• Periodic
	• Examples of new projects / processes developed that work across agencies • Examples of cross-agency collaboration	• Collation of examples and case studies, which may be identified through staff perceptions surveys	• Annual
2d. To what extent has Safer Together increasingly integrated partner and community perspectives and activities into our approach to reducing risk?			
Agencies and partners have improved capacity and capability for collaboration with each other and communities Greater collaboration and integration of bushfire risk reduction activities	• # of joint agency burns / activity (trend over time)	• Fuel management report (MER Unit, DELWP)	• Annual
	• Planning documentation showing how other mitigation approaches are considered and incorporated	• Document review	• Periodic
	• Examples of community knowledge / values incorporated into planning • Examples of how other mitigation approaches are incorporated into agencies' operations • Examples of how other land managers are being involved in bushfire management • Examples of FFMVic support to upskill CFA volunteers in planned burning (including endorsement)	• Identified through staff perceptions surveys and interviews (additional follow-up may be required)	• Annual

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
	• # actioned burn plans (public and private land; CFA data currently available as proposed / planned / completed)[3]	• Fuel management system (which should be available once upgraded) • CFA: SharePoint data	• Annual
2e. To what extent has Safer Together monitored, evaluated and reported to improve delivery and provide accountability?			
Improved understanding of outcomes and efficacy of processes and actions Evaluation and reporting continually informs and improves our approaches Program is transparent and accountable for public funds	• This document — *Safer Together MER framework* — indicating a framework is in place, it is guiding MER, and evaluation outcomes and related reporting are available internally and externally • Progress and implementation of recommendations (such as action plans and tracking) • Evidence of lessons shared (from the evaluation) • Evidence of other evaluation within the Safer Together program taking place and being used to improve practice	• Document review • Project staff interviews	• Periodic

Source: *Stephanie Zillies*

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
2f. To what extent has Safer Together generated, used and shared knowledge to improve the delivery of bushfire management and risk reduction?			
Research conducted; tools, models and outputs are developed and available Effective knowledge transfer and sharing occurs Decisions are better informed by evidence and values	• Description of research delivered • Description of outputs from the program	• Document review, project lead interview	• Periodic
	• Staff perceptions of output value / utility • Feedback from key stakeholders about dissemination, communication and use	• Staff and stakeholder surveys • Knowledge translation plans	• Periodic
	• Examples of cross-agency collaboration in research and priority-identification • Examples of how research has been used in practice • Examples of how evidence informs risk reduction methods	• Staff and stakeholder surveys with additional follow-up as needed	• Annual
	• Description of knowledge-translation activities and their extent	• Document review	• Periodic
2g. What other outcomes have there been from Safer Together?			
Decisions are better informed by evidence and values	• Examples of science, evaluation and community values being incorporated into decision-making; evaluation recommendations being implemented	• Project staff interviews • Document review • Staff and stakeholder surveys	• Periodic

Outcomes	Indicators / issues	Data source / methods	Frequency
Agencies better understand community perspectives, values and knowledge Communities understand risk and management options	• Changes in how communities are engaged; interactions between agency staff and community members; cooperation between agencies and communities; agencies and communities value each other's roles and inputs • The community better understands their risk and their response to management options changes	• Community and staff perceptions surveys and staff interviews, plus follow-up to develop case studies and collate examples as appropriate	• Periodic
More respectful and productive relationships among agencies, partners and communities	• Greater trust, respect, understanding and valuing of roles and knowledge between agencies, partners and communities • New vs strengthened partnerships and working relationships • Characterisation of nature of partnerships and relationships (e.g. formal / informal, networking, service provision, expertise, embedded)	• Partnership, staff and community perceptions surveys	• Periodic

Notes

1. Not currently available and not an initial priority for development. It may be established over time if it is of cross-agency value.
2. Data is not currently available, but it should be revisited at the time of first reporting and considered in future.
3. Data is currently not easy to access, and it could be incomplete. This should be further investigated over time, as the fuel management system is upgraded.

4. Reporting and improvement

4.1. Reporting

There are three types of reports under the MER framework:

- **annual progress reports**, that assess progress and highlight achievements
- **evaluation reports**, that respond to the evaluation questions and draw evaluative conclusions, identify lessons and recommend improvements to ensure outcomes are achieved
- **evaluation summaries**, which are public-facing reports that summarise progress towards outcomes.

Annual progress reports and evaluation summaries are expected to be available on the **Safer Together website** and linked to the **fuel management report website**. All reports are cross-agency, reflecting the Safer Together program objective.

Table 6 defines evaluative conclusions, lessons and recommendations. The definitions are important, given the focus in some areas of emergency management on lessons management and the implementation of recommendations.

Table 7 shows the purpose, content and intended audience for each type of report. The indicated responsibility is for adopting and tracking implementation of recommendations: responsibilities are located within the Safer Together program governance structure, and they are included to demonstrate a commitment to ensuring evaluation findings are implemented.

The Safer Together MER Project Officer will be responsible for producing each report. However, responsibilities and approvals may change over time, depending on funding, the program structure and the shift to business as usual.

Table 6: Reporting and improvement definitions

Term	Definition
Evaluative conclusion	The result of what an evaluation discovers for each evaluation question. An overall conclusion should be made for the whole program.
Lesson	A generalisation about an experience from the program that identifies a course of action and which is based on evidence, observations and insights from an evaluation.
Recommendation	A suggestion for a prescriptive, viable course of action that either reinforces a positive finding of an evaluation or addresses an identified need for improvement. A recommendation should be made to the relevant governing body, which either accepts or rejects it.

Table 7: Types of reports

Type	Purpose	Content	Audience	Approval	Availability
Annual progress report	Track program progress and achievements and communicate them internally and externally	Status of key numeric indicators with infographics as appropriate Key achievements and outputs Two case studies, to capture the program intent and possibly elements of multiple priorities	General audience: internal and external stakeholders and the community	Safer Together program governance[1]: review and approval for publication online	Safer Together website
Evaluation report[2]	Provide full technical detail about the evaluative conclusions, lessons and recommendations	Evaluation methods Data and information including case studies that answer the evaluation questions Key achievements and evaluation findings Lessons and recommendations	Internal audience including program staff, agency staff and executive	Safer Together program governance: • report review and approval • review and share lessons • review and accept / reject recommendations • coordinate and track implementation of recommendations	Targeted internal distribution
Evaluation summary[2]	Provide a short, public-facing summary of the evaluation report to support public accountability and transparency	Key findings and case studies with a focus on outcomes Annual progress report content: the evaluation summary replaces a separate annual progress report in that year	Community and internal and external audiences	Safer Together program governance: review and approval for publication online	Safer Together website

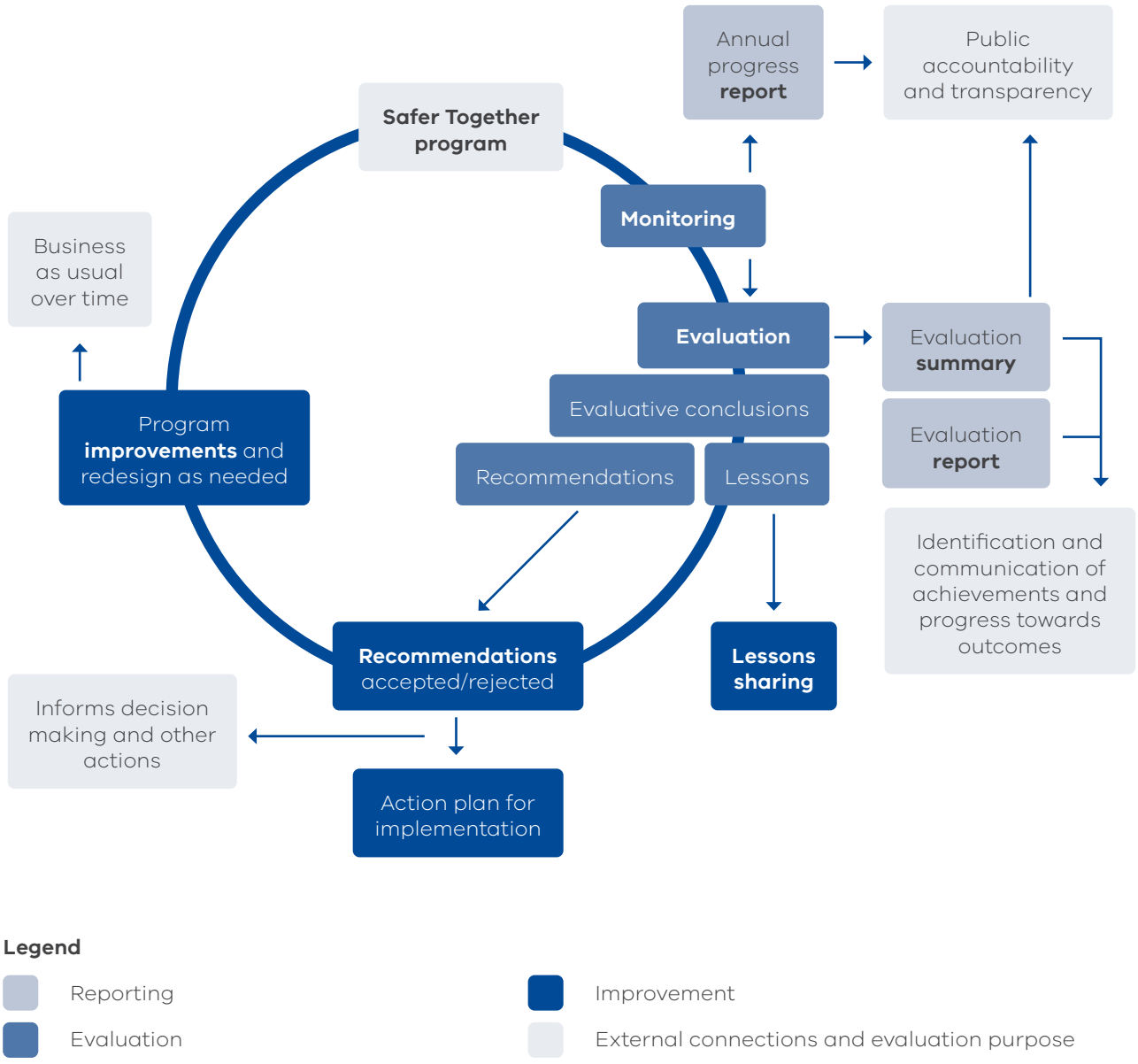
Note

1. This includes project control groups, the Steering Committee and the Project Control Board.
2. The frequencies of evaluation reports and summaries are yet to be confirmed.

4.2. Improvement

Figure 2 shows the links between the elements of the MER framework and how they fit together in a reporting and improvement cycle. It also shows additional outcomes relating to the purpose of the evaluation (as explained in **Section 1.1**) and external connections.

Figure 2: Reporting and improvement cycle



Source: Danielle Leehane

5. Glossary

Agencies: includes all government fire management organisations, both with employees and volunteers: specifically Forest Fire Management Victoria (Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, VicForests and Melbourne Water), the Country Fire Authority and Emergency Management Victoria.

Continuous improvement: a process of consistently re-examining a system, process or program to make changes as needed to make it better and more likely to achieve its intended outcome.

Evaluation: a planned and periodic assessment of the quality and value of a program, where a judgement is made about the achievement of or progress toward the program's objectives and outcomes[2].

Evaluative conclusion: the result of what an evaluation discovers for each evaluation question and for the whole program.

Lesson: a generalisation about an experience from the program that identifies a course of action and which is based on one or more lines of evidence from an evaluation.

Monitoring: the planned, systematic and continuous collection and analysis of data and other information, to track the progress of a program.

Partner: a key stakeholder that is working on or included in the Safer Together program or operations including local governments, land managers (other than those named in 'Agencies' above), Traditional Owners, business and industry; but not the general community.

Recommendation: a suggestion for a prescriptive, viable course of action that either reinforces a positive finding of an evaluation or addresses an identified need for improvement.

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2 Markiewicz and Patrick (2016). Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks. Thousand Oaks, California, USA. Sage

Appendix 1:

Enabling projects (2017-2019)

Community first

1.1 Build capacity and capability

This project aims to build the skills and capabilities of staff and volunteers including firefighters and fire managers across the agencies using common training packages. Three levels of training are available: Level 1 (Community Engagement), Level 2 (Community Development) and Level 3 (Creative Facilitation).

1.2 Community-based bushfire management

This project will review community feedback and the guidelines for community-based bushfire management (CBBM) and will establish best practice engagement through CBBM approaches. Eight CBBM officers are working with 22 communities across the state, using this approach.

1.3 Community risk understanding

This project aims to help communities understand and manage their bushfire risk. It focuses on interpreting the science and on the tools that community members can use to see what actions they can take or activities they can get involved in.

Working together

2.1 Joint planning

This project is developing a model for cross-agency planning for fuel management, preparation for planned burning and engagement activities to improve interoperability between the CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic). The project team is responsible for understanding the capacity and capability required to deliver joint planning, preparation and engagement; to develop the joint fuel management program; and to prepare burn plans.

2.2 Joint delivery

This project is establishing a joint FFMVic / CFA regional process for selecting burns and coordinating resources. It will also develop agreed principles and processes for the tenure-blind use of funds for operations, appliance coordination, use of resources including machinery, hazardous trees management and burn planning and preparation work.

2.3 Expanding strategic bushfire management planning

This project is supporting regional, multi-agency teams to deliver a strategic bushfire management planning process across public and private land. The project's other intention is to incorporate additional strategic mitigations, particularly prevention and suppression.

2.4 Joint training system in relation to planned burning

This project focuses on the development of a joint training system, which will include content, accreditation pathways and burn complexity levels.

2.5 Shared doctrine framework

This project is producing a shared doctrine framework to guide the development and maintenance of shared fuel management standards and procedures between the CFA and FFMVic.

2.6 Common burn risk assessment tool

This project is delivering a burn risk assessment approach, which will determine complexity levels and community risks to improve interoperability between agencies' planned burning risk assessments.

2.8 Common quality assurance system for fuel management

This project is establishing a common quality assurance system and consistent statewide processes and mechanisms for continuous improvement and lesson management and sharing. This will improve interoperability between agencies for planned burning quality assurance.

2.9 Cultural burning practices

This project is supporting Traditional Owners and Registered Aboriginal Parties to undertake fuel management on all land tenures, and it is providing opportunities for Traditional Owners to develop their traditional burning capacity and capability. The project is supporting the work of the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations to implement the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy*.

2.10 Safer Together policy and legislative enablers

This project is delivering solutions to align policy and legislative settings with the government's overarching vision for whole-of-landscape bushfire fuel management. The project will identify legislative changes required to support the greater participation of local governments and public authorities in fuel management and management objectives for whole-of-landscape bushfire fuel management. It will also propose options to modernise relevant legislation.

2.11 Fuel management system

This project is optimising interoperability between agencies by developing a single, intuitive, flexible platform for delivering the multi-agency fuel management program in Victoria.

Measuring success

3.1 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework

This project is delivering this document: the MER framework to measure the effectiveness of the Safer Together program. This includes how we work with communities and across agencies and how we use science and information to inform our actions. It will help us to measure success and to continually improve our approach to bushfire risk reduction.

Better knowledge = better decisions

4.1 Joint research strategy

To enable a coordinated, targeted approach to bushfire science and research investment, this project will deliver a bushfire science strategy including joint priorities for investment and governance and processes for engaging research providers.

4.3 Improve modelling tools

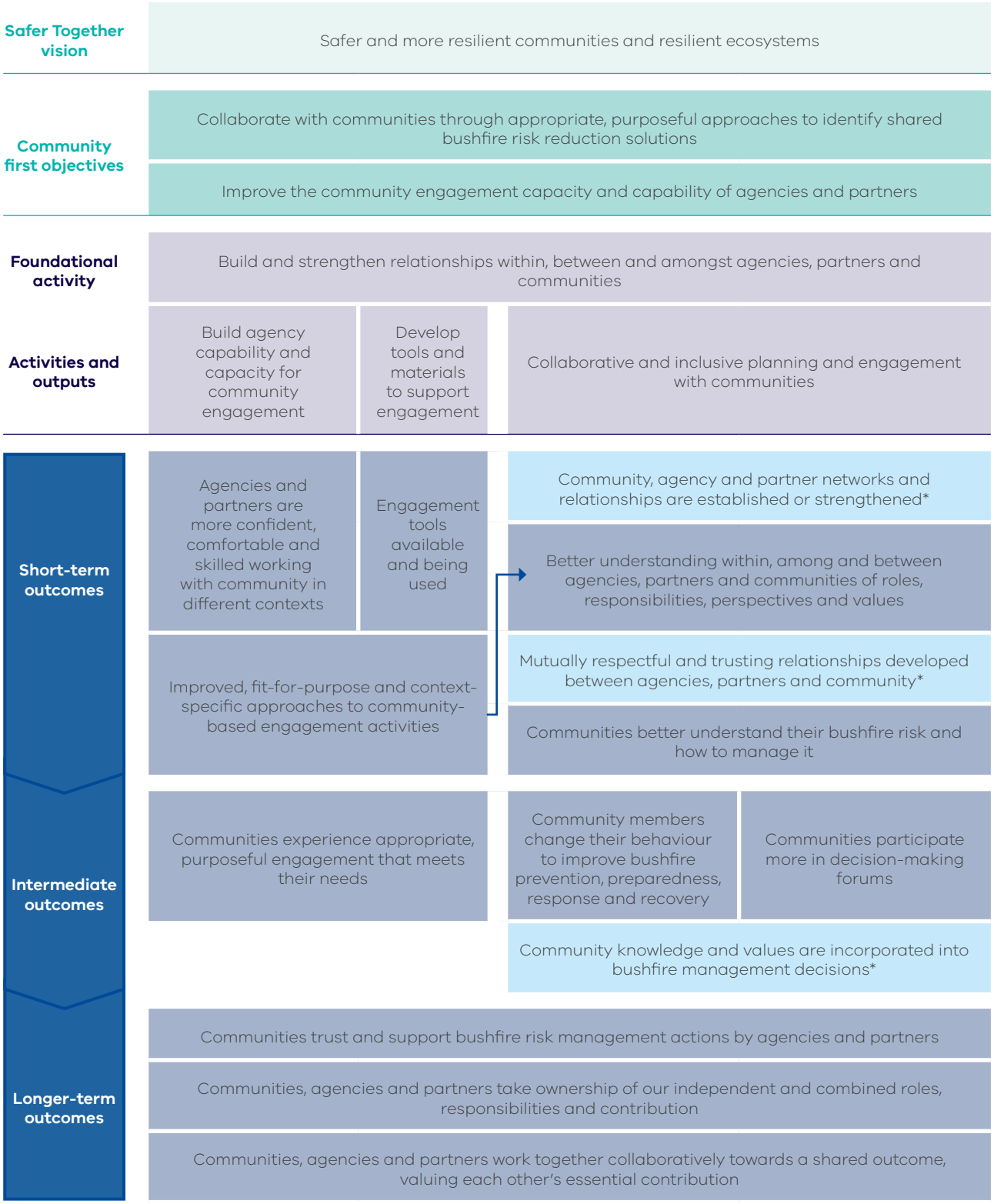
This project is delivering analysis guidelines for better complimentary application of Phoenix and the *Victorian Fire Risk Register* and a long-term plan to better integrate modelling tools.

Source: *Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning*

Appendix 2:

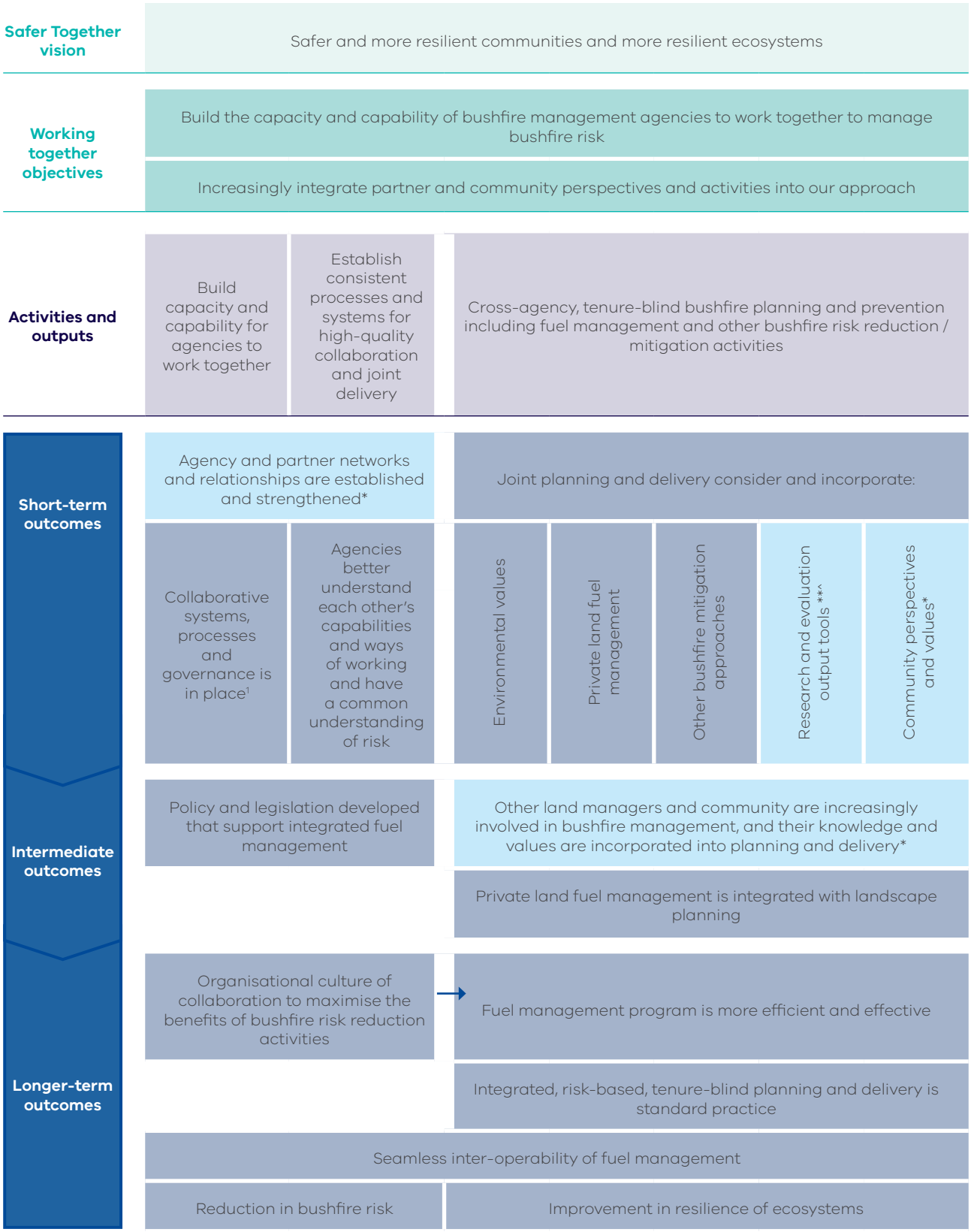
Program logics for priority areas

Figure 3: Community first program logic



** links to Working together priority*

Figure 4: Working together program logic



1 Collaborative systems, processes and governance include training, management, governance, risk-based planning and delivery systems, continuous improvement, lessons management and standards

** Links to Community first priority*

*** Links to Better knowledge = better decisions priority*

^ Links to Measuring success priority

Figure 5: Measuring success program logic

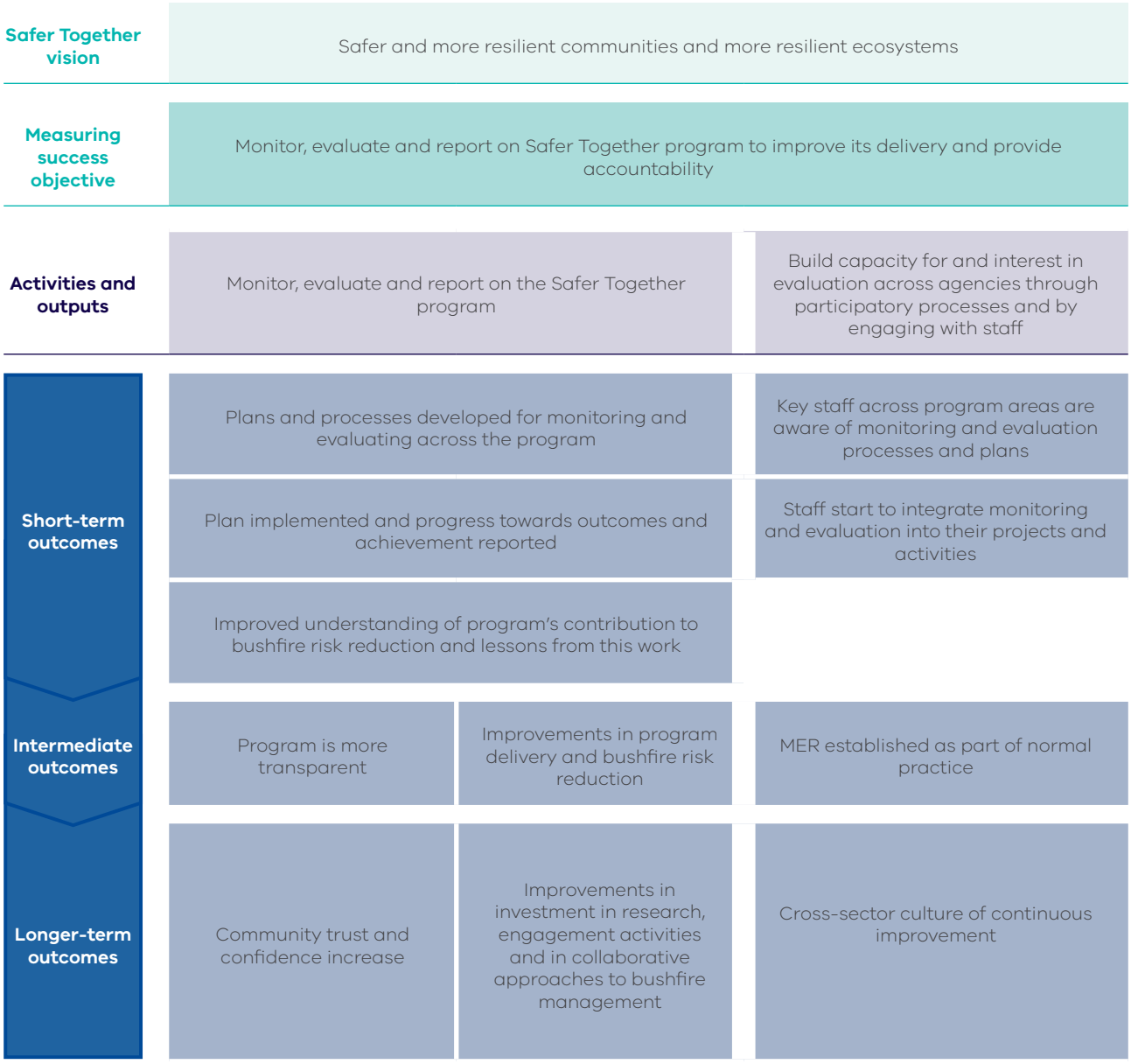
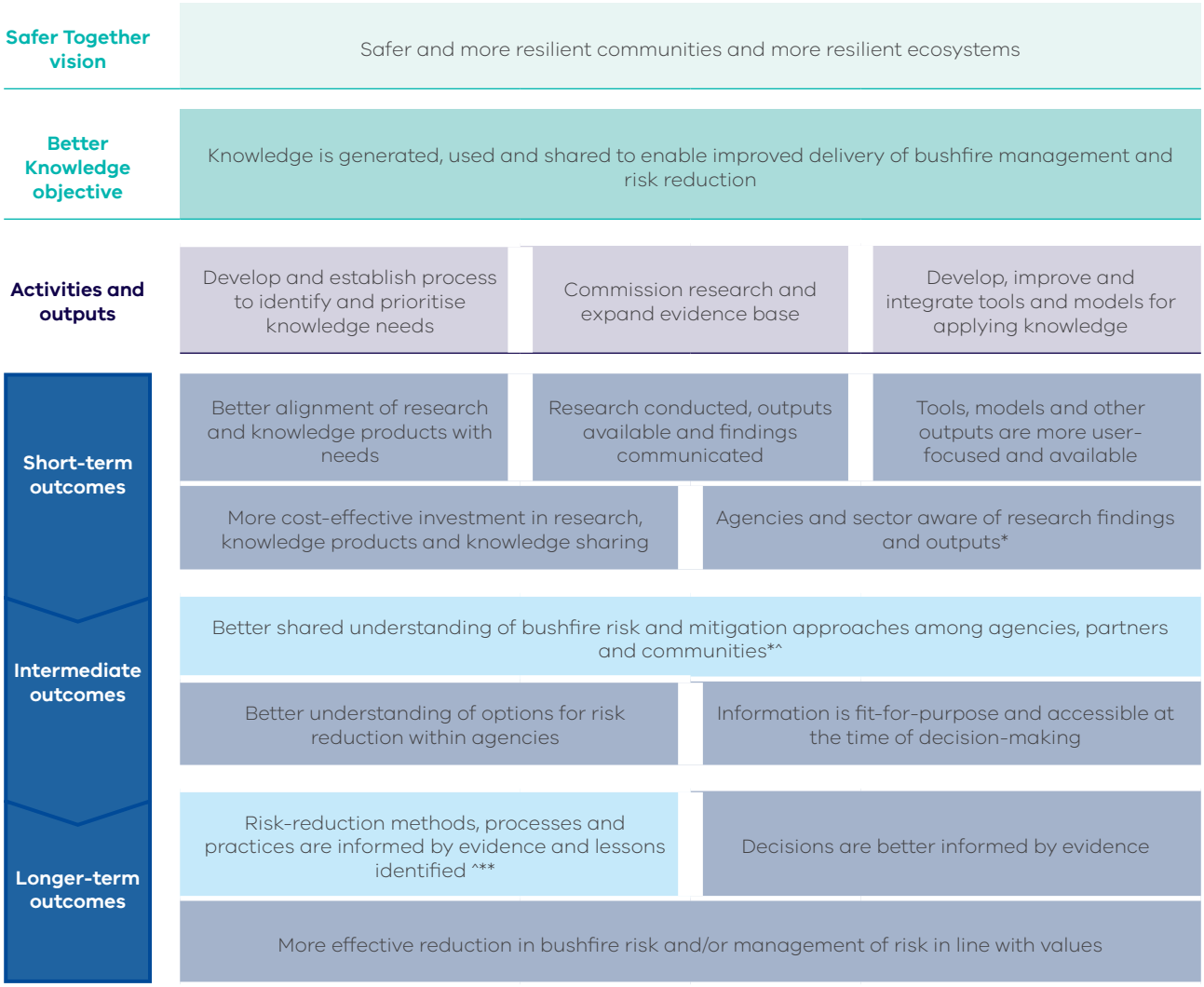


Figure 6: Better knowledge = better decisions program logic



** Links to Community first priority*

^ Links to Working together priority

*** Links to Measuring success priority*

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