Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

Request for Proposal

Community-led Climate Solutions

Grant Program Evaluation

Key Details	
Request for Proposal Closing Date and submission method.	**Monday 4 November 2024 5pm AEDT.** Proposals must be lodged to: s.matthee@frrr.org.au
Interviews:	Shortlisted applicants will be offered interviews during week of 11 November 2024.
Contact:	Jai Allison Insights and Impact Measurement Manager Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal j.allison@frrr.org.au Ph: 0478 646 313
Contract Period	December 2024 to end September 2027
Budget	The contract limit is $90,000. Submissions should propose a total cost inclusive of GST and all expenditures (see Pricing section for details)
Supporting Information	1-Community-led Climate Solutions Program Overview and Guidelines. 2-About FRRR 3-Examples of FRRR 'insight' reports and evaluations 4-FRRR Impact Framework (available on request)

About FRRR

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) is focused on increasing equity of opportunity in remote, rural, and regional Australia. We focus on improving outcomes in the areas of **people**, **place**, and **disaster resilience and climate solutions**, in the belief that targeted philanthropic investment and collaboration will build more vibrant, sustainable, and adaptive remote, rural, and regional communities - and a more equitable and prosperous Australia as a whole. **FRRR believes:**

- in the power of people to drive prosperity.
- that local solutions are central to achieving equality of access to opportunities across remote, rural and regional Australia; and
- that remote, rural and regional communities have the knowledge to best respond to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

In working toward our vision of a vibrant, resilient, and revitalised remote, rural, and regional Australia, FRRR believe targeted, well-informed investment in people and organisations that are in and of their place will stimulate ideas that lead to actions, both big and small. Investing in local people and organisations that are connected, who know and understand the local context, and who can mobilise and activate resources can transform a community's view of itself and drive its future.

Refer to www.frrr.org.au for further information.

FRRR is a trusted partner of government, philanthropy, and business. Formed in 2000 by the Australian Government and Sidney Myer Fund, with the support of prominent Australian philanthropic institutions; since its establishment FRRR has granted out over $175M to more than 14,000 projects across Australia.

Our work is delivered through three pillars:

- **Granting & Development**
  - With the support of our donor partners – including governments, business, philanthropy and generous individuals – we provide grants and resources that range from small to large, and support NFP's and community groups with coaching and capacity building
- **Leveraging & Brokering**
  - We harness FRRR's tax status, knowledge, and networks to support innovation, self-generation, and unlock more giving to address community needs. We partner with not-for-profit organisations to enable them to fundraise and seek to connect goodwill with good purpose.
- **Insights & Learning**
  - We connect policymakers, communities, and funders with ideas, knowledge and lived experience to influence more targeted and relevant support for communities. With more than 2,000 applications for support each year, we keep a pulse on the needs of remote, rural and regional communities. Our flagship Insights initiative is the Heartbeat of Rural Australia Study

FRRR Values

FRRR are seeking an evaluation partner that works in reflection of the following FRRR values and aspirations:

- We find ways forward – supporting and making a positive contribution to all those we work with.
- Real world problem solving - we are grounded and take a considered, collaborative approach, coming together to make things happen.
- Finding common ground- we are curious and community minded, connected and respectful, yet always looking forward.
- Lived experience matters- we believe the best way to lead is through listening, learning and knowing the facts.

FRRR strongly encourage proposals that include opportunities for local participants and regional people to play an active role in the evaluation process to build local capability and self-articulate outcomes and impact over time.

Context of This Request for Proposal

FRRR is seeking proposals from experienced social impact evaluation providers (referred to as Evaluation Partner) to:

1. collaboratively design a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Learning (MERL) plan then,
2. execute the plan as part of an evaluation of the Community-led Climate Solutions (CLCS) grant program.

The maximum overall budget for the evaluation is $90K over the period of the evaluation, which includes up to 3 annual grant rounds (between 2024 – 2027), and Round 1, which took place in 2023. Each annual grant round is expected to include two streams of grants:

- Small grants including approximately 20 grants of up to $20,000, that are awarded to community-led not-for-profit organisations seeking to implement an innovative project. (12-month delivery timeframe)
- Larger grants including up to 4 grants of up to $75,000 that are awarded to community-led not-for-profit organisations seeking to scale up proven project. (18-month delivery timeframe)

In total FRRR expects at least 80 small grants and 8 larger grant projects to be evaluated, but this number may change with increased funding, and the evaluation approach must be flexible such that it can comfortably encompass larger or smaller number of grants without an impact on the evaluation scope and price.

The evaluation needs to factor in the different focus of the smaller and larger grant streams for multiple reasons. As indicated in the CLCS program guidelines the larger grant stream requires that projects explicitly address socioeconomic disadvantage. Hence, the MERL (monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning) plan will need to incorporate this focus on disadvantage whilst delineating any implications the differences between the streams has on process or program and learning impacts.

The two-stream approach is important for evaluation design because it categorises distinctions in the program methodology and our assumptions about investing in social innovation. The stream 1, smaller (engage) grants are investments a diverse range of community-led responses to climate change by providing seed funding for smaller scale initiatives. Stream 2 provides larger, yet still flexible grants to a smaller set of diverse projects so that they can scale. Hence, exploring the effectiveness and impact this model of funding CLCS provides will be a learning edge of the evaluation.

The evaluation will include four core aspects:

(a) process evaluation of the program (its activities and outputs),
(b) the impact of the program,
(c) the impact of FRRR, funders, grant recipients and other stakeholders learning through participation in the program, and
(d) contributing to an evidence base for community-led climate solutions.

The impact evaluation aspects are required to document and synthesise the outcomes achieved at an Intermediate timeframe (2-3 years, the primary focus of the evaluation), as well as long term (3+ years) and impacts. The collaboratively designed MERL plan will indicate how FRRR and partners could measure progress towards longer term (3+ years) and more broad impacts, but will not be implemented within the budget of this MERL project.

The evaluation will be developed in reference to the CLCS program theory of change (presented in Appendix B) and FRRR's organisational theory of change, presented in Appendix C (note this is taken from the FRRR organisational Impact framework, which is available on request).

FRRR requests proposals to enter an evaluation partnership that leverages the strengths and capabilities of all parties involved. There is scope for novel, bespoke, approaches to who fulfills which functions of the evaluation and how they do it. For example, achieving value for money in meeting the diverse objectives may require developmental, 'critical friend' or other innovative, evaluation approaches to designing and delivering the MERL plan within the budget available.

FRRR is requesting prospective evaluation partners provide an outline of their proposed MERL plan. A proposed MERL plan should illustrate how it:

1. Engages with, and answers the key evaluation questions
2. Is inclusive of diverse participant needs for engagement
3. applies MERL methods appropriate to the context and objectives
4. builds capabilities of participating grant recipients, FRRR staff and partners through collaborative learning-oriented processes
5. captures opportunities for grantee storytelling that centre community voice in its methods and outputs
6. will measure relevant impacts based on short term project outcomes whilst indicating programmatic contributions to broader longer-term outcomes
7. manages ethical considerations whilst democratising the data it generates.

Indicative Evaluation Questions

Specific evaluation questions will be designed according to the anticipated aspects of the MERL plan to address the four aspects:

a) **Process evaluation** – reflecting to achieve programmatic improvements
b) **Program impact** – Social, economic and environmental impact measures
c) **Impact learning** – Shared learning between stakeholders (FRRR, funders, grant recipients, communities and others)
d) **Evidence base** – for community-led climate mitigation and adaptation solutions

The cyclical nature of annual grant rounds provides potential to learn from and adapt the next iteration of the program in response to specific questions. Working to answer the right questions can also generate useful insights and shed light on what and how impact is being achieved at multiple (individual, community, and systemic) levels. Figure 1 is indicative of FRRR's existing 'mental model' of questioning for the 'process evaluation' and 'program impact' aspects of a MERL plan.

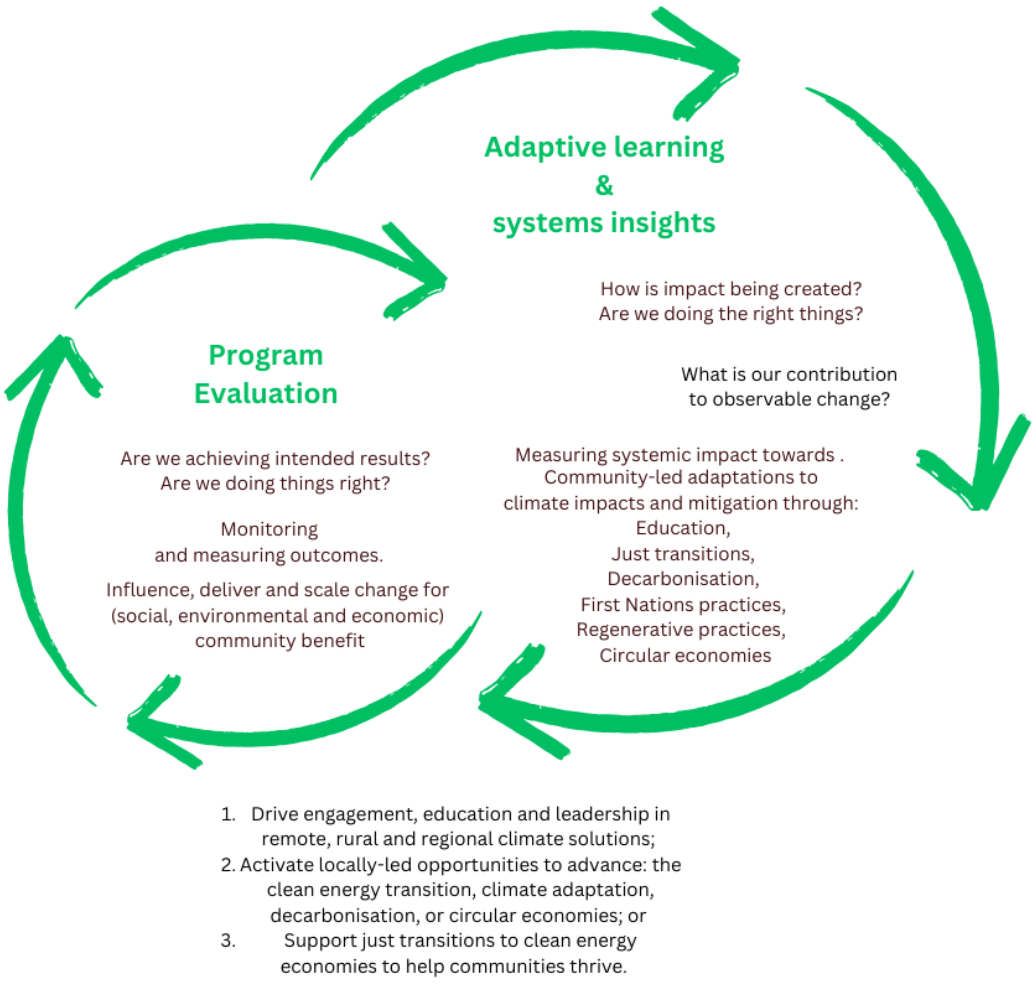

Figure 1 - Indicative evaluation cycle and conceptual questions

As the details, questions and model itself presented in Figure 1 are merely indicative of current thinking, FRRR expects they will be improved upon in the process of collaboratively designing and implementing the MERL plan.

A set of indicative evaluation questions are provided for the 'impact learning' and 'evidence base' aspects of the MERL plan, with a priority question bolded. Note the Stream two specific questions related to socio-economic disadvantage:

Stream 1 & 2

Further, broad based potential 'impact evaluation' questions could include:

- Are changes happening when we expected?
- Are the results what we expected?

Potential 'impact learning' evaluative questions include:

- How are we learning? (How are we collaborating and engaging in learning opportunities? What are we learning from the MERL process?)
- Can sharing perspectives on what is making the CLCS program effective generate actionable organisational and/or systemic insights?
- How are diverse stakeholders co-generating insights about the CLCS program changing the thinking and actions of participants as well as the broader sector?

Potential evaluative questions to develop the CLCS evidence base include:

- What types and measures of value are actors (such as communities, intermediaries, philanthropy, CSR, governments at each level) experiencing by participating in the investment in community-led climate adaptation and mitigation?
- **Does funding a diverse breadth of small scale initiatives across different actors and different mechanisms, help shift community capacity and agency to engage in climate mitigation and adaptation, and does it help us (the sector) learn how to more effectively invest in CLCS?**

Indicative evaluation questions specific to Stream 2 include:

- How can scaling CLCS enable disadvantaged communities to nurture connection, leadership and self-determination?
- What are the conditions for successfully scaling CLCS's to address disadvantage? And how can they be supported to spread their impact

Methodology, and Considerations

Proposals should include a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning approach consistent with the CLCS program and the values that underpin FRRR's theory of change.

FRRR is seeking proposals that consider the implications of what evaluation methodology will be adopted. Without being prescriptive, preliminary thinking indicates the objectives of the evaluation and motives of FRRR could be well met through a developmental evaluation approach.[1] The particular aspects of developmental evaluation approaches that resonate with FRRR include:

- Integrate the MERL process into program delivery – thus tightening feedback loops
- learning by collaboratively adapting the program to the experience of diverse stakeholders (including funders, grant recipient organisations, partner organisations and community members)
- incorporate system thinking (thus recognise where contribution to impact can be measured, and where attribution is appropriate)

Importantly FRRR values the potential to enter a partnership of shared collaborative design and stewardship of the MERL plan, more so than the specific methodology proposed. Whatever approach is proposed, its effects on the MERL outcomes (e.g. its influence on program effectiveness as well as the impact of progress and results) should be noted in proposals.

Components of the evaluation will be undertaken through participatory methods and will respect the community-led focus of the program. For example, FRRR expects participating grant recipients will have input to improving further iterations of the program and have the results presented back to them in an appropriate format.

Participants in the evaluation should be given access to, ownership and potential to share benefits of the data generated through the MERL activities.

The evaluation approach should enable recipient community organisations to reflect on their experiences, learn from and share the results of their work as part of participating in the evaluation. This could be achieved through activities such as workshopping (co-creating) case studies and other communication materials as part of the evaluation process.

Ethical and Accessible

An ethical approach will be undertaken at all stages of the evaluation and the Evaluation Partner will take great care in their approach and observation. Diverse options for how different stakeholders can engage and participate must be factored into all activities. Evaluation methods must be delivered with transparency and consent. Approaches that are culturally appropriate and are responsive to the needs of rural, regional and remote communities will be observed throughout the evaluation.

[1] For further details on developmental evaluative approach see - Developmental evaluation | Better Evaluation

It is expected appropriate methods of engagement are proposed for the diverse types and needs of the communities grant recipients operate in (for example, online or virtual engagement may not be feasible in some First Nations communities, hence FRRR suggests *at least* one in-person trip to collect data in a stream 2 project community will be required and therefore should be budgeted for).

Proposals that embed the engagement of remote, rural and regional people and seek to build localised evaluation capability over time are prioritised. This should include First Nations people and communities, vulnerable, young people (18-35) and culturally diverse groups.

FRRR welcomes proposals that include or 'sit alongside' social research work that is in some way related to the objectives of this evaluation project.

Acknowledgements & Intellectual Property

All partners will be appropriately acknowledged as agreed within contractual arrangements.

Intellectual Property Rights will be agreed upon within contractual arrangements and not infringe any existing agreements, including Intellectual Property Rights of third parties. Any intellectual property requirements of the evaluator should be made explicit in the proposal.

Evaluation Data Sources & Gathering Activities

The MERL plan could use a variety of data sources such as:

- program management records – administered by FRRR
- project management records gathered through grantees – including end of project reports
- Web based materials – websites, social media posts, visual and digital media recordings
- Interviews, focus groups and workshops with FRRR staff, funders, grant recipients, their partners, key stakeholders, and community members
- Individual grantee self-assessment tool
- most significant change stories
- surveys,
- case studies

The Evaluation Partner (and FRRR) will collect data at agreed intervals and means. Responsibilities for who collects what data will be negotiated during the MERL plan collaborative design process and reflected in contract arrangements.

Interviews and observations conducted by the Evaluation Partner will be key information sources and will provide insights on program impact through data analysis as well as contributing to broader narrative storytelling. The MERL plan will further detail and plan strategies, approaches and tools suitable to collect information for evaluation purposes.

Evaluation Objectives, Deliverables and Scope

The four objectives of the MERL plan and its implementation include:

a) **Process evaluation** of the grant program – facilitate inclusive participatory feedback (loops) that can be used to improve the program through each iteration

b) **Impact evaluation** – measure and report the short term (1 to 3 year) impacts of the grant program (including design for measuring ongoing longer-term and broader systemic impacts)

c) **Impact learning** – facilitate stakeholders (e.g. funders, FRRR staff, and grant recipients) to draw-out and reflect on putting learnings from the process and impact evaluation into action (collaboratively)

d) **Contribute to evidence base** – that enables partners/stakeholders to demonstrate the level of need for investment in community-led climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as the value in the variety of different activities and value of approaches at multiple scales

As outlined in the indicative evaluation plan stages section below, the evaluation partner and relevant FRRR staff will collaboratively design an agreed final MERL plan. According to the developmental evaluation approach this plan will be flexible according to the insights generated and may be adapted by mutual agreement of the partners.

FRRR is seeking proposals that build on the indicative measures provided below by outlining what is to be measured, to what extent, how it will be measured and why this is important for achieving the objectives. Collaboratively designed measures are to be specified and included in the completed MERL plan and approach.

Indicative Process Evaluation Measures

Overall program process (stream 1 and 2)
Programmatic measures
● effectiveness of the program, including; ○ design, ○ delivery mechanisms, ○ timing, ○ budget, ○ constraints, ○ risks, ○ appropriateness of language relating to modes of climate adaptation and mitigation, program locations, alignment to funder objectives and future opportunities, at a local, regional and federal level.

Indicative Impact Evaluation Measures

Overall program Impact (Stream 1 & 2)
Outputs
• Recipient communities have built capacity to lead climate transitions, decarbonize and adapt to impacts of climate change
Intermediate and Longer term Outcomes (2-3 years+)

• local climate solutions deliver positive social, economic and environmental benefits through education, engagement and action on:
  ○ decarbonisation
  ○ clean energy
  ○ just transitions
  ○ circular economies
  ○ sustainable agriculture/food systems and/or
  ○ biodiverse ecosystems
• community self-perception of their ability to (and agency in) adapting to and mitigating the effects of a changing climate
• community self-perception of their ability to (and agency in) navigating the net zero transition (particularly related to ensuring no one is left behind).
• measure of change in project participants attitudes and support for community-led solutions to climate adaptation, climate mitigation and transition to net zero emissions.
• GHG Emissions measurement and reduction efforts

Stream 2 program Impact:
Outputs
• Existing locally-led projects are scaled to a more mature state • Demonstrate the appropriateness of projects as responses to identified climate change risk or impact
Outcomes
• Improvement in the capacity of local communities to take an active role, or lead, in the mitigation or adaptation of climate change • Alleviate socioeconomic disadvantage

Indicative Impact Learning Evaluation Measures

Overall program learning (stream 1 and 2)
Impact Learning measures
• Level of actor understanding about their own and others roles in effective community-led climate mitigation and adaptation • Participants perception of value in sharing perspectives, co-generating insights, new knowledge/learning • Measure of how innovative the project ideas and deliver are • Potential for participants to either collaborate in or initiate other CLCS? • Capacity to advocate on CLCS agenda

Indicative Deliverables

The evaluation plan deliverables will be determined through the collaborative design process. As per the Evaluation timeline section below, FRRR assumes collation of evaluation activities (i.e. data collection, workshops etc.), will be used to generate interim 'process evaluation' presentations/reports that can be used to improve grant program iterations on an annual basis.

FRRR assumes and is open to negotiate whether the 'impact evaluation' and 'impact learning' will be reported annually and at completion of the evaluation (i.e. August 2027).

Locations

The CLCS program is national in scope, hence FRRR does not prescribe whether the evaluation partner should conduct any part of the evaluation activities in a particular place. Although proposals may include some travel, it is expected the vast majority of engagement and data collection will be undertaken virtually (and evaluation partners must demonstrate that have ICT capabilities and experience conducting relevant MERL activities online).

If the Evaluation Partner intends to travel to any locations for in-person interaction/data collection with projects or stakeholders, it would be viewed as advantageous but explanation of how it would 'add value' to the evaluation should be noted and associated cost estimated included in the proposed budget.

Indicative Evaluation Plan Stages

Proposed evaluation plans should be delineated into co-design, annual cycles and reporting stages. Indicative stages of the evaluation plan include:

Stage 1: Collaborative design evaluation plan

The Evaluation Partner will collaborate with FRRR to design and create a detailed evaluation plan that details:

1. key evaluation questions, learning objectives, and any baselines by which program elements will be evaluated.
2. evaluation approach, methods, activities, that are aligned to the overarching CLCS Theory of Change and FRRR Impact Framework
3. MERL indicators, data sources, collection frequency and collection responsibilities
4. Activity cycles timing and outputs

For the process, program impact and learning evaluations.

FRRR will collaborate with the Evaluation Partner to establish meeting, workshop and reporting cycles, including administrative support.

Stage 2: Cycles of data Collection, Workshops + Reporting (Implementing Evaluation Plan)

- Each year, in partnership with FRRR, the evaluation partner will engage with grant recipients (and where required grantee community members or stakeholders) and

funders to collect and collate information to inform the evaluation of program process, program impact and impact learning.

- The evaluation partner will analyse and use data collected to design and deliver interim workshops that present analysis, give FRRR staff, funders and (other participants such as grant recipients) an opportunity to share reflections, learn, and inform the next phase of data collection.
- The evaluation partner will analyse results from the interim workshop with the collected data to generate and present an annual report to FRRR. The report will: summarise progress towards impact and learning measures, share insights, identifies risks and challenges, and provide recommendations and other innovative evaluation outcomes as determined through the collaborative design process.

Stage 3: Final Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Partner will provide an end of program evaluation of publishable quality (primarily focused on the learning and programmatic impacts). This report will assess evidence of achievements of intermediate outcomes, progress towards long term outcomes, assess evidence of impacts and contribute to FRRR reporting to funders.

It is expected that a variety of written, audio, visual and multi-media content will be produced in parallel (in part from) the evaluation findings. Prospective evaluation partners should indicate their capacity to produce or contribute to diverse reporting formats and what the costs might be in their proposed budget.

Evaluation Timeline

Activity	2024	2025	2026	2027
Evaluation contract begins	December			
Collaborative design grant acquittal reporting framework	Nov to Dec			
Collaborative design MERL plan.	Nov to Dec			
Implement MERL plan	Nov to Dec	Jan to Dec	Jan to Dec	Jan to June
Interim workshop	April/May	April/May	April/May	
Annual working report	June	June	June	
Final program report				August 2027

Budget & Pricing

The overall budget for the evaluation is $90,000. This includes GST, reimbursements, evaluation partner travel and any direct expenses.

As indicated throughout this RFP, FRRR invites proposals that can utilise all stakeholder strengths and capabilities (i.e. there is scope for FRRR staff to provide support for some processes within the MERL cycle). Therefore, we encourage innovative approaches to designing and delivering a MERL plan.

Applicants are encouraged to submit a budget that includes GST, travel and direct expenses and provides a breakdown of activities to illustrate value for money. Prospective budgets are encouraged to demonstrate a means of honouring the time and value provided by grant recipients and community participation in evaluative activities.

Audience, Distribution and Use of Evaluation

With agreed consent by all parties, it is intended that all parties will use, promote and redistribute evaluation collateral to a wide audience through a variety of mediums and forums, such as:

Party	Audience	Intended Use
Program funders	Board, existing and future collaborators and public via communication channels and public forums.	• Promoting the value of community-led climate solutions • To demonstrate their Initiative achievements and learnings • Promoting the value of collaborative investment & inform future investment strategies and decisions • Reporting against targets and obligations
FRRR	FRRR Board, existing and future funders, Program Advisory Committee and public via FRRR communication channels and public forums.	• Promoting the value of community-led climate solutions • Profiling locally informed and capability strengthening evaluation processes. • Profiling benefits of co-designed programs in rural, regional and remote (RRR) locations • Promoting community outcomes and impact. • Inform future community and capability investment needs • Inform future program design
Grantee organisations & their communities	General communication channels and public forums.	• Promoting the value of community-led climate solutions • Profiling benefits of co-designed and collaborative community programs • Promoting community outcomes and impact to other local people and external stakeholders • Inform future investment needs to external stakeholders • Inform decision strategy and decision making
Participant Individuals	Personal communication channels and public	• Promoting community outcomes and impact to other local people and external stakeholders
Evaluation Partner	General communication channels	• Promotion of evaluation processes and community impact.

What FRRR is looking for in an evaluation partner

1. Alignment with FRRR values and aspirations.
2. Demonstrated understanding of the requirements, objectives and motivation of the evaluation.
3. Experience evaluating community led and co-designed capacity building or development projects
4. A deep understanding of working with regional and rural communities, volunteers and the not-for-profit sectors including First Nations, Young People (18-35) and other vulnerable groups
5. Ability to adapt, change and pivot if required when working with communities and developmental projects
6. Demonstrated examples of providing and presenting data and evaluation information materials that can be used for a variety of audiences (funders, community etc)
7. Proposed evaluation methodology that meets the requirement and suitability of the program and community context
8. Evidence that relevant insurances, licences, policies and procedures are in place and compliant with State, Territory or Commonwealth laws. Demonstrated health and safety measures including Working with Vulnerable Persons, Working with Children, Occupational Health and Safety policies as well as relevant insurances such as Public Liability and Professional Indemnity
9. Overall value for money.

Suitably qualified and experienced individuals or organisations must submit a proposal that includes:

- Responses to "what we are looking for in an evaluation partner" points (1-9) above
- An outline of their suggested approach to collaboratively designing and implementing CLCS monitoring, evaluation, reporting and Learning plan
- Examples of previous work experience (social impact evaluations) with relevant communities
- The CVs of the individuals or team that would undertake the evaluation
- Budget

Proposals should be no greater than thirty pages (including attachments).

FRRR is an equal opportunity employer and encourages proposals from applicants from diverse backgrounds.

Contact

Prospective evaluation partners are encouraged to contact FRRR staff to discuss any aspect of this request for proposal before submitting a response.

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Sarah Matthee
Climate Solutions Portfolio Lead
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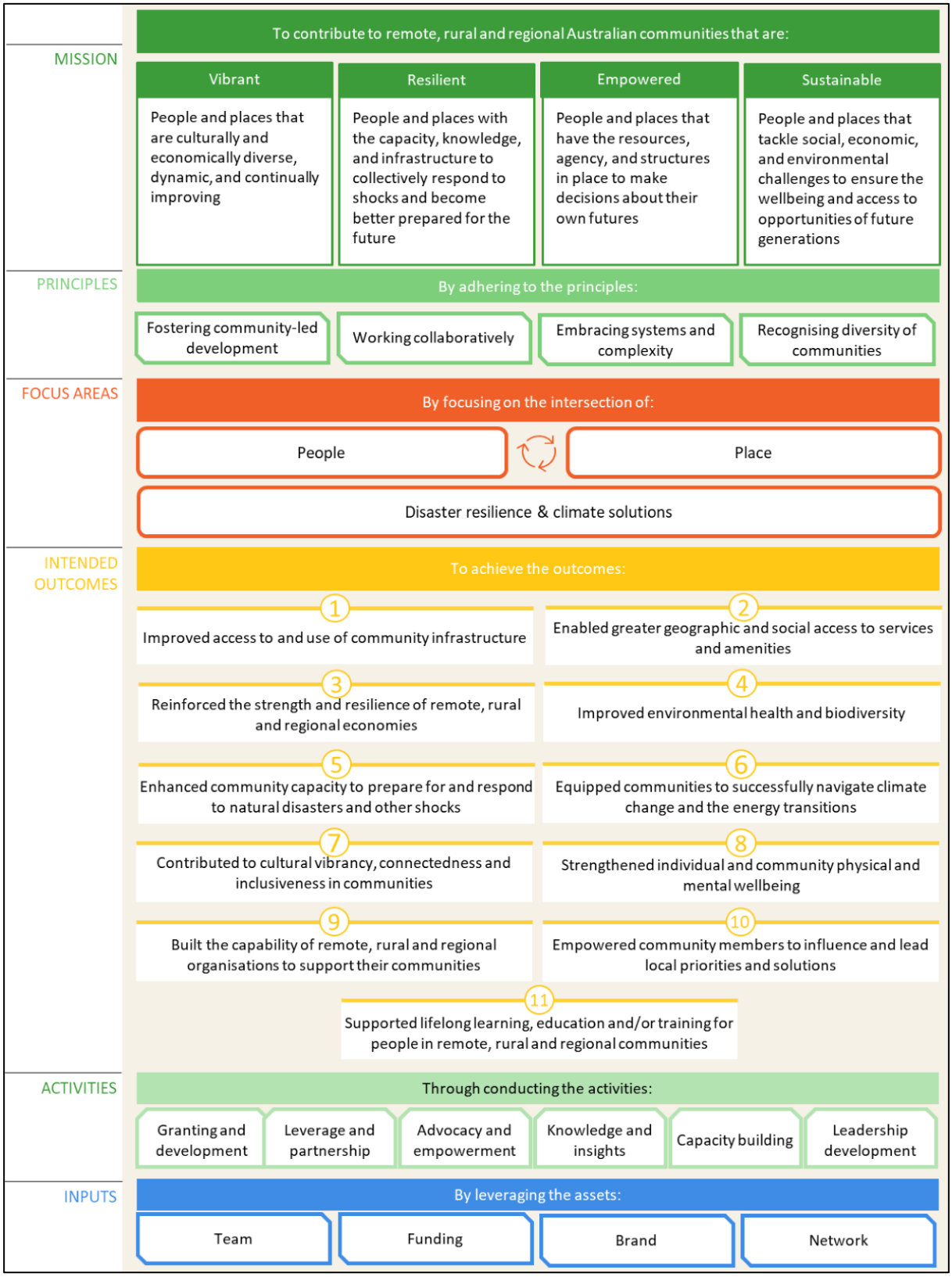
Appendix A – FRRR Theory of Change



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Appendix B – CLCS Theory of Change