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Evaluating communication and governance processes in whole-of-government evidence-based policies

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During 2005 and 2006 Charles Darwin University's Learning Research Group conducted an evaluation of the Northern Territory government's Domestic and Aboriginal Family Violence Strategies. The Strategies were developed within a whole of government framework that depends on a formal interagency structure and a non-government representative group acting as an advisory committee. An important component of the evaluation was a critical assessment of the communication and governance structures within government and between government and non-government agencies. The key informing principle underlying the evaluation is a strength-based approach whereby recommendations enable anti-violence stakeholders to build on activities and processes that work well. Within this context, this paper explores the evaluation processes that facilitate a whole of government evidence-based policy development/implementation framework. It provides detail of the methodological basis for the evaluation. The evaluation attempts to identify the factors within governance structures that either facilitate or inhibit the development and implementation of the Strategies. The paper draws conclusions about the effectiveness of the evaluation as part of the policy development process, with particular emphasis on the development of supportive interagency and government-non-government governance and communication structures.