

**0124**

**Taken for granted: Towards a real model for evaluating discretionary grants**

R J Goodbourn

*Clear Horizon, Frankston,*

There is growing outsourcing of government services, an increasing trend towards local responsibility for funded programs and a concurrent rising demand for accountability for public funding. These changing contexts place increasing pressure on discretionary grants processes to demonstrate sound administration, together with accountability for delivering outcomes.

Because of the inherent range of stakeholder perspectives, including funding agencies, funds managers, applicants and beneficiaries, there is a corresponding mixture of priorities for the focus and methods of related evaluations. This diversity is compounded by the "emergent" status of the evaluation profession. As is common in emerging professions, there is debate about the role of various "players" and the relationships between them. This is particularly evident with regard to "audit" versus "evaluation". Much of the literature reinforces the distinction between these functions, rather than seeking ways in which they may be symbiotic in establishing a holistic approach to the evaluation of grants based programs.

Existing guidelines relating to the evaluation of competitive grants processes are primarily government initiatives, with the "external auditor" focus. What is missing is a pragmatic and flexible model which allows funds and program managers and beneficiaries to develop an evaluation strategy which addresses external compliance and accountability concerns while still acting as an ongoing learning tool for the program in hand. This paper proposes a model that combines the required elements of compliance auditing, objectives-based evaluation and needs based evaluation to provide a holistic and robust tool for evaluating discretionary grants.