

# The Art of Building Organisational Capacity to Evaluate

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Australian Government



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# This presentation

- Describes our approach to using evaluation for organisational capacity building at the Australia Council
- Highlights the lessons learned
- Links our learnings to the literature

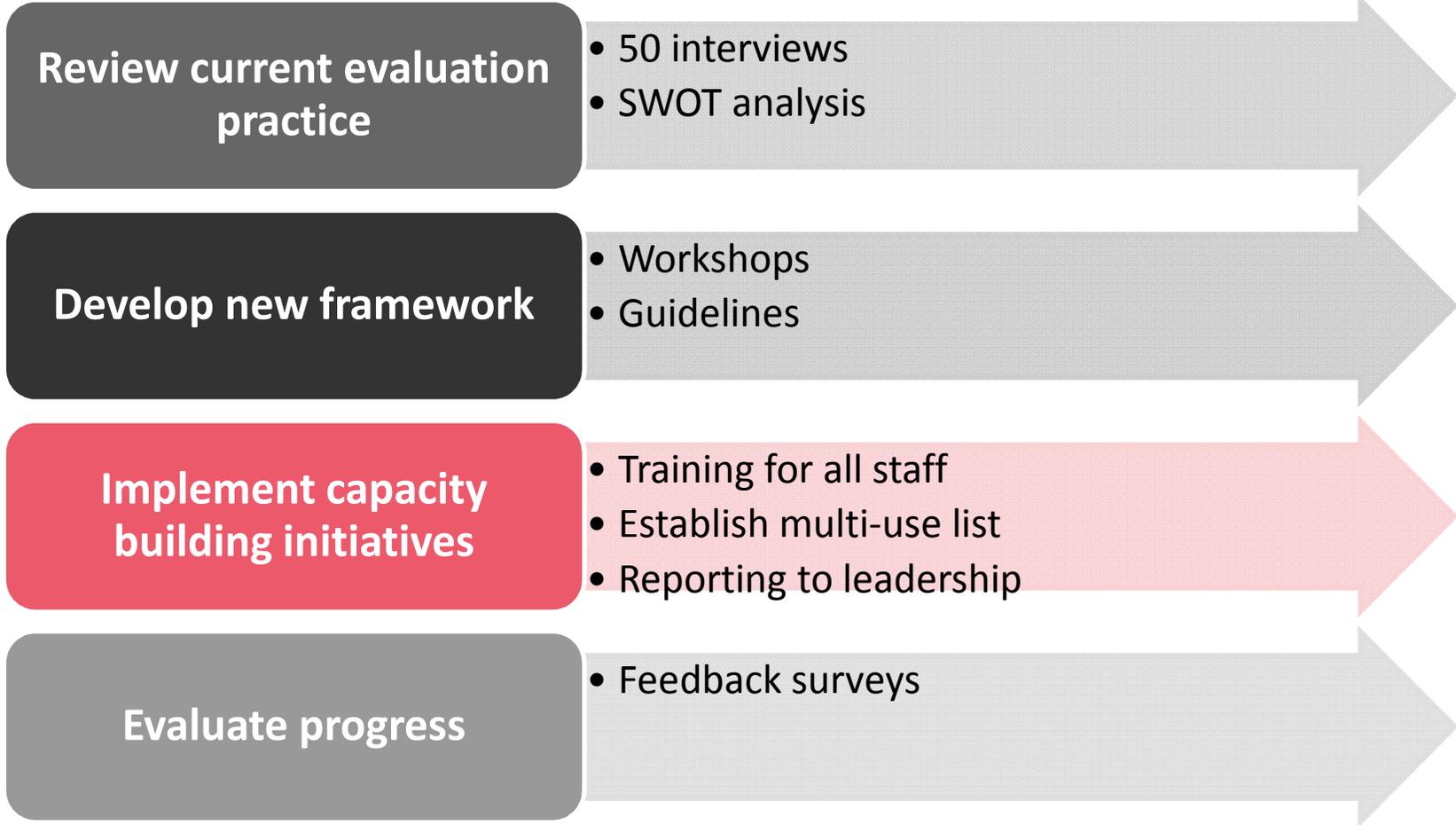


# Australia Council

for the Arts  
An Australian  
Government  
Agency



# What we did

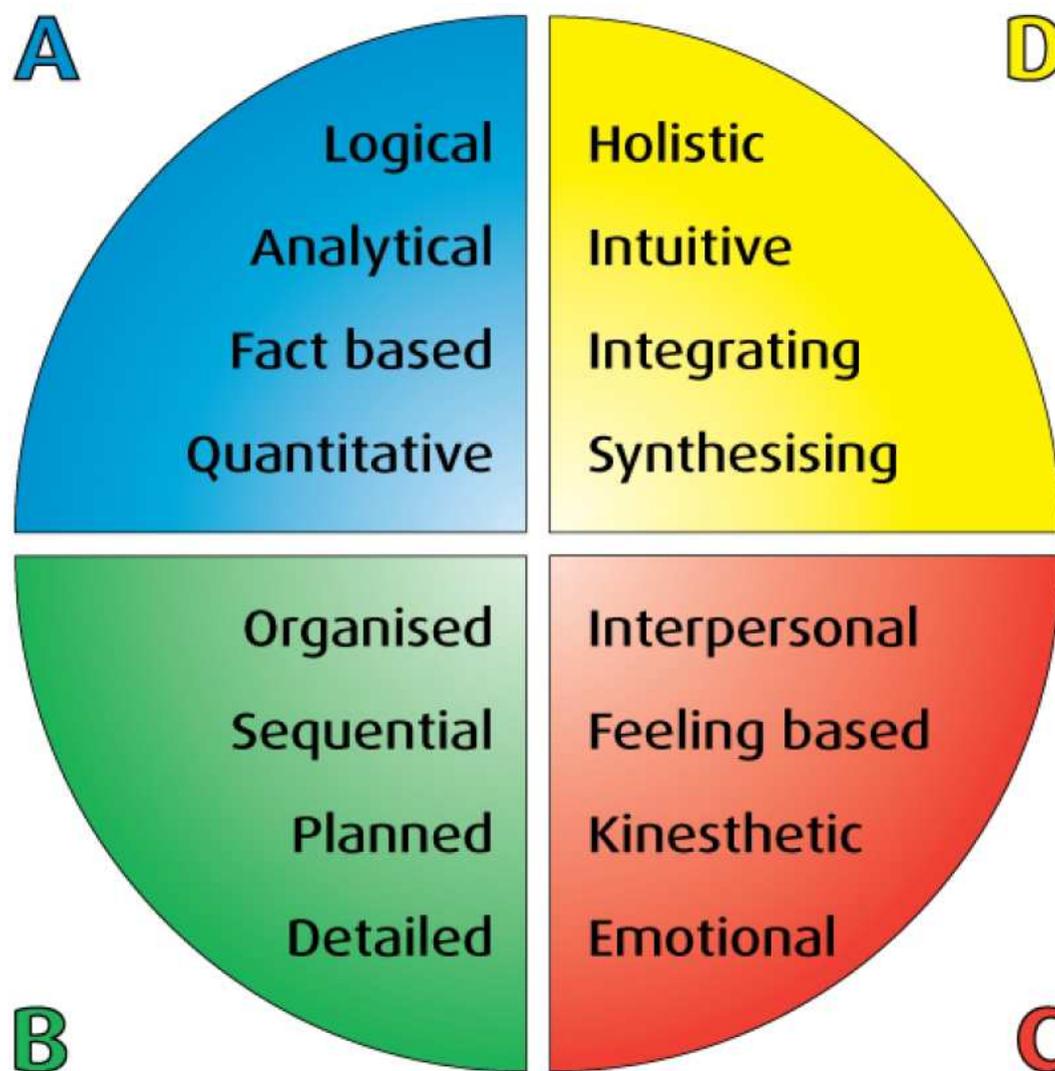


“Evaluation hasn’t played a big part but we feel its absence...it’s hard to know what is or has worked”



“We need to improve the way we demonstrate value and impact...”

“Evaluation should be critical to everything we do”



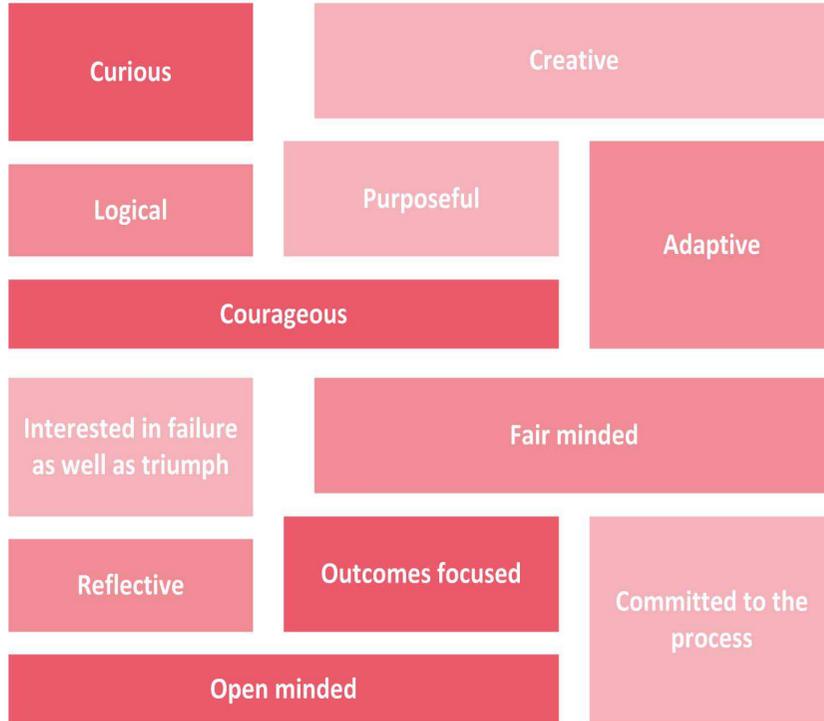
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# SWOT



Australia Council...

... Staff think evaluatively, by being...



... invests in evaluation that is...



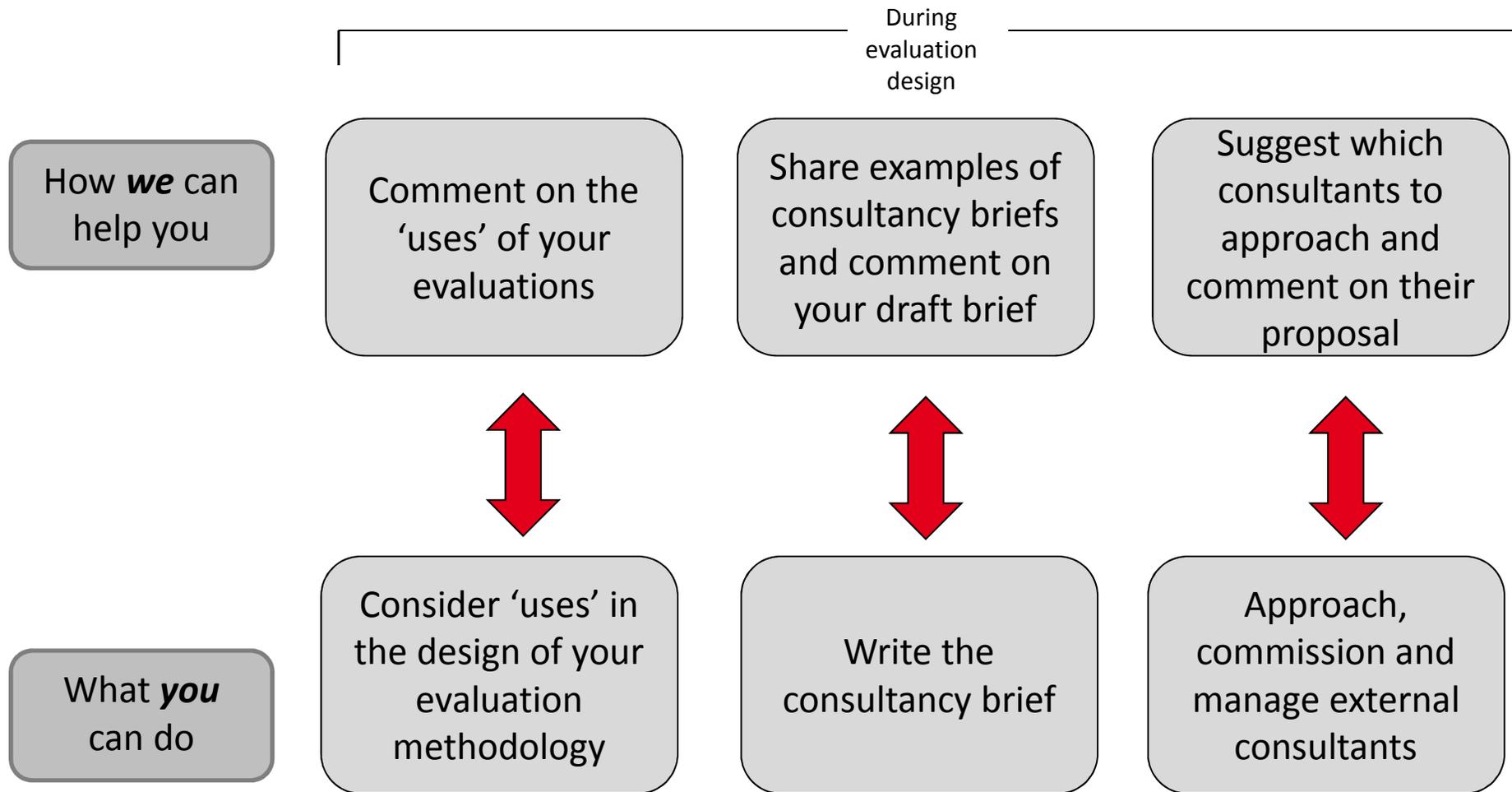
...which results in...

- An enhanced evidence base
- Smarter decisions and better professional judgement
- More efficient, effective and innovative practice
- More compelling business cases (for the Australia Council and the sector)
- Australia Council is a learning organisation
- Strong credibility with government, community, arts sector and philanthropists
- Leadership in evaluation practice for the arts

# What, when and how to evaluate

Factor	Some questions you might consider	Y/N – formal evaluation
Size	Is your project is large according to the Project Management criteria?	Most large projects would benefit from evaluation.
Innovation	How innovative is the work of the project? Is this routine work or new in some interesting or important way?	The innovative aspects of the project may benefit from formal evaluation
Strategic significance	Is this project addressing something important to the division or the organisation?  Will this project reposition your work, or the work of the organisation?  Is the work of this project likely to have significance to key stakeholders?	Formal evaluation can improve project rigor and position it for success
High profile/ potentially influential	Is the work of this likely to attract attention internally and or externally?  Is the work of this project aiming to influence change in the business of art, artists and audience?	Evaluation can help stakeholder relations and enhance decision making  Rigour for planning and measurement can be assisted by formal evaluation
Repeat activity	Is the project one that will be conducted again and is of some significance?	Evaluation can identify areas to improve project design and delivery in the future
Funding arrangements	Is it required or expected that project will be evaluated as a condition of funding?  Is there benefit in securing on going funding from short term or time limited funding?	Formal evaluation may be a requirement.  Demonstrating project outcomes can improve arguments to secure ongoing funding

# Clarifying the role of the RSA team



# The RSA team



**NICK – Director RSA**



**BRIDGET – Research Manager**

**EXPERIENCE**

Nick has an extensive background in the cultural sector. He has taken on many roles, including exhibitor, distributor, broadcaster, broadcasting regulator, industry advocate, consultant, teacher and author.

Bridget has twenty years experience in the cultural, telecommunications, transport and government sectors as a researcher, strategic planner and policy adviser.

**EVALUATION RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Lead the development of an evaluative culture within the Council
- Ensure the provision of high quality evaluation advice to E-team and Council
- Contribute to the setting of strategic priorities based on evaluation

- Co-ordinate evaluation activity across the whole of Council
- First point of contact for Music, Dance, Theatre, and Artsupport

**INTERESTS**

Reading  
 Film  
 Good food and wine  
 Visual Arts  
 Travel  
 Exercise

Music  
 Historical Fiction  
 Travel  
 Iyengar Yoga

# RSA team role



# Strong strategic alignment

Through actively using and investing in evaluative practice, the organisation will build its capacity to:

## Be strategic and discerning

- Think critically about what you do
- Articulate your purpose
- Focus on impact - not just delivery
- Meaningfully assess the value of an action or approach
- Construct convincing, well-reasoned rationales for new and existing initiatives

## Be well-informed

- Learn about what's occurring and how it relates to the broader context
- Build the evidence base for funding and support from Government, philanthropists and the broader community
- Make decisions based on relevant and credible information

## Improve practice

- Have structured and purposeful conversations about the rationale for, impact of, and process used – at every level
- Consistently adapt your approaches; make the most of lessons learnt.
- Enhance responsiveness to your stakeholders



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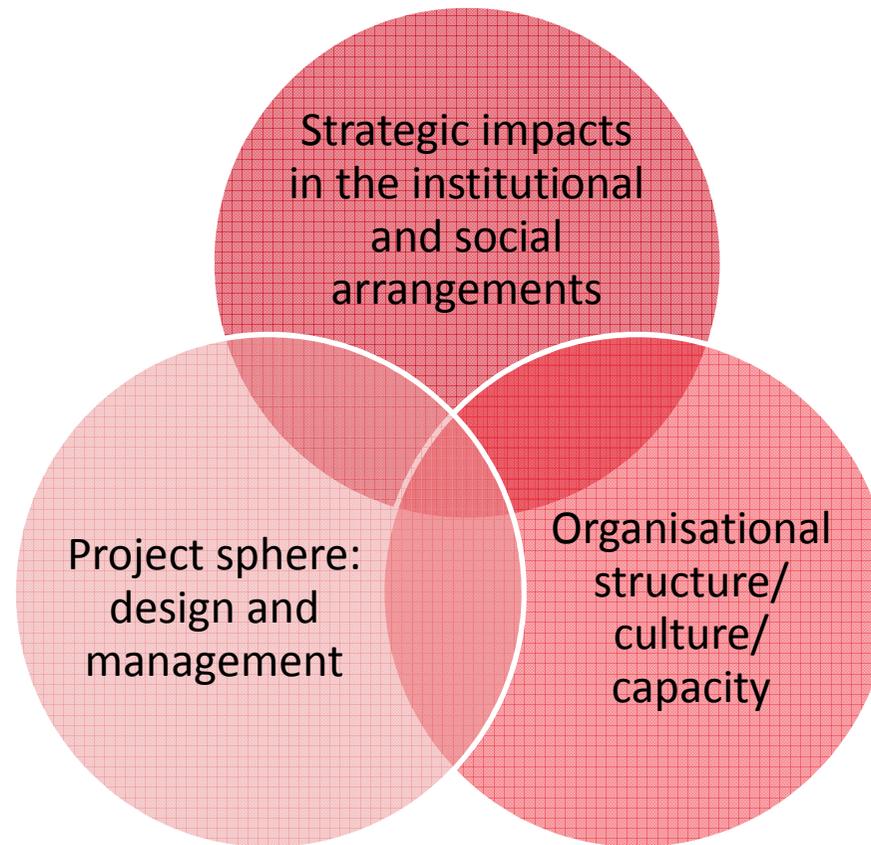


# Evaluate at any level



# Scope of evaluative influence

- Systems perspective



# What we think worked well and why...

- Orientation of the project – definition and scope
  - Investigated needs at first stage – bespoke design
  - Trained the RSA team
  - Delivered each session according to the needs of that group – pre-preparation
  - Cross disciplinary and team based process
  - Executive directors participating in each session
- 
- Linked into systems change
  - Project reference group – feedback and advocated
- 
- Follow up delivery and training
  - Used to clarify role of RSA team – strategic session
  - Informed by and linked with systems reform and KPI's
  - Transmitted the strategic intention of organisation and collaboratively designed the process which linked individual and team responsibility for contributing to it

# Contribution

- Great partnership between consultant and client
- Consistency of consulting team
- Adaptively managed and strongly organisationally supported
- Valued the role of the consultant as 'external'
- How the consultant went about things – flexible, experienced, questioning and engaged



# What the literature says about this space....

- Current organisations - dynamic and uncertain, need inter-disciplinarity and creative flow
- Interplay between the 3 dimensions - managerial discourse, formal structures, informal/social interactions (Lapierre, Potvin & Zuniga 2012)
- Phases – inquiry; implement flexibly; embed structurally (Preskill & Torres, 1990)
- *'Connection between organisational learning and evaluation is knowledge and knowledge processing'* (Levin-Rozalis & Rosentein, 2005)
- Capacity building should occur at individual, team, organisational and intra organisational level (Cooke, 2005)

# Learnings

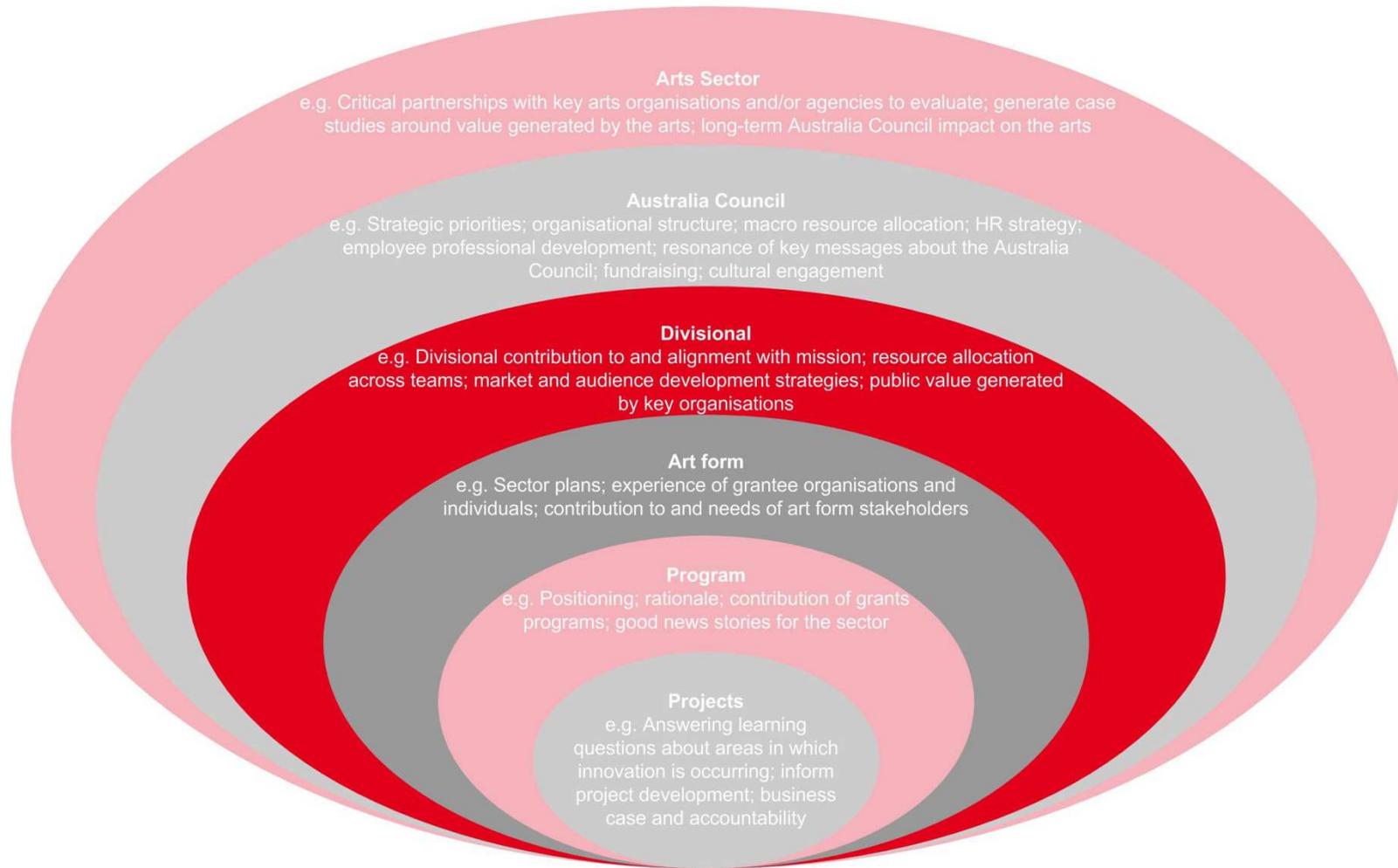
- Lack of existing benchmarks
- Resources for following stages
- Written Guide – developed at beginning – would have been better at the end
- Long term project – requiring continuous investment and effort

# Opportunities going forward

- Meeting demand for advice
- Intra organisational and work with stakeholders
- Capacity building in the arts sector – particularly with arts organisations



# Spheres of influence



Thank you



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