



**BetterEvaluation**

# Professionalisation of Evaluation – Possible Pathways within the AES Context –

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The Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG)

# Why consider professionalisation?

To avoid or address particular threats:

(1) The field of evaluation is brought into disrepute through **poor quality or unethical evaluations** – resulting in:

- Distrust of evaluation in society at large
- Evaluation sidelined or not taken seriously by decision makers

(2) Other disciplines, professions or occupations **encroach** on evaluation practice – due to:

- Loose definition of evaluation
- Lack of universally accepted standards
- Weak identity of evaluators

# AES' history of 'professionalisation'

Ongoing debate: *Should evaluation be a profession?*

Overall approach:

- ▶ Inclusive – supporting everyone involved in evaluation
- ▶ Bridge between providers and consumers of evaluation
- ▶ Activities explicitly directed at supporting good practice

## **AES' Strategic Priority** (July 2016 – June 2019)

**To strengthen the capacity and professionalism of the evaluation sector**

## Competitively awarded short-term research

- ▶ Review of AES' work (previous and ongoing)
- ▶ Review of international literature (targeted, not systematic)
- ▶ Scan of pathways taken by others (evaluation, other fields)
- ▶ Few interviews (opportunities, facilitators, barriers)
- ▶ No consultation



Our work is intended to inform AES' next steps

## Next steps

*Before* AES moves to implement any *significant* actions

Some level of wider consultation with AES members, other evaluators, and users of evaluation services

To identify:

- needs
- resources
- risks
- opportunities
- interest in engaging in various options

# Broad definition of 'evaluation'

Not only...

- ▶ the process and results of determining the merit, worth or value of things

Also...

- ▶ the range of tasks and products related to monitoring the performance of interventions and to supporting learning

## Broad definition of 'evaluators'

- ▶ Those doing evaluation
  - on a full-time, part-time or intermittent basis
  - within specific organisations or as external consultants
  - with varying degrees of competency
- ▶ Those identifying as evaluators as well as those doing evaluation as part of their job

# ‘Professionalisation’ of evaluation

Actions to continuously improve the quality of evaluation practice and products

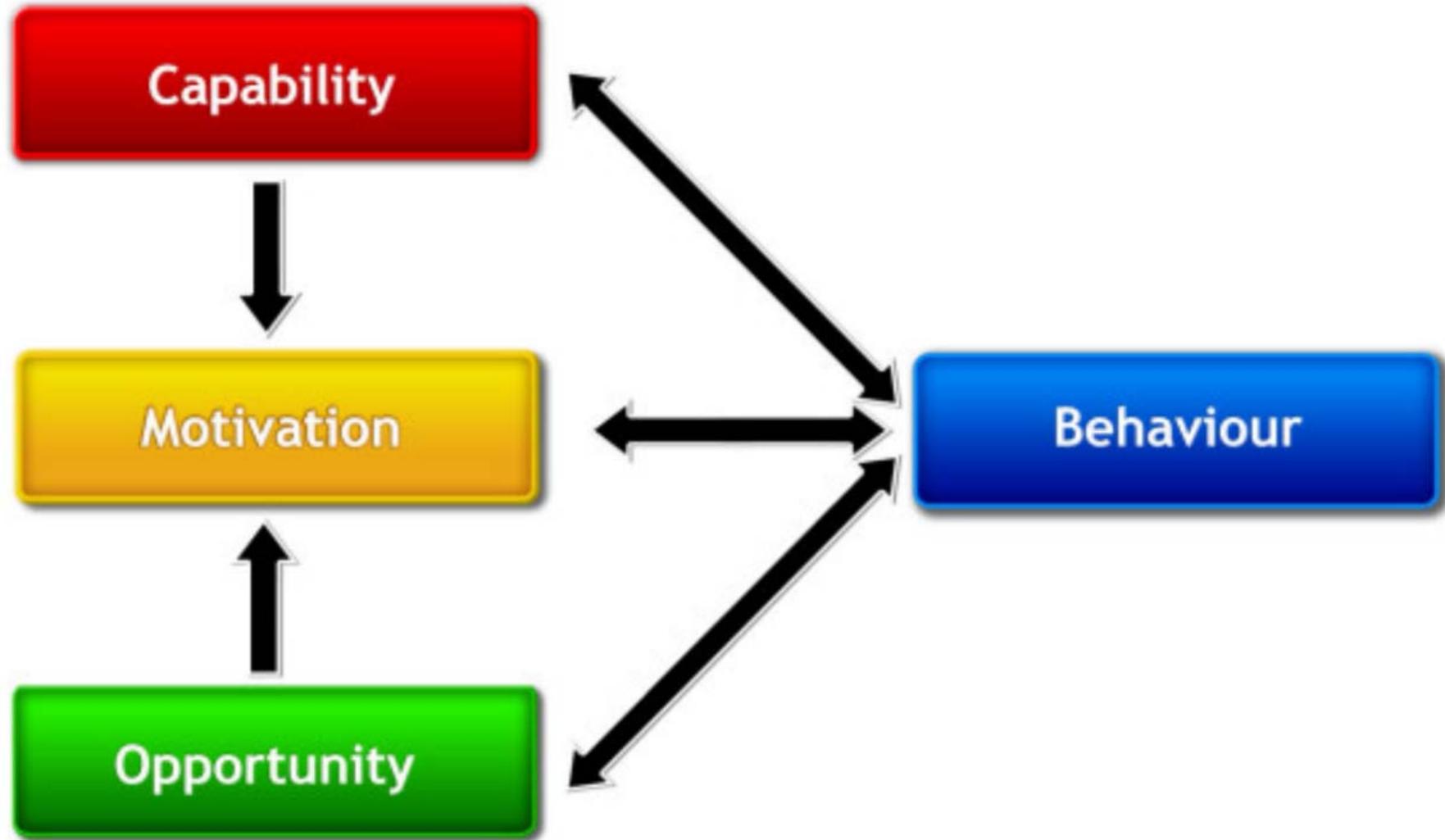
- ▶ How *competence and conduct* of evaluators can be strengthened for the purpose of good quality evaluation in the public interest
- ▶ What elements in the *context* can be influenced to support evaluation better

# What do we want to achieve?

An evaluation sector which

- ▶ is highly capable
  - professional competencies are articulated and widely used
  - continued learning is available and accessible
- ▶ is highly professional
  - a code of conduct or professional standards are clearly articulated and adhered to
- ▶ offers good 'career' pathways to recruit and retain competent individuals

# How might this be approached? (1)



## How might it be approached? (2)

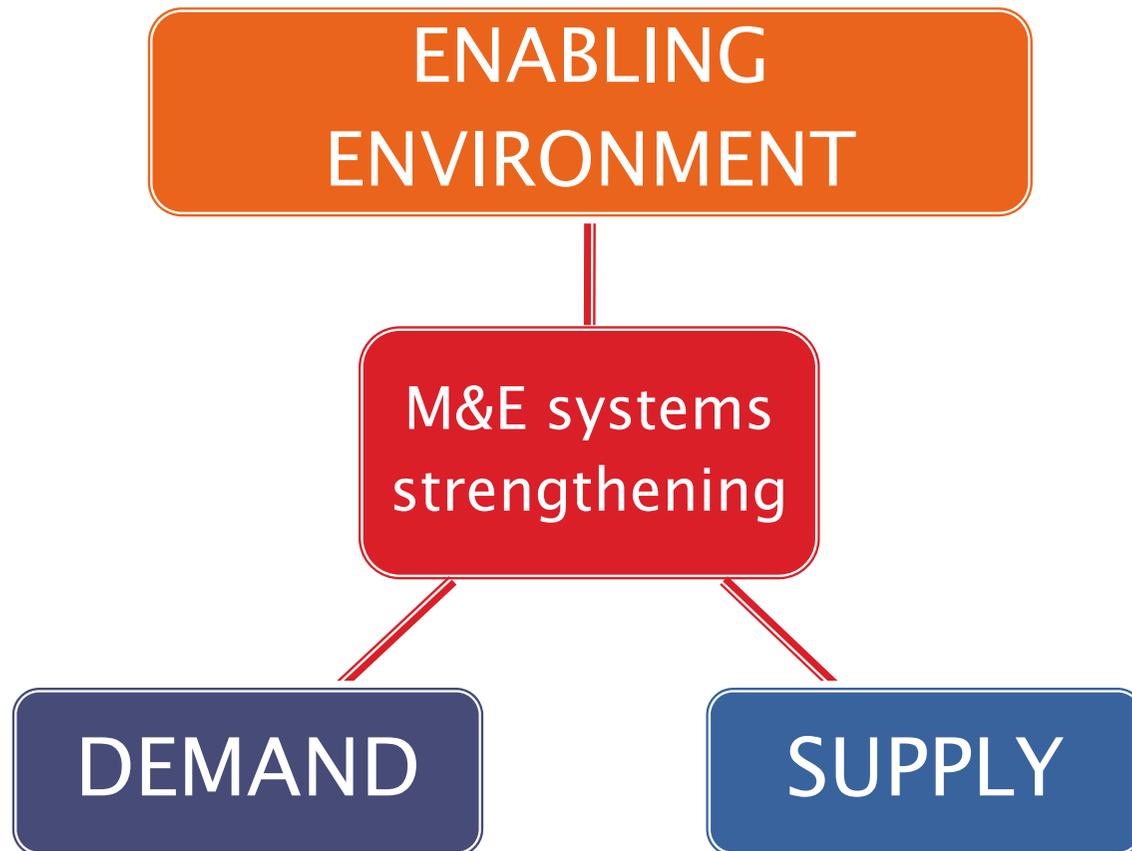
(1) **Increasing motivation** – active contribution to a valued occupational identity

(2) **Increasing capacity** – ongoing and linked professional development and support

(3) **Increasing opportunity** – better informed and motivated demand side of evaluation and enabling environment

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(4) **Gatekeeping** – controlling entry to the field and removing those breaching agreed professional standards or code of conduct



# Context (1)

## Across Australia, New Zealand, The Pacific

- ▶ Geographic commonalities and differences
- ▶ Different evaluator identities
- ▶ Different evaluator competency levels

## Context (2)

### Across Australia, New Zealand, The Pacific

- ▶ Diverse and changing government contexts for evaluation at different levels
- ▶ Diverse cultural contexts, in particular Indigenous issues
- ▶ International and local changes in how evidence and its use are understood

## Context (3)

### Across Australia, New Zealand, The Pacific

- ▶ Evaluation work where many practitioners do not see it as their primary identity
- ▶ Limited options for university–accredited and other formal courses on evaluation
- ▶ Large numbers of AES members and other evaluators living outside the capital cities where most training events are held

## Context (4)

### Across Australia, New Zealand, The Pacific

- ▶ The considerable discussion, activity and products on professionalisation over the life of the AES
- ▶ Other evaluation associations in the region (ANZEA, Mā te Rae, Pasifika Fono) and other organisations working on similar issues

# Context (5)

## *Beyond* Australia, New Zealand, The Pacific

- ▶ Many evaluation associations and networks operating on a global, regional, sub-regional, country or more localised level
- ▶ Umbrella organisation IOCE (International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation)
- ▶ **2016–2020 Global Evaluation Agenda (EvalPartners)** calls for inter-related professionalisation action in:
  - (1) Building individual capacities for evaluation
  - (2) Evaluation knowledge creation and dissemination
  - (3) Frameworks for evaluation impartiality and quality for different levels

41 different approaches to professionalisation

Overall change theory	Strategy	Approaches	
<b>Increasing motivation</b>  Active contribution to a valued occupational identity	1. Reference points for professional practice	1.1 Code of conduct 1.2 Competencies 1.3 Distinct occupational category	1.4 Expectation of ongoing competency development 1.5 Standards
	2. Engagement with other professional associations	2.1 Evaluation associations	2.2 Other professional associations
	3. Public recognition of good practice	3.1 Awards 3.2 Fellows	3.3 Voluntary credentialling
<b>Increasing capacity</b>  Ongoing and linked professional development and support	4. Competency assessment	4.1 Peer assessment	4.2 Self-assessment
	5. Knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSA) development	5.1 Dialogues 5.2 Peer learning	5.3 Self-paced learning 5.4 Training (accredited or not)
	6. Ongoing competency development	6.1 Coaching 6.2 Expert advice 6.3 Expert review 6.4 Fellowship	6.5 Internship 6.6 Mentoring 6.7 Peer review 6.8 Supervision
	7. Building and sharing knowledge	7.1 Community of Practice 7.2 Conference 7.3 Journal	7.4 Learning partnerships 7.5 R&D projects
<b>Increasing opportunity for professional practice</b>  Better informed and motivated demand side of evaluation and enabling environment	8. Educating the public and evaluation managers and users	8.1 Public information about evaluation	8.2 Public information about professional practice
	9. Strengthening the enabling environment for good evaluation practice	9.1 Engagement in relevant organisational processes	9.2 Engagement in relevant public processes
<b>Gatekeeping</b>  Controlling entry to the field and removing those breaching agreed professional standards or code of conduct	10. Restricting entry	10.1 Compulsory accreditation 10.2 Compulsory certification 10.3 Compulsory credentialling	10.4 Hurdle requirements for consultants register 10.5 Hurdle requirements for membership 10.6 Licensing
	11. Detecting and correcting poor quality practice or unethical conduct	11.1 Complaints procedure	11.2 Disciplinary action

## Four possible pathways

*1. Business as usual* – a number of activities related to professionalisation, but not focused or well-connected – **we recommend stopping this**

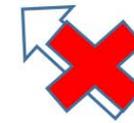
*2. Focus, connect and augment current activities* including adding some additional activities – **we recommend doing this** informed by consultation with AES members and other stakeholders

*3. Develop a voluntary credentialling process* – **we recommend, possibly, considering this later** informed by consultation and evidence as it becomes available from similar efforts internationally

*4. Push for a regulated and licensed profession* – **we do not recommend this** given the nature of evaluation practice and the stated mission of the AES

# Recommendations for the AES

## PROFESSIONALISATION



Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3	Pathway 4
<b>STOP</b> CONTINUING BUSINESS AS USUAL	<b>START</b> FOCUSING, CONNECTING AND AUGMENTING CURRENT ACTIVITIES Do this now, informed by <u>consultation</u>	<b>CONSIDER</b> DEVELOPING VOLUNTARY CREDENTIALLING PROCESS <i>Possibly do later,</i> informed by <u>consultation</u> and <u>evidence</u>	<b>DO NOT</b> PUSH FOR A REGULATED AND LICENSED PROFESSION

## Pathway 3: Consider developing VOLUNTARY credentialling POSSIBLY, LATER...

....informed by consultation AND evidence

*Credentialing* –a process by which a person receives a credential for having mastered certain skills and competencies in a particular field of practice.

Typically, assessed by an external body (usually a professional society in the area of consideration)

## Potential benefits of 'credentialling'

- Can help with delineating the practice of evaluation from related practices
- Can provide clearer guidance for professional development of evaluators which can encourage institutions to establish accredited evaluation programs
- Can encourage those conducting evaluations to acquire and maintain the necessary competencies over time
- Can facilitate selection of evaluators

# Potential benefits of 'credentialling'

In the long run...

....credentialling is expected to lead to **better quality evaluation practice and products** which, in turn, may **elevate the status of evaluation**

# Challenges of 'credentialling'

- ▶ Does not guarantee that the credentialed evaluator is actually up to a new task (e.g., doing evaluations in different contexts or specific methods)
- ▶ Most often a team rather than one individual conducts an evaluation
- ▶ New developments in evaluation  need for ongoing competency development  need for re-credentialling
- ▶ **Expensive** (human & financial resources) & **time-consuming**:
  - Needs to be a dynamic system (reflect changing knowledge base)
  - Difficult to cover ongoing costs (establishing, administering, maintaining, revising the system)

## Experience with 'credentialling'

- ▶ Experience with this approach in evaluation is limited
  - For example: Canadian Evaluation Society (CES), Japan Evaluation Society (JES)
- ▶ Effects are not fully understood – available information mostly focused on the process of establishing and maintaining the system

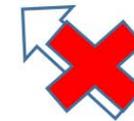
# 2016 Evaluation of CES Credentialling Program

- ▶ Low uptake (<20% of CES members)
  - Not required for their job
  - Time/money for application perceived high for perceived benefit  
BUT application process itself as a means for learning how to improve their work
- ▶ Commissioners did not pay much attention to credentialed individuals in their hiring ('nice to have' but many other factors)
- ▶ Credentialed individuals did not report getting more business

See: Fierro et al. 2016

# Recommendations for the AES

## PROFESSIONALISATION



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## Pathway 4: Do NOT push for a REGULATED and LICENSED PROFESSION

Controlling entry through *compulsory* completion of accredited courses, certification, credentialing and, perhaps, licensing

Not desirable or feasible because:

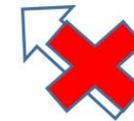
- ▶ Diversity of competencies required to suit different contexts for evaluation
- ▶ Potential negative impacts of
  - excluding competent practitioners for whom evaluation is not their primary identity
  - reducing the variety of backgrounds which enrich practice
- ▶ High investment needed to pursue this

## Pathway 4: Do NOT push for a REGULATED and LICENSED PROFESSION

- ▶ *Not desirable* to establish hurdle requirements for AES membership –want to maintain a rich variety of those conducting, managing, commissioning, and using evaluations
- ▶ *Might consider* hurdle requirements for the AES consultants register
- ▶ *Encourage* the AES to keep in place its current **Complaints Procedure and Disciplinary Action** pertaining to its members

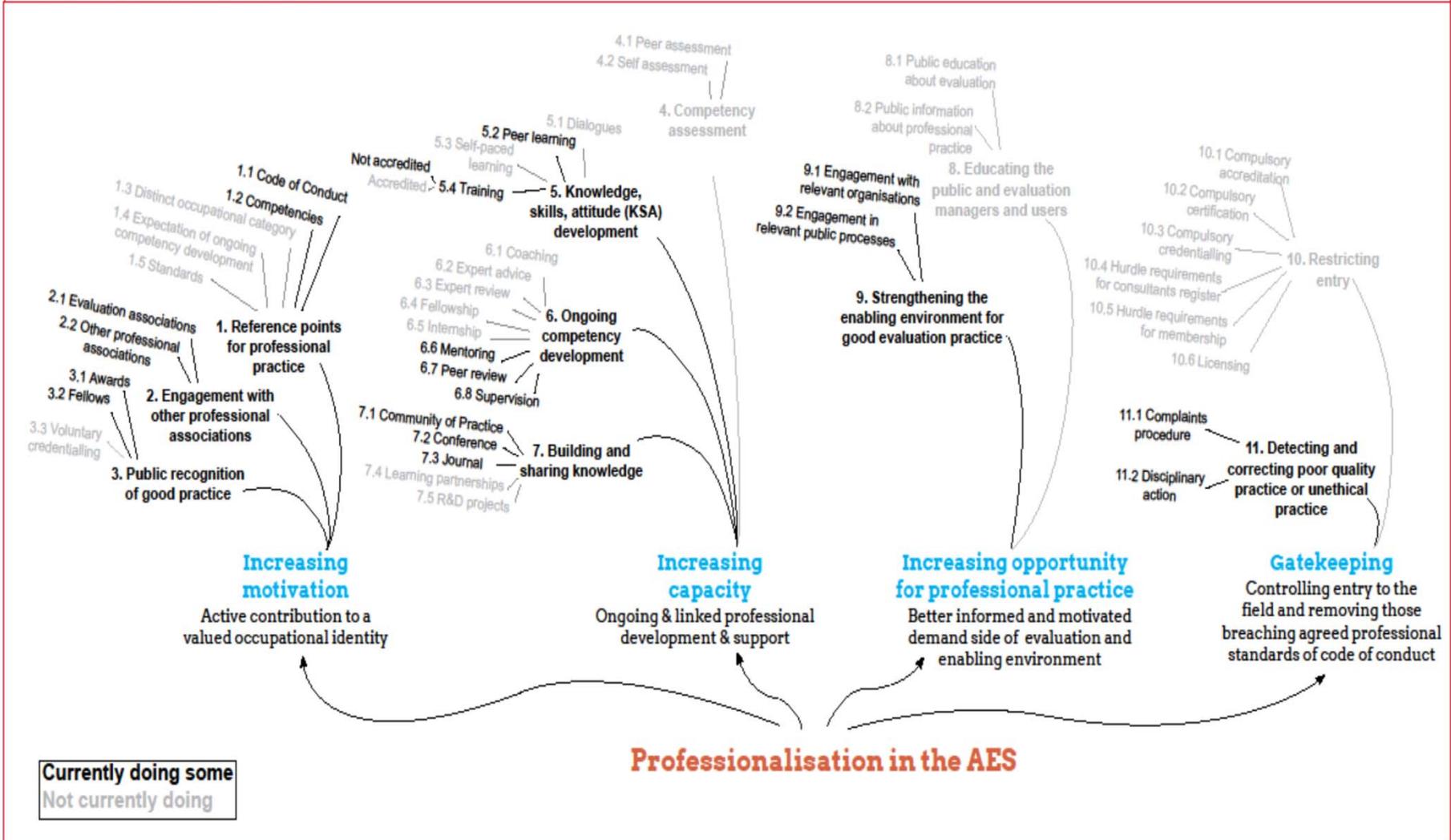
# Recommendations for the AES

## PROFESSIONALISATION



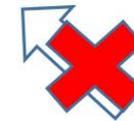
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**Pathway 1: STOP**  
**CONTINUING BUSINESS AS USUAL**



# Recommendations for the AES

## PROFESSIONALISATION

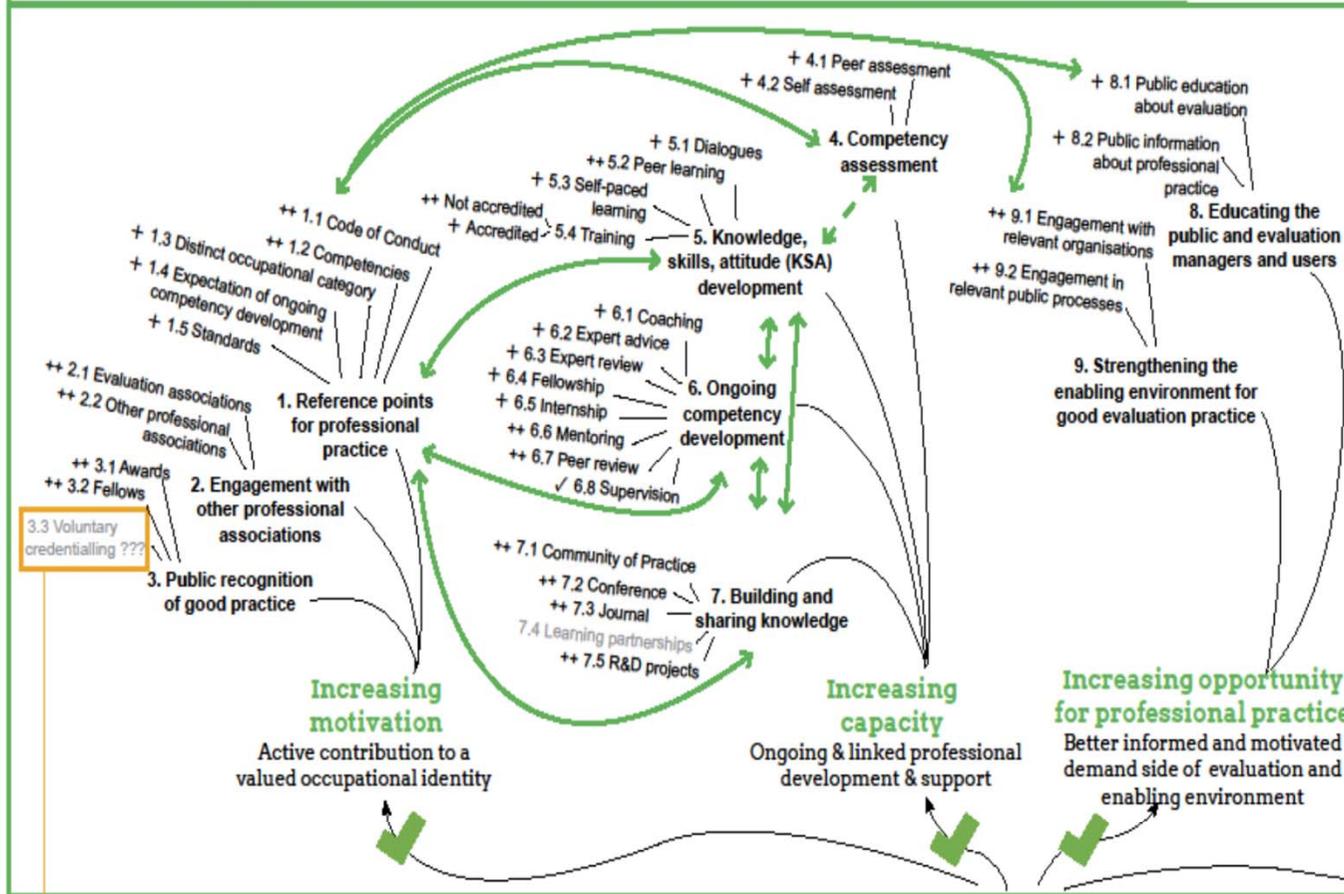


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**Pathway 2: START**

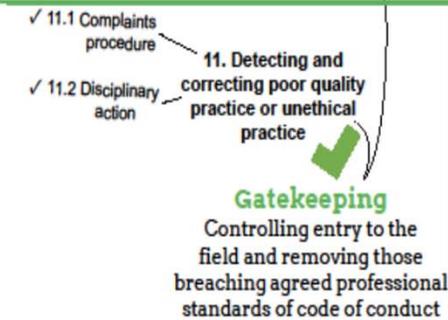
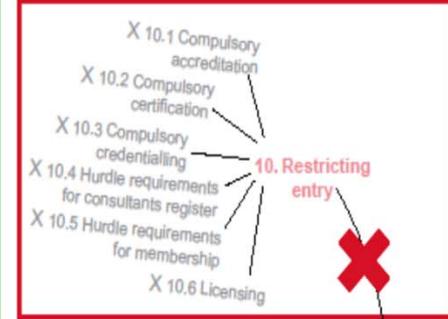
**FOCUSING, CONNECTING AND AUGMENTING CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

Do this now, informed by consultation



- ++ Currently doing some, AUGMENT
- + Not currently doing, START
- ✓ Currently doing some, CONTINUE
- X Not currently doing, DO NOT

**Pathway 4: DO NOT**  
**PUSH FOR A REGULATED AND LICENSED PROFESSION**



**Pathway 3: CONSIDER**  
**DEVELOPING VOLUNTARY CREDENTIALLING PROCESS**  
*Possibly do later, informed by consultation and evidence*

**Professionalisation in the AES**

## Pathway 2 – START focusing, connecting and augmenting current activities

- ▶ Making better use of AES existing and previous efforts through more focus and connection, as well as additional activities
- ▶ Address **capacity and motivation** of evaluators (supply) **AND opportunity** for evaluation (demand and enabling environment)
- ▶ Address **resourcing** (what within existing resources, what needing new resources)
- ▶ **Principles** for engaging in this pathway
  - Pay attention to due process
  - Identify who needs to be involved in specific activities
  - Distinguish between short-term and longer-term activities
  - Address the needs of different types of AES members

## Do in the shorter-term

- ▶ Promote the use of the **Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework and Guidelines on Ethical Conduct of Evaluation and Code of Ethics**
- ▶ Plan, develop and promote connected, ongoing professional development explicitly linked to identified priorities and the **Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework**, going **beyond simply providing training**
- ▶ More systematically support sharing and learning from evaluation practice
- ▶ Become a **more visible and effective advocate** for evaluation and seek to influence evaluation demand and its enabling environment
- ▶ Engage in **strategic partnerships** with other evaluation associations and relevant local professional associations

## Example

### *Public recognition of good practice – Fellows*

- ▶ Use AES Fellows more strategically (e.g., convening conference sessions around identified priority challenges, reviewing journal articles, providing expert advice around recurrent issues, coaching or mentoring) and make them more visible on the website

### *Competency assessment*

- ▶ Develop a self-assessment and/or peer review assessment tool for individuals to take up on a voluntary basis \$

## Do in the longer-term (1)

*For example: engagement with other professional associations*

- ▶ Engage with IOCE and regional evaluation associations to develop ‘standards across borders’ to achieve critical mass for what constitutes good professional practice in evaluation \$
- ▶ Encourage the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Statistics New Zealand (NZS) to add ‘evaluator’ as a distinct occupation to the Australian and New Zealand Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) \$

## Do in the longer-term (2)

*For example: Building & sharing knowledge – R&D*

- ▶ Identify funding sources for research projects on evaluation methods and processes and support members through peer reviewing their funding applications

## Follow Up

- ▶ Report being used by AES Committees / Chapters for activity planning
- ▶ Wider dissemination of the report by AES
- ▶ Paper in AJE
- ▶ ...