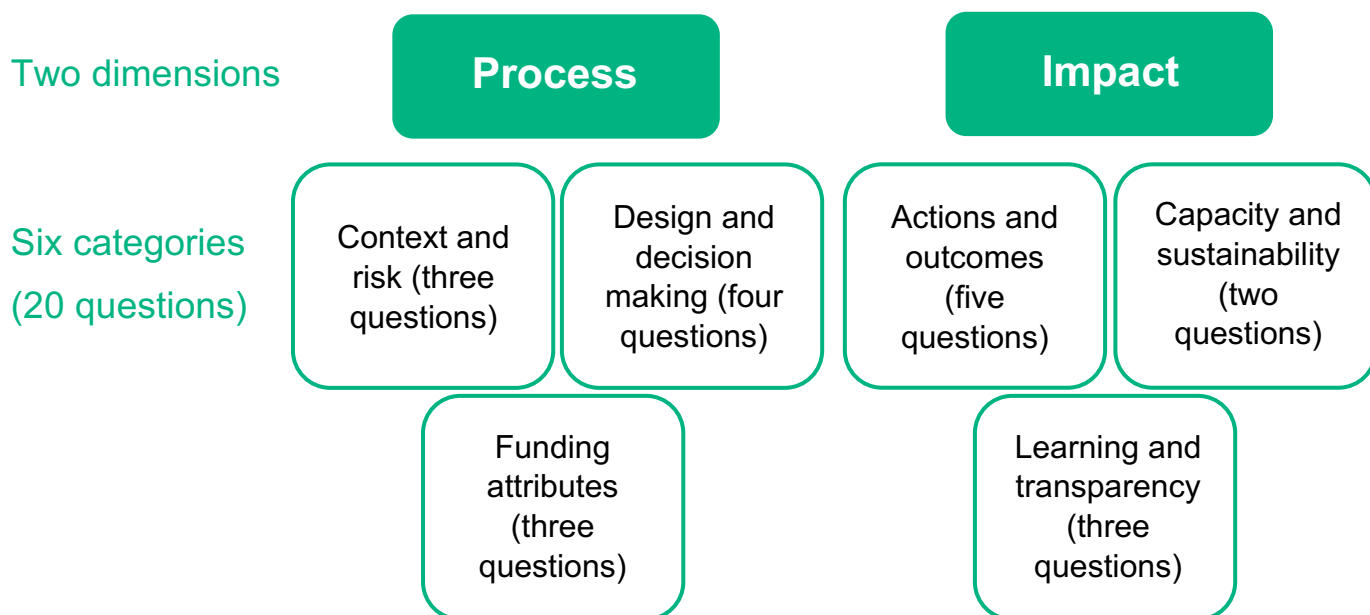


The Locally Led Adaptation Evidence and Impact Framework

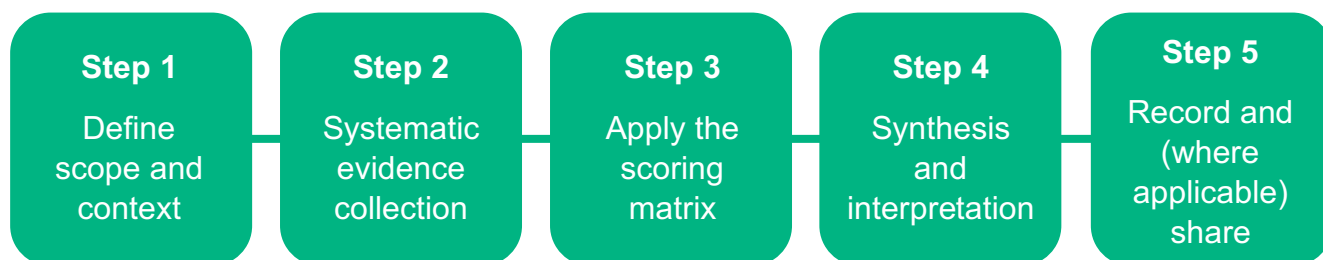


This document is the operational version of the ‘Locally led Adaptation (LLA) Evidence and Impact Framework’. It is a practical tool for documenting, assessing and learning from LLA in a way that is clear, consistent and comparable across contexts. It is not a substitute for project- or programme-level monitoring and evaluation, nor a mechanism for primary data collection; it is a structured means of compiling and weighing the strength of evidence that adaptation is genuinely locally led and impactful.

At a glance



How to use the framework: a five-step process



Interpretation and action guide

	High impact	Low impact
High process	Robust LLA	Strong process LLA
Low process	Top-down impact	No evidence of LLA

The eight principles for locally led adaptation



1. Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level

Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritised, designed and implemented; how progress is monitored; and how success is evaluated.



2. Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, displaced people, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups

Integrating gender-based, economic and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action, and encouraging vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.



3. Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily

Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity and institutions through simpler access modalities, and longer-term and more predictable funding horizons, to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.



4. Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy

Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions, and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.



5. Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty

Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, Indigenous and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.



6. Flexible programming and learning

Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems, and flexible finance and programming.



7. Ensuring transparency and accountability

Making processes of financing, designing and delivering programmes more transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders.



8. Collaborative action and investment

Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds and so on) support one another and their activities avoid duplication, to enhance efficiencies and good practice.

Structure: two dimensions, six categories, twenty questions

The framework organises the eight principles into two complementary dimensions — Process (how adaptation is designed and implemented) and Impact (what changes as a result) — operationalised through six evidence categories and twenty scored questions.

Part 1 (Process) covers Context and risk (3 questions), Design and decision making (4 questions), and Funding attributes (3 questions).

Part 2 (Impact) covers Actions and outcomes (5 questions), Capacity and sustainability (2 questions), and Learning and transparency (3 questions).

The number of questions within a category does not change that category's weight in the Process or Impact average; each category contributes equally to its domain regardless of how many questions feed it. Evidence may take many forms — quantitative data, qualitative accounts and Indigenous, traditional or locally situated knowledge — provided it is credible and verifiable within its context.

How to use the framework: a five-step process

The framework is applied to a single source of evidence about one adaptation intervention, producing one Process average, one Impact average and one classification for that source. In a research or evidence synthesis setting, the source is an existing document: a project evaluation, case study or peer-reviewed paper (as throughout this study). In a practitioner setting the 'source' is the assessor's own project documentation, used for self- or peer-assessment. The five steps below are the same in both settings; only the origin of the documentation differs.

- **Step 1: define scope and context.** Establish the specific adaptation activity, the timeframe being evaluated, and the key stakeholders involved.
- **Step 2: systematic evidence collection.** Use the standardised tables (Part 1 and Part 2) to collect verifiable information, linking every piece of evidence to at least one LLA principle.
- **Step 3: apply the scoring matrix.** Assign a 0–3 score, or mark Not Applicable, to each question based on the strength and verifiability of documentation, scoring Process and Impact separately, and recording a brief justification for each score in the tables at Part 1 and Part 2.
- **Step 4: synthesis and interpretation.** (i) For each category, average its scored questions, excluding any marked Not Applicable. (ii) Calculate the Process average as the mean of the three Process category averages (Categories 1–3), and the Impact average as the mean of the three Impact category averages (Categories 4–6) – each category counts equally regardless of how many questions it holds. (iii) Apply the 1.5 threshold: a domain average of 1.5 or above is 'High', below 1.5 is 'Low'. (iv) Read the Process/Impact combination against the interpretation and action guide to obtain the classification. (v) Apply the Not Applicable gating rules in A.6: if two or more of the three categories in a domain are entirely Not Applicable, record that domain as 'Not Classifiable'; if this holds for both domains, recommend the source for exclusion.
- **Step 5: record, and (where applicable) share.** Record the completed assessment transparently, with the justification for every score, so that it can be reviewed, reused or challenged. Where the framework is used by those implementing or funding the intervention, also apply minimum standards for ethical, non-extractive practice and share findings back with the community in accessible formats to strengthen downward accountability. Where it is used to assess an existing document produced by others – as in a research or evidence synthesis setting – this step covers transparent recording of the assessment and, where possible, publishing it alongside the source; the 'share back' obligation falls on the original intervention, not the reviewer.

Part 1: context, design and funding (process)

Category (principles)	Question	Score (0–3/N/A)	Evidence and justification
1. Context and Risk (P2, P5)	1a. Was local/Indigenous knowledge documented as a primary driver of the risk assessment?		
1. Context and Risk (P2, P5)	1b. Did vulnerability baseline assessments clearly inform design choices?		
1. Context and Risk (P2, P5)	1c. Were structural inequalities and marginalised groups mapped prior to implementation?		
Category 1 average			
2. Design and Decision making (P1, P2)	2a. Did the community have access to, and influence over, decision making processes? (A specific, corroborated instance of a community declining or redirecting a proposal scores as highly as a formally named approval protocol.)		
2. Design and Decision making (P1, P2)	2b. Did local stakeholders, especially marginalised groups, have approval or veto power?		
2. Design and Decision making (P1, P2)	2c. Were local communities represented in core design teams (membership logs, roles)?		
2. Design and Decision making (P1, P2)	2d. Was inclusive public participation documented (town halls, consultations)?		
Category 2 average			
3. Funding attributes (P3)	3a. Did funds reach local entities directly?		
3. Funding attributes (P3)	3b. Was funding aligned with community-defined priorities?		
3. Funding attributes (P3)	3c. If the project was supported by external funding, is there evidence some funding was allocated as overhead or flexible funding to local organisations? (Score Not Applicable if the project has no external/international funding component at all.)		
Category 3 average			
Process average (mean of category 1–3 averages)			

Part 2: actions, capacity and learning (impact)

Category (principles)	Question	Score (0–3/N/A)	Evidence and justification
4. Actions and outcomes (P2, P6)	4a. Were outcomes achieved through leadership by local actors rather than external consultants?		
4. Actions and outcomes (P2, P6)	4b. How robust is the evidence that outcomes were equitably distributed across socioeconomic groups?		

4. Actions and outcomes (P2, P6)	4c. Is there evidence of mechanisms to enable changes during implementation, based on evolving community priorities? (A single well-evidenced instance of a plan changing in response to feedback is sufficient.)
4. Actions and outcomes (P2, P6)	4d. Is there evidence of roles, responsibilities and formal decision making power for marginalised groups within the project?
4. Actions and outcomes (P2, P6)	4e. How clearly does the data demonstrate that final outcomes align with community priorities (including priorities that evolved during the project)?
Category 4 average	
5. Capacity and Sustainability (P4)	5a. Is there evidence that capacity for analysis, planning and maintenance has been transferred to local organisations?
5. Capacity and Sustainability (P4)	5b. Is there evidence of continued operation and functionality of activities beyond the original funding or implementation period?
Category 5 average	
6. Learning and transparency (P6, P7, P8)	6a. Is there evidence of existence and/or implementation of iterative feedback loops resulting in verified changes to plans or budgets? (Either the existence of a mechanism, or evidence it was used once, is sufficient.)
6. Learning and transparency (P6, P7, P8)	6b. Is there evidence of multi-directional learning, up and down the delivery chain?
6. Learning and transparency (P6, P7, P8)	6c. How robust is the documentation of the community's perception of results and finance/budget utilisation?
Category 6 average	
Impact average (mean of category 4–6 averages)	
Overall classification (from interpretation and action guide)	

Scoring scale

Score	Level	Evidence threshold
0	No evidence	No verifiable documentation; claims unsupported by records or traceable sources.
1	Limited	Some indication of LLA principles, but partial or descriptive; without triangulation.
2	Substantive	Clear, documented, verifiable evidence, including in-depth anecdotal testimony.
3	Robust/triangulated	Multiple sources – records, observations, local testimonies – demonstrating consistent practice and clear outcomes.
N/A	Not applicable	The question's underlying mechanism cannot structurally apply to this source – not merely unmentioned, but genuinely inapplicable (see below).

Scoring reflects the strength of evidence, not a value judgement of the intervention. Each score should carry a brief justification referencing specific sources. Process categories (1–3) and Impact categories (4–6) are averaged separately before synthesis, and Not Applicable questions are excluded from their category average entirely, rather than being counted as a zero.

Use Not Applicable when a question's underlying mechanism genuinely cannot apply – for example, a funding-transparency question where a project is entirely self- or locally-funded, or an outcome question where no implementation phase has yet occurred – not merely because the source does not mention it. Score 0 only when the mechanism could have applied and the source had a genuine opportunity to document it, but does not. A simple test: “If this had happened, would the source likely have said so?” If yes, and it says nothing, score 0. If the answer is that the source had no occasion to address this at all, the correct code is N/A.

If two or more of the three categories feeding a domain (Process or Impact) are entirely N/A for a given source, do not compute an average for that domain from the single remaining category. Report that domain as “Not Classifiable” instead. If this is true of both domains simultaneously, the source lacks a basis for scoring altogether; recommend it for exclusion from the working corpus rather than forcing a classification (see interpretation and action guide).

Interpretation and action guide

High = domain average ≥ 1.5

Low = domain average below 1.5

Scenario	Interpretation	Recommended next step
High process/high impact	Robust LLA – the “gold standard”: strong local ownership with verifiable, equitable outcomes.	Scale and influence: use as a case study to shape policy and funding models elsewhere.
High process/low impact	Strong Process LLA – strong local leadership; outcomes not yet materialised (often a time lag).	Patience and monitoring: maintain patient funding (P3) to allow results to emerge.
Low process/high impact	Top-Down Impact – results achieved through external drivers; weak local legitimacy and high post-donor risk.	Transfer ownership: pivot to investing in local capabilities (P4).
Low process/low impact	No Evidence of LLA – neither approach nor outcomes align with LLA principles as documented.	Fundamental redesign: restart the context and risk assessment using local/Indigenous knowledge as the primary driver.
Not classifiable (one domain)	2+ of 3 categories are N/A on one side – insufficient basis to trust a number there, though the other side may still be genuine.	Report the classifiable side only; do not force a number on the Not Classifiable side. Common for research studying a phenomenon rather than an implemented project.
Excluded from corpus	2+ of 3 categories are N/A on BOTH sides simultaneously – no basis for scoring at all.	Recommend removal from the working corpus; list separately in any summary; exclude from the denominator of any classification-percentage calculation.