Executive Summary

Community Development Professionalisation RPL Pilot Project

Proposal 2011

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1. Introduction

The motivation behind this pilot project is to integrate the learning of persons currently working in the field of community development as they have knowledge and/or skills from various fields due to the absence, until recently, of a standalone community development profession with its own qualification frameworks and career path. Integrated learning would provide these individuals who come from various directions/disciplines to move towards a common purpose and/or end result of community development professionalisation. The recently developed community development qualifications frameworks at NQF levels 4, 5, and 8 is intended to serve the purpose of the said single career pathing/mainstreaming in community development. It is for this reason that a community development RPL model needs to be developed inductively and assessed (i.e. community development RPL pilot project) in order to not only achieve integrated learning in the field of community development but also improve and standardize the knowledge, skills and attributes of persons in this sector.

2. Background

The strategic importance of integrated learning towards professionalisation of community development is grounded in the International Sustainable Community Development (ISCD) focus and the South African Intergovernmental Relations and Service Delivery framework. The South African Presidency's Intergovernmental Relations and Service Delivery (IRSD), aims to transform the South African state and government. The object of intergovernmental relations is to establish a system in which all spheres of government plan together to provide a coherent approach to service delivery and community development. This should be achieved by means of Integrated Development Planning (IDP). The cornerstone of integrated planning is the participation in municipal IDPs by national and provincial sector departments (public sector) and private sector to ensure: a) implementation of national policy and legislation; b) enabling integrated service delivery to the community between public and private sectors; and c) promotion of sustainable development (IRSD Report, 1999).

Community development is of strategic importance due to its relevancy to every government department through the programmes of the South African government such as: a) the War-on-Poverty; b) Local Economic Development (LED) Programme; c) the Extended Pubic Works (EPWP) Programme; d) the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development (ISRD) Programme, etc. These policies and programmes clearly articulates at least four community development perspectives which have been adopted by the democratic government of South Africa in its effort to improve the lives of its citizens, which are the income, basic needs, social exclusion and the sustainable livelihoods perspectives. The development perspectives are: a) income; b) basic needs; c) social exclusion and d) sustainable livelihoods. The challenge for South Africa has been the capacity to consolidate these perspectives into a comprehensive community development approach that is inclusive, integrated and coherent (Luka, 2011).

The above-mentioned political- and socio-economic factors all indicate the need for a sustainable and integrative community development intervention strategy. It is this integrative community development intervention strategy that acts as the foundation and focus for the newly developed SAQA frameworks at NQF Levels 4, 5 & 8 in Community Development, as it enhances and promotes holistic community well-being. The said

qualification frameworks development process has ensured: a) consistency and uniformity in the implementation of unit standards; b) linkage of community development professional needs to specialised qualifications; c) compliance of community development qualifications with relevant legislation and regulations; and ultimately d) commencement of the process towards professionalisation of community development (Luka, 2011).

The wide interest in community development within intergovernmental- and multi-sector private stakeholders emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary trained (i.e. integrated learning) individual who can facilitate sustainable integrative community development. Integrated learning ensures the finding of integrated solutions for the complex environmental- and social-economic needs that can not be addressed by any single discipline. This will be possible with the said new qualification frameworks in community development with exit level outcomes (ELO's) geared towards critical cross-field outcomes (CCFO's) (attributes) which inculcate respect for intercultural, trans-disciplinary and sustainable approaches to sustainable, integrated and holistic well-being of communities, families and individuals.

Community development and national integration is fundamental to human survival. This integration also involves integration of learning from various disciplines but also qualification levels – thus necessitating RPL towards a single career path in community development. Suitably qualified professionals working in the field of community development with the relevant psychosocial and structural knowledge, skills and attributes are an essential component in the holistic and integrative empowerment of communities towards overall and sustainable well-being.

3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Conceptualisation

Recognition of prior learning can be obtained in an informal and formal manner which could be at the workplace, family, community and/or personal reading. Thus, the recognition of prior learning (RPL) could have the following purposes:

i. *Access*: the evaluation of candidates to assess whether they meet the necessary entry requirements;
ii. *Social justice*: RPL is then applied in terms of equity;
iii. *Pedagogy* (rather androgogy – dealing with adults): this involves a 'teaching' element; and
iv. *Credit accumulation*: RPL in order for candidates to achieve the required credits for placement within a specific qualification.

The RPL process consists of the following seven overall steps:

i. Pres-screening of candidates which takes on the form of a discussion to explore the reasons why the candidate wants to go through RPL followed by the identification of the knowledge this candidate has acquired. The above are then linked with an appropriate qualification or unit standard (part qualification) in order to identify the career path opportunities for the candidate.
ii. Based on the above first step; a discussion follows with regard to the portfolio development process by the candidate – i.e. linking experience or own practice with theory. The portfolio development process involves supporting the candidate which can take on the form of counselling, supervision and/or institutional support of which

the latter could be a challenge regarding the after-hours support that might be required by this adult learner/candidate.

iii. The above steps are followed by the provision of the exit level outcomes (ELO's) of the relevant qualification in preparation towards the development of the portfolio of evidence (POE).

iv. Development of the POE by the candidate and the submission thereof for assessment.

v. Assessment of the POE as well as indicating if there is still matters to be addressed for further competencies.

vi. Certification (in the case of a full qualification) or else the candidate achieves the necessary credits in order to enter into a qualification for study.

Mentioning was made above with regard to credit accumulation towards a qualification; i.e. Transfer of Credits. Transfer of credits is a process where the number of credits accumulated by a candidate from different qualifications is assessed for similarity in order to acknowledge the applicable ones towards another required/prospective qualification. It is envisaged that the Transfer of Credits will form an important part of the RPL process for this community development. This process will be conducted with the application of a qualification matrix in order to see which qualifications are mostly aligned with the new community development qualifications.

4. Problem Statement

The absence in the past of a standardised and professional career path in community development has resulted in the lack of standardised and quality assured knowledge, skills and attributes amongst persons working in the field of community development. This is evidential, especially amongst public sector officials; as indicated in several skills audits which were conducted within several public sector departments. These audits also indicated the lack of standardisation regarding position titles and salary grading within, as well as, between public sector departments – all of which are results from the lack of, until recently, a single standardised community development qualification and career path linked with a community development policy framework for South Africa.

The recent developed community development qualifications frameworks now provide the framework for a standardised and professional career path in community development; however, it resulted in the vast need for career path mainstreaming (integrated learning) of persons currently working in the field of community development but coming from various sectors and functioning at different levels.

Addressing this need would require a generic scientific RPL model for community development to validate and measure the impact of career path standardisation and professionalisation.

5. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a reliable and valid generic RPL model for community development which could assist FET's and HEI's, public- & private sector, NGO's and policy makers with standardisation and professionalisation of a community development career path – one that would ensure quality, effectiveness and efficiency and thereby linking

and aligning itself with the concepts of quality assurance, accountability and policy changes of the relevant stakeholders.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Setting/Location

The research setting for the study will be within all nine provinces with persons working in community development from private and NGO sector as well as officials at different post levels of several public sector departments of South Africa in order to assess the RPL model comparability between post levels (relating to different NQF levels) public sector departments in provinces as well as HEI's and FET's in the different provinces.

6.2 Target Group and Sample

The target group for this RPL pilot project will need to be sampled from various sectors; e.g. public sector as well as the NGO and private sector, as all of them currently employ persons in the field of community development. The participation of various stakeholders is therefore imperative for the validity and reliability of the data collection for the RPL pilot project. Stakeholders may take on several functions such as being a: stakeholders (e.g. policy maker), role-player (e.g. FET, HEI or employer) and/or a funder towards the implementation of this pilot project. Key stakeholders, to name but a few, which are required for this pilot project is: SAQA, DSD, DPSA, PALAMA, DLG, DPW, HWSETA, ETDPSETA, LGSETA, PSETA, FET's and HEI's. These stakeholders need to be spread across the nine provinces in South Africa.

Stratified/purposeful sampling technique will be applied for the study and selection criteria which clearly indicate the characteristic and key factors of the candidates (unit of analysis) for the RPL process will be drafted beforehand. It is envisaged that a sample size of a minimum of 1800 candidates are required for this study. The stratified sample of 1800 candidates will be sampled as a minimum of 200 candidates per province consisting of a minimum of 50 candidates amongst four participating public sector departments. The sample candidates will be selected from each of the qualification levels by means of the said staggered project implementation process. For example ensure candidates with:

- No formal qualification (thus RPL be based on years of experience);
- NQF level 4 qualification from a qualification in another relevant field;
- NQF level 5 qualification from a qualification in another relevant field;
- NQF level 8 qualification from a qualification in another relevant field;

The selection for the above will be done by means of a diagnostic tool.

The RPL process of candidates will involve a 'field based' process due to the nature of the community development profession. This process necessitates the selection, appointment and training of mentors, supervisors and managers in order to support the candidates during their RPL field/worked based process.

The research methodology to be applied in this project is programme evaluation – specifically Process Evaluation Design in order to evaluate the inductive RPL Model for community development. This evaluation study for which funding is requested would be the first of three evaluation designs that would be applied to the RPL pilot project process.

6.3 Evaluation Objective and sub-objectives of the study

The objectives for this formative implementation evaluation study are aligned and will aim to reflect inductively on the process of community development professionalisation by means of a single career path and with special attention to the quality, standards, effectiveness and efficiency of a generic community development RPL model.

6.3.1 Main evaluation objective

The main evaluation objective of the study is to determine whether the Community Development RPL pilot project can in fact provide an integrated learning RPL model towards achieving formal qualifications in the new professional community development career path.

6.3.2 Evaluation sub-objectives and related research questions.

The sub-objectives that followed from the main objective of the study were:

1) To assess the need and feasibility for the Community Development RPL project
2) To evaluate the Community Development RPL project planning and design.
3) To evaluate the implementation of the Community Development RPL project
4) To provide conclusions and/or recommendations for adjustment and/or improvement of the Community Development RPL project.

Sub-objective 1: *Assess the need for and feasibility of the Community Development RPL project*

1) What are the needs of the target group?
2) What attempts have been made before to implement programs to meet these needs?
3) What were the major implementation obstacles faced by existing and/or similar projects?
4) What do similar implemented projects tell us about the best practices in the field of RPL?
5) What resources are needed to implement an effective RPL programme?
6) What challenges and limitations contribute to the implementation of a RPL programme?

Sub-objective 2: *Evaluate the Community Development RPL project planning and design.*

1) How is the programme theory of the project designed to provide an integrated learning RPL model towards achieving formal qualifications in the new professional community development career path?
2) What action model (components and activities – programme operations) are needed for the success of the Community Development RPL project?
3) Does the action model of the project support the change model of the Community Development RPL project?
4) How will the monitoring and/or making of any necessary changes of the RPL project implementation be done?

Sub-objective 3: *Evaluate the implementation of the Community Development RPL project*

1) Is the Community Development RPL project serving the right target group?
2) What is the opinion of the participants about the Community Development RPL project?

3) Are potential participants rejecting the programme or dropping out? Why?
4) Is the Community Development RPL project producing the expected outputs?
5) Is the RPL project meeting its standards of quality?
6) Is the Community Development RPL project producing its intended short-term outcomes?
7) What implementation obstacles are being encountered?
8) What differences are there between sites?

Sub-objective 4: Provide conclusions and/or recommendations for improvement of the Community Development RPL project

1) Is the Community Development RPL project meeting its implementation goals and targets?
2) Are the participants receiving the outcomes they expected?
3) Is the RPL project producing any unintended positive or negative results?
4) Are significant internal or external events affecting the project, its staff, or its clients?
5) What are the project's strengths and weaknesses?
6) What are the differences in strengths and weaknesses between sites? Why?
7) What are the areas that require improvement?
8) Are the efforts to improve the programme working?

The Community Development RPL clarificatory evaluation will be conducted in a participatory manner. A logic model is developed for each of the different stages in the Community Development RPL project, as the project is an emergent intervention. Emergent interventions require a series of logic models that indicate specific activities and causal paths expected to evolve during implementation of each emerging phase of the intervention (Rogers, 2008:39-40).

7. Operationalisation

In order to evaluate the implementation of the Community Development RPL project, the initial need for the project has to be assessed. The assessment of need for the Community Development RPL project relates to the first sub-objective of the study. For this purpose the various skills audits and accredited qualification at the different NQF levels relating to community development will be assessed. From the literature assessment a comparison matrix will be developed that could define, describe and score the different qualifications relevant to the different post levels of the respective participants in the pilot project. The second part of the literature review for this sub-objective will be to determine the challenges and limitations that contribute to RPL projects similar to this one. For this purpose a review will be done on existing research reports regarding integrated learning RPL case studies. Another very important part of the clarificatory evaluation study is that of Stakeholder identification, involvement and role clarification. This is important due to the multi-disciplinary status of the career path in community development.

The results from the first sub-objective will tie in with the assessment of the second sub-objective, which deals with the planning and design of the Community Development RPL project. Four evaluation questions will be asked as indicated earlier. In order to answer these four questions, the evaluators will conduct a series of meetings, focus interviews, observations and workshops with the participants and role-players involved in the project.

This will be done in order to conceptualise and write up the Community Development RPL project, so that explicit final theory-of-change logic models could be developed for the implementation evaluation of the project. These first two sub-objectives complete the clarificatory evaluation of the Community Development RPL pilot project study. The logic models that are the end result of the clarificatory evaluation will be used to address the third sub-objective for the study, which relates to the implementation evaluation of the study. For the purpose of this proposal a set of two implicit logic models have been developed (*see Annexure 2 & 3*) and will form the basis from which to finalize the explicit final theory-of-change logic models when the clarificatory evaluation are being conducted during step one of this RPL pilot research study.

The data for the RPL pilot study will be collected over a period of three years (excluding the completion of NQF level 8), but based on a staggered and phased process which would mean that ones once the results of phase one (RPL NQF Level 4) are available then national full-scale implementation can take place, resulting in the first phase full-scale implementation being possible within twenty (20) months after the start of phase one. The collection method for addressing objective one and part of two will be that of semi-structured interviews with the relevant policy makers, stakeholders and programme staff in order to find out the reason and motivation behind the conceptualisation of the programme.

The second form of data collection method will be that of reviewing literature and documents relevant to the programme, its purpose and strategic importance in order to gain insight from existing literature as to the strengths, limitations and challenges phased by similar programmes. The third form of data collection will be focus group workshops that will first serve the purpose of feedback with regard to the first part of data collection and secondly to validate the findings before the compilation of the programme theory (logic & theory of change models for the programme). The data collection method for the remaining objectives will be that of semi-structured interviews and self developed questionnaires with the participants of the programme, respectively and will be operationalized; using survey design methodology. Data analysis will be done on both qualitative and quantitative data – for which descriptive and inferential statistics will be analysed. Descriptive statistics will be employed to express terms of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics will apply cross tabulations and chi square and results will be accepted significant at a 5% level.

8. Indicative Budget Breakdown of RPL Cost:

Year 1

Item	Cost	Total
Application	220 X 600	132 00
Assessment for credits (FETC)	330 per subject/unit standard @ 23 X 400	3 036 000
Assessment of credits (Certificate (Level 5))	330 per subject/unit standard @ 23 X 200	1 518 000
Administrative costs:	Air fare @ 3000 x 8 x 12	2 880 000
	Accommodation @ 900 x 8 x 12	86 400
	Transport@ 300 x 8 x 12	28 800
Total		**7 681 200**

Year 2

Item	Cost	Total
Application	220 X 600	132 00
Assessment for credits (FETC)	330 per subject/unit standard @ 23 X 400	3 036 000
Assessment of credits (Certificate (Level 5))	330 per subject/unit standard @ 23 X 200	1 518 000
Administrative costs:	Air fare @ 3000 x 8 x 12	2 880 000
	Accommodation @ 900 x 8 x 12	86 400
	Transport@ 300 x 8 x 12	28 800
Total		**7 681 200**
+ 10% escalation from 2011		**8 449 320**

Year 3

Item	Cost	Total
Application	220 X 600	132 00
Assessment of credits (professional degree)	330 per subject/unit standard @ 36 X 600	7 128 000
Administrative costs:	Air fare @ 3000 x 8 x 12	2 880 000
	Accommodation @ 900 x 8 x 12	86 400
	Transport@ 300 x 8 x 12	28 800
Total		**10 229 200**
+ 15% escalation from 2011		**11 763 580**

Total Project Cost (over 3 years): **R27 894 100**

9. Conclusion:

In conclusion; the implementation evaluation of the study will use the logic models to first assess whether the programme theory relates to the integrated learning RPL needs of persons working in the community development environment. The logic models provide the objectives for the Community Development RPL project. The objectives of the project will be used to develop a data matrix which will inform the aspects for evaluation of each objective. The aspects for evaluation will be assessed from data gathered by means of content analysis on the relevant policies, skills audits and accredited curriculum content – to name but a few, structured face-to-face interviews with a tailor-made questionnaire and site observations of programme delivery. The final act of the evaluation is to arrive at conclusions and judgements regarding the aspects for evaluation in order to provide formative findings for the Community Development RPL pilot project, prior to comprehensive implementation. These formative findings will relate to the fourth and last sub-objective of the study, which relates to the client/stakeholder feedback on the Community Development RPL pilot project.

A detailed research implementation plan (inclusive of Gantt charts linked with budget items) will be developed upon receipt of a letter of intent for the funding of this RPL community development pilot project. Annexure 1 indicates the sections that will be addressed in the said implementation plan.

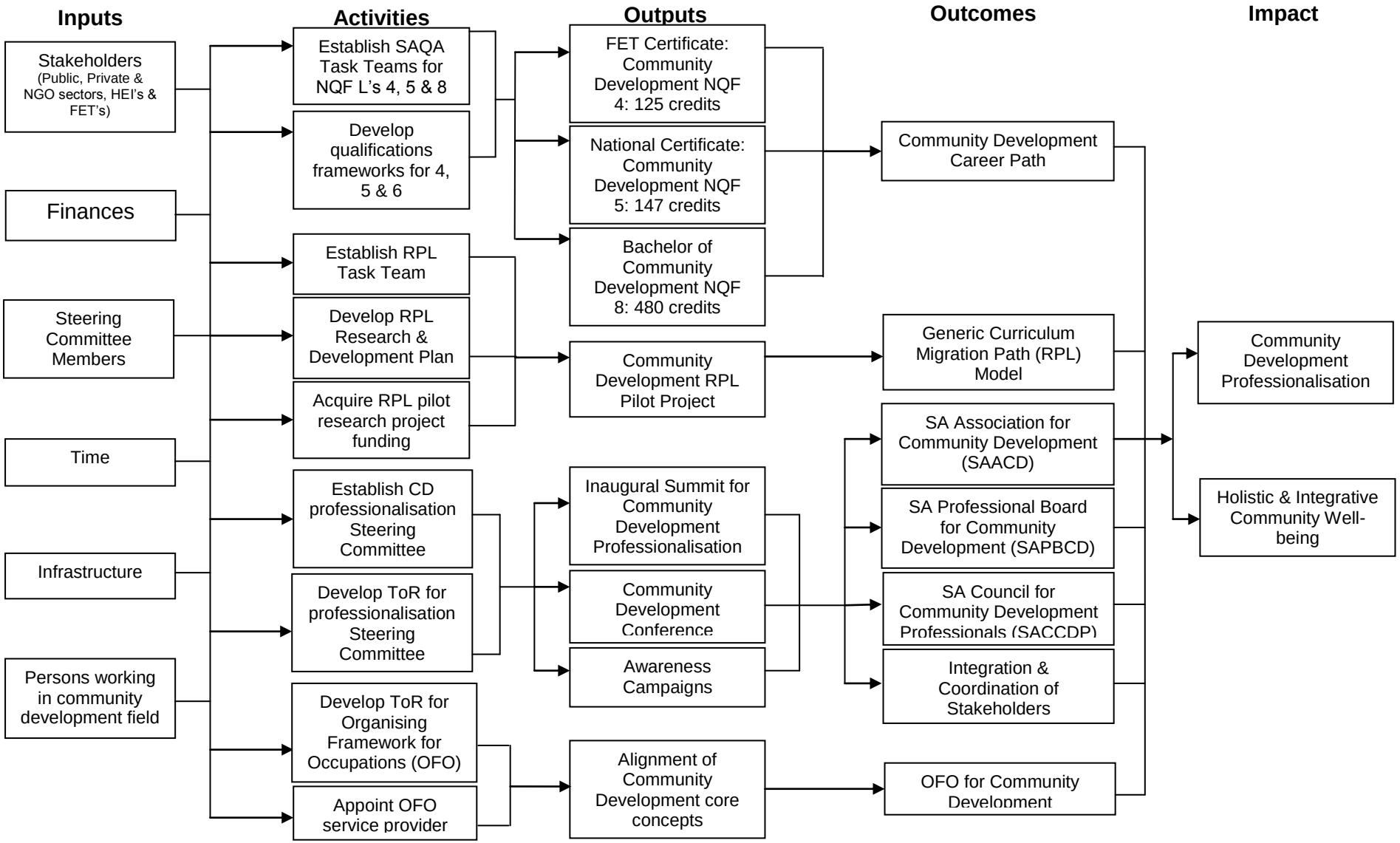
Annexure 1

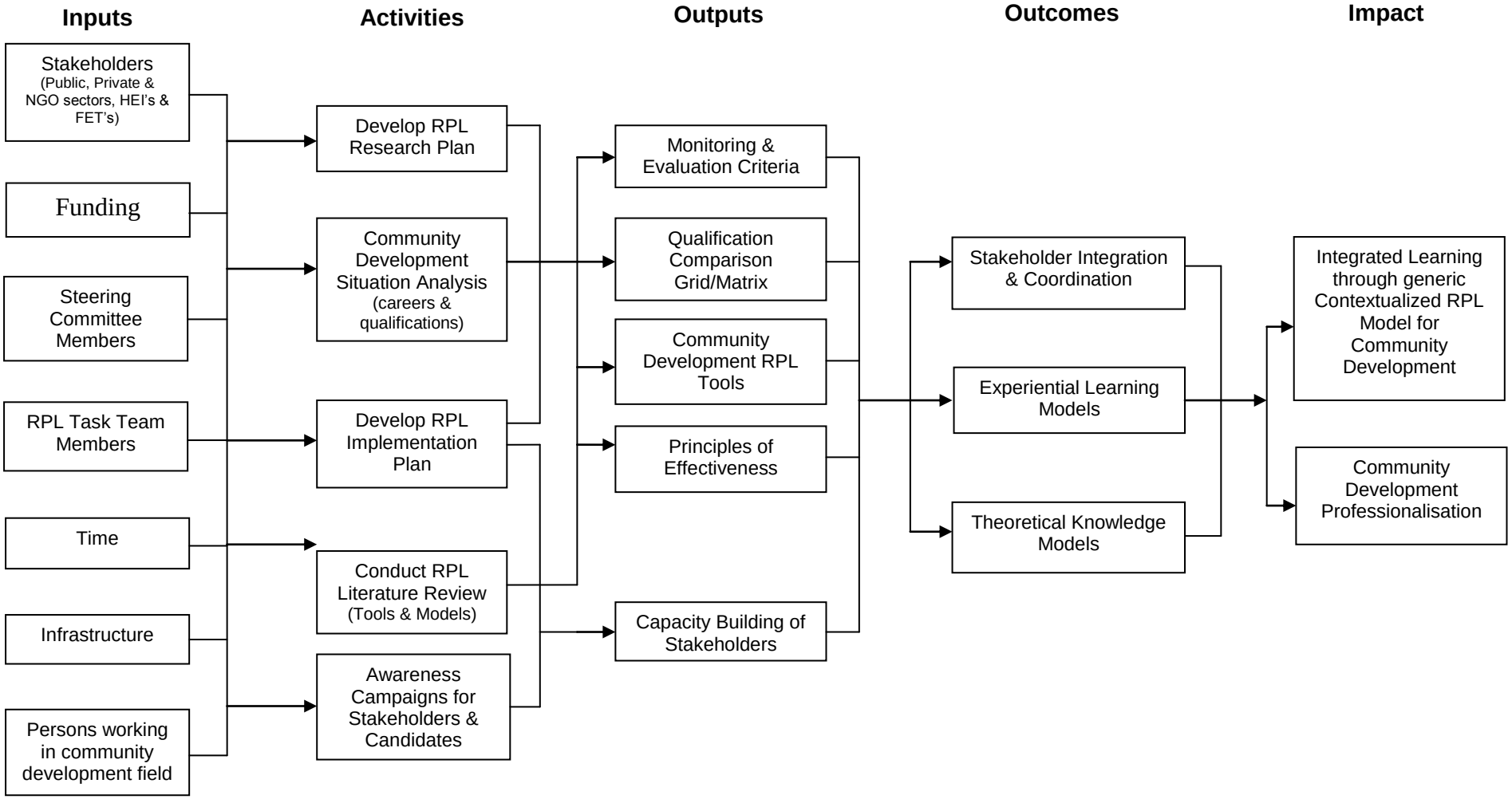
The PCM Basic Format

1. Summary
2. Background
2.1. Government/sectoral policy - Donor policy: coherence/complementarity
2.2. Democracy - Human Rights - Good governance
2.3. Features of sector
2.4. Beneficiaries and other stakeholders
2.5. Problems and opportunities to be addressed (Relevance)
2.6. Other interventions, cooperation with other donors
2.7. Documents available, i.e. evaluations
2.8. Project/program history, including past, present and future application of PCM
3. Intervention (intended and unintended results)
3.1. Overall objectives (Impact)
3.2. Outcome: Project/program purpose (Effectiveness)
3.3. Outputs (Efficiency)
3.4. Inputs and activities (Economy)
4. Assumptions
4.1. Assumptions at different intervention levels
4.2. Risks and flexibility
5. Implementation
5.1. Physical and non physical means
5.2. Organization - procedures - transparency
5.3. Timetable
5.4. Cost estimate and financing plan
5.5. Special conditions: accompanying measures taken by Government
6. Quality Factors ensuring Sustainability
6.1. Policy support
6.2. Appropriate technology
6.3. Environmental protection
6.4. Socio-cultural aspects: - Gender issues -
6.5. participation - empowerment - ownership
6.6. Institutional and management capacity, public and private; decentralization of responsibilities:
subsidiarity
7. Economic and financial viability
8. Monitoring and evaluation
8.1. Monitoring plan and indicators
8.2. Reviews / evaluations
9. Conclusions and proposals
(Including overall sustainability assessment)

Annexure 2

Strategic Level Theory-of-Change Logic Model for Community Development Professionalisation



Annexure 3

Theory-of-Change RPL Logic Model