8. Outcome?

One advantage of the structured approach resulting from the five-question framework is that it also provides a systematic process for evaluation, relevant to question five: '*What is the result of the synthesis of disciplinary and stakeholder knowledge?*' Questions relevant for evaluation are presented in Box 8.1.

Box 8.1 Questions for Evaluating Synthesis of Disciplinary and Stakeholder Knowledge

How well did the synthesis meet its aims and include the beneficiaries (relevant disciplinary experts and stakeholders)?

Was the systems view taken suitable? Would a different systems view have been more useful?

Was the full range of pertinent systems views and applicable disciplines and stakeholders recognised and assessed?

Within the necessary limitations of the research, were the most worthwhile disciplines and stakeholders included? Was the balance between different disciplines and stakeholders fitting? Did any of those excluded turn out to be critical?

Was the problem framed accurately?

Were values considered adequately?

Were the differences in the team relevant to developing a rich appreciation of the problem harnessed effectively? Were potentially destructive differences well managed?

Were sufficient flexibility and iteration built into the processes of deciding on a systems view, scoping, boundary setting, framing, considering values, and harnessing and managing differences?

Were applicable synthesis methods used? Would other methods have made better contributions? Were justifiable decisions made in choosing by whom and when the synthesis was undertaken?

Was the overall context for the knowledge synthesis adequately considered? Were critical contextual factors missed?

Was the authorisation for the knowledge synthesis apposite? Did it influence the knowledge synthesis in significant ways?

Did the host organisational structure or culture provide barriers to the knowledge synthesis? If so, were these effectually recognised and managed? Were facilitators beneficially mobilised?

Knowing what to evaluate is one thing, figuring out how to undertake the evaluation is another. In traditional disciplines, the research is assessed by others from that discipline through peer review.[1] Developing I2S as a discipline also makes peer review feasible for knowledge synthesis specifically, and for integrative applied research more generally. Those who have been involved in the knowledge synthesis aspects of projects are in the best position to act as reviewers and I2S provides elements for reviewers to assess, as outlined in the questions above.

In order for a peer-review process to be effective, the research has to be recorded so that all the critical aspects are highlighted. The five-question framework aims to provide an appropriate structure for such documentation.

Task for the I2S Development Drive
Gather and analyse case examples of evaluation both to improve the list of assessment questions and to develop more detailed guidelines for reviewers.

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1 Although peer review has its limitations, it is still more efficient and flexible than the alternatives. The main point here is that I2S and integrative applied research should be evaluated in the same way as other disciplinary research.