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"Grounding: Make It Real, Make It Count" –
Applying the OECD DAC "6C Framework©" for business coaching

Introduction – *"Why should I read this?"*

These are times of **change and turbulence**, and companies around the world – regardless of size or sector -– are under increased pressure. This is not least the case in financial terms, as global markets fluctuate and crisis is looming.

Businesses everywhere need to ensure that they can **navigate and adapt** to stay successful. This requires strategic reflection and (re-assessment) by **senior management** of basic internal and contextual assumptions, and a willingness to act on these when required.

We can help you to address these needs!

Lindholt Consult has adapted and utilises an already existing globally recognized and universally applied assessment framework from the international development sector – the **Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)**'s **six Evaluation Criteria.**[i]

Adapting these into our so-called **"6C Framework©"**, they form the foundation for a forward-looking facilitated strategic reflection and coaching approach, which Lindholt Consult is now applying in a groundbreaking manner for businesses, organisations, teams and individuals, with immediate positive outcomes already evident.

The intention of this concept paper is therefore to introduce a unique, innovative and focused approach to effectively **assist businesses of any type in optimizing their performance,** internally as well as in the contexts in which they operate.

A key strength of this framework is that it focuses on a holistic approach to operational and company quality assurance, as it **addresses both strategic, and operational dimensions**. It enables an effective and comprehensive, systematic assessment, reflection and adjustment process, which focuses directly on your business organisation, and enables effective follow-up.

Investing in this facilitated process as described below, will enable your company to better stay agile in fast-changing markets; strengthen stakeholder confidence (investors, customers, employees); and e.g., design **and implement projects and initiatives that deliver not just short-term wins but ensuring competitive advantage**.

Once the process described below has been completed, the framework can form the basis for ongoing monitoring and adjustment at both the organisational and programme/project level and thus ensure sustainability and long-term value for your company.

2) Background – "*What are The Six Evaluation Criteria and where do they come from?*"

During the 1990s, global funding for development activities increased at multi- and bilateral levels under a broad scope of modalities. The purpose of this funding and the projects and programmes was to improve the living standard – including in diverse areas such as rural infrastructure, health, water and sanitation, governance, and gender equality – of people in the global South. However, with "aid fatigue" and domestic fiscal pressures in the donor countries increasing, this also fuelled an increasing need to standardize aid assessment and improve the quantity, quality, and developmental effectiveness of international development assistance.

In response, the OECD DAC in 1991 adopted the first evaluation criteria framework. The aim was to ensure that development projects and programmes are aligned with actual needs, produce intended outcomes, maximize cost-effectiveness, and generate long-term, sustainable benefits.

The five original 1991 criteria were **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact** and **Sustainability**. In 2019 - as a result of a general assessment of the Criteria in view of their use, and to ensure alignment with the increased demand for coordination within the global development sector – a sixth criterion, **Coherence**, was added. Lastly, to ensure further clarity on their uniform interpretations, definitions for all of them were developed in 2002.[ii]

The criteria address six complementary aspects, designed to comprehensively enable the systematic evaluation of stand-alone interventions, i.e., programmes and projects, through basic questions addressing each of these:

- **Relevance** *("Is the intervention doing the right things"?)*
- **Coherence** *("How well does the intervention fit?")*
- **Effectiveness** *("Is the intervention achieving its objectives?")*
- **Efficiency** *("How well are resources being used"?)*
- **Impact** *("What difference does the intervention make?");* and
- **Sustainability** ("*Will the benefits last?")*

As stated by DAC:

"*The criteria should be viewed **as a set of lenses through which one can understand and analyse any intervention**. They provide **complementary** perspectives, giving a holistic picture of the intervention, its implementation, and its results*.

*Together, they **describe the desired attributes of all development interventions**—policies, programs, and projects—that should be relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions, achieve results efficiently, and have positive, lasting impacts for sustainable development*."[iii]

This reflects the original intent behind their creation: not only to develop a systematic framework **but also to ensure it remains broad, foundational and adaptable enough to be applied to any development program or project, regardless of funding modality, scale, or thematic focus.**

From the outset, it was also made clear that the criteria should be applied in accordance with two overriding Principles: 1) The criteria should be **applied thoughtfully** to support high-quality, useful evaluation; and 2): Use of the criteria **depends on the purpose of the evaluation**.[iv] These caveats aim to ensure that the framework avoids becoming rigid or static, rather than dynamic and adaptable to the context in which it is to be applied. A significant part of the success and viability of the framework can be traced back to the successful implementation of these principles in mid-term and final project assessments, and it is also on this basis that the application of the framework beyond the development context becomes viable.

There are no consolidated figures for the **number of times** the framework has been applied for evaluation purposes, indicatively, the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC) has compiled a record of more than 4,000 reports in their database since 1991 until today.[v] The actual figure may likely be significantly higher, considering the vast number of international bi- and multilateral donors and agencies applying the criteria for the evaluation of their extensive portfolio of engagements.

The 6C Framework in this way represents a **solid, theoretically based, robust and comprehensively field-tested platform for quality assurance** of interventions of any type and scale.

3) Application – *"What can coaching from the 6C Framework© do for companies?"*

3.1 *"Looking forwards, not just backwards"*

As the global development sector has experienced a massive **disruption** since the beginning of 2025, when the US significantly scaled back their substantial financial contributions worldwide, the appreciation of the value of evaluation practices that are merely "**hindsight-oriented**" also began to lessen. As each external review or evaluation represents an investment of resources (financial as well as internal agency staff time etc.), the need to make them worthwhile is increasingly discussed among global stakeholders. This has therefore given validation to the shift of also using the Criteria in **a forward-looking strategic manner**.

Using the 6C Framework© in this manner, is a logical fit and could, as an example, mean that:

- **Relevance** becomes a question of strategic planning review and consolidation within a changing context to ensure the ability to meet requirements and demands (-> *purpose, applicability* and *alignment)*.
- **Coherence** is then a matter of "fitting into the future landscape" by ensuring both internal alignments, e.g. between different teams' plans; as well as mapping out potential synergies with other organisations' upcoming initiatives to form a stronger collaborative ecosystem rather than competing (-> *integration* and *consistency*).
- **Effectiveness** aims towards ensuring future objectives, mainly by identifying and mitigating risks that could prevent the achievement of goals, and setting realistic, adaptive targets, including robust Key Performance/Success

Indicators[vi], and developing adaptive management frameworks that allow for changing strategies, e.g., adaptive programming if intermediate results are not pointing toward the desired long-term outcome (-> *progress* and *results*).

- **Efficiency** involves addressing the need to optimize future resources, both in terms of adapting to shifting conditions as per the previous criteria, and within a possible context of changes in the availability of these, both in terms of financial and human capacity, "*doing more with less*", including effective risk management (-> *energy* and *resources*).
- **Impact** involves thinking beyond immediate results to the broader, long-term consequences of the strategy as adapted (-> *added value* and *ripple effects*).
- **Sustainability** relates to ensuring lasting benefits, focusing on the long-term viability of the benefits, capacity building, and ownership by local stakeholders (-> *durability* and *resilience*).

3.2 "*Applying the 6C Framework© to the context of the business sector*"

For coaching and process facilitation purposes, whether in organisational or personal development, business projects and leadership, the 6C Framework© can be reframed into **a simple, human-centred approach**. This makes it accessible to any staff member regardless of their position within an agency or business, regardless of technical background. Instead of abstract evaluation terms, the six criteria translate into guiding review, process and questions for growth, alignment, and impact.

Using the 6C Framework© is like holding up a six-sided mirror: each side reflects a different dimension of thriving and growth. Together, they help businesses, organisations, teams and individuals themselves clearly, act with purpose, and celebrate achievements with confidence.

In this manner **the 6C Framework translates powerfully into the commercial sector**. It provides a suitable and empowering framework both for general strategic guidance and continuous optimization of ongoing business operations, as well as design, mid-term and final evaluations of time-bound projects.

Businesses operating at any scale and irrespective of sector can in this manner use them to **sharpen overall decision-making and adaptability**, especially under profound and rapid contextual change and volatility, **maximize Return on Investment (ROI),** and ensure projects deliver sustainable value.

As described above, using the 6C Framework in commercial projects reframes evaluation from a purely post-mortem exercise into **a strategic management tool**. The clear benefits include increased **clarity**, as people understand where they stand and why; **confidence**, as regular reflection builds assurance in decisions and direction; **efficiency**, as resources are used wisely, reducing stress and burnout; **impact**, as efforts are connected to meaningful outcomes, not just outputs; **resilience**, as long-term sustainability is built into the process; and **harmony**, as actions align with values, strategies, and wider commitments.

4. Approach – *"How are we doing it?"*

Lindholt Consult and its CEO Lone Lindholt has a strong track of engagement with the development sector across several continents since the late 1980s, both working within different implementing organisations, and as an external evaluator and programme designer.

In coming from this background, in mid-2025 we realised that applying the 6C Framework© for the coaching of businesses, organisations, teams, and even individuals merely require an appropriate re-framing of the explorative question for each.

For each of the six criteria we have successfully developed and utilised a corresponding number of questions designed to facilitate the explorative process – see below and in Annex 1.

This process and questions have been successfully utilized since Oct 2025, to great effect and with validated benefits within PivotiN, an online coaching programme designed in particular for individuals being laid off from development agencies.

For the context of **any commercial company**, the following are a sample of **guiding questions** to facilitate the exploration:

- **Relevance:** *"Do we know what the market and our customers need and want, at this point and going forward? Do we have a clear and adaptable strategy for our business that accurately reflects this?"*
- **Coherence:** *"Do we operate in compliance with our own strategies (internal coherence); and with the legal and policy frameworks of our context (external coherence)? Do we know and interact appropriately with our potential competitors and collaborators/enablers in the market?"*

- **Effectiveness:** *"Do we have clear, comprehensive and consistent implementation plans and robust monitoring frameworks for all aspects of our strategy? Do we deliver on our promises?"*
- **Efficiency:** *"Do we fully understand, and use wisely, the scope and nature of our available resources?"*
- **Impact:** *"Do we have clarity about our values, and do we live by them?"*
- **Sustainability: "***Do we want to, and can we continue, doing what we do, going forward"*

When facilitating this process with any organisation, team, agency, business or individual, Lindholt Consult's overall approach is essentially inquiry and coaching, i.e., "*I ask and you find the answers*", ensuring that the answers are true and valid for and resonate with your specific context.

At the same time, we will engage with participants in a deeper probe of each question until clarity is achieved and, not least, the outcome can be concretised for follow-up action.

For an example of how such a facilitated process could be undertaken, see example in Annex 2.

For details on Lone Lindholt and Lindholt Consult's background, capacity and experience in this field, see overview in Annex 3.

Notes

[i] https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/development-co-operation-evaluation-and-effectiveness/evaluation-criteria.html

[ii] https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/EV(2022)2/en/pdf

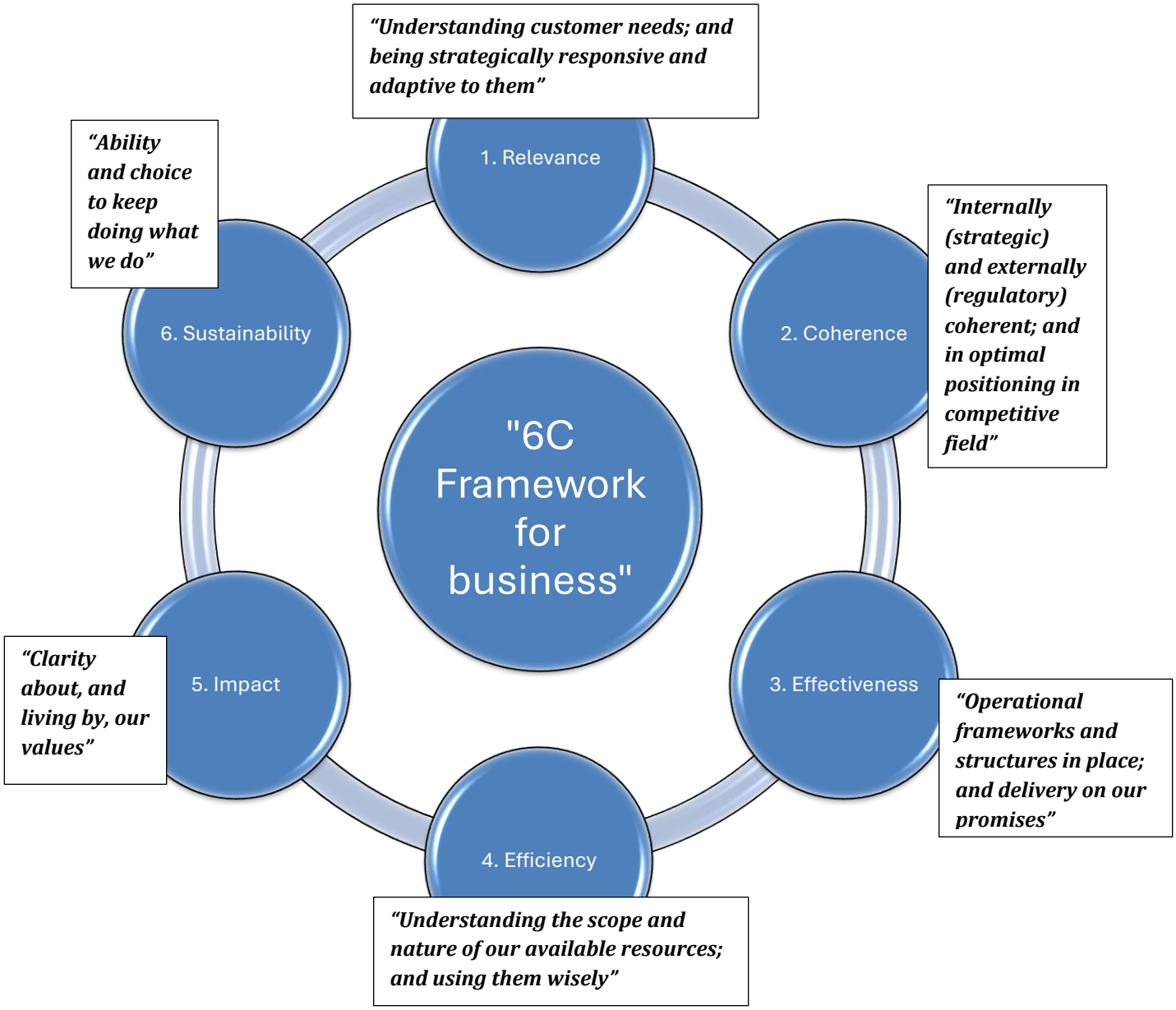
[iii] https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/development-co-operation-evaluation-and-effectiveness/evaluation-criteria.html#:~:text=Together%20they%20describe%20the%20desired,all%20development%20interventions%20(policies%2C%20programmes&text=have%20positive%2C%20lasting%20impacts%20for,sustainable%20development.

[iv] https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf (accessed on 11 January 2021).

[v] https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/dac-evaluation-resource-centre---derec.html

[vi] https://www.undp.org/evaluation/blog/not-just-looking-back#:~:text=As%20you%20may%20suspect%2C%20none,evaluation%20recommendations%20should%20systematically%20consider:

Annex 1 "6C Framework©" coaching for business – outcomes



Annex 2 Example of a facilitated process with a commercial company

Below is a breakdown of how a facilitated process would be undertaken:

1. Initial framing and agreement on the process with key management and staff, including designated internal focal point, clarity of expectations, deliverables etc.

2. Preparation, Lindholt Consult, for initial situational analysis enabling design of bespoke process, including facilitation of access to relevant existing material (organisational profile, strategy, portfolio of programmes and projects, annual reports, KPI/KSI framework etc.)

3. Workshop on each Criteria (with management, key senior staff), can be staggered e.g., over 1 month in full/half days

4. Completion and consolidation of key findings and decisions in summary action documenting collaboration - Lindholt Consult and internal organisation focal point

5. Completion and presentation workshop (e.g., key stakeholders, all staff) facilitated by Lindholt Consult

Annex 3 Lone Lindholt & Lindholt Consult's profile, facilitation and coaching

Dr Lone Lindholt

CEO, Lindholt Consult

Education and training/certification

- Master (1988) and PhD (1994), Law (University of Copenhagen)
- Certified life, stress and team coach, Denmark (2015-2021)
- Diploma, Modern Journalism (New York University and Rolling Stones, Yellowbrick) (2026)

Professional experience (summary)

- Chief Technical /Senior Sectoral Advisor, Support Programme for Rule of Law, Access to Justice and Good Governance, Lao PDR (full-time base in Vientiane), Luxembourg Aid and Development (2021-2024)
- Lindholt Consult (2013 – 2021; and 2025 - to date)
- Senior Legal Advisor, The Danish Institute for Human Rights (1997-2013)

Basic information

- Citizenship, residence and company registration: Denmark.

Full-time base and licensed to work in Laos (Vientiane) (March 2021 to date).

Language

- Danish, English, German, French

Facilitation and coaching

Process facilitation for and coaching of organisations/networks, teams and individuals (internal staff and external partners) has been an integrated and central aspect of my senior positions and consultancy career since 1997.

My overriding approach is always to conduct initial intake assessments of the needs of the "partner(s)", so that they are in the center, and are coached/encouraged to be clear on what they want and need from the process and communicate this with others who will be involved.

As a facilitator, my role is then to ensure that, together, we achieve this. My style is supportive, warm, humorous, inquisitive – and very results-oriented. Balancing participation and ownership with time management and progression towards desired outcomes requires a respectful, "presence" AND consistently being supportive with a firm guiding hand.

Also, my role drawing on all my background and experience is not (necessarily) to provide the technical expertise, but instead to facilitate the process being effectively delivered to participants and stakeholders, by "asking the right questions", leading the inquiry and exploration, and ensuring that all key points are summarized and captured within the time frame.

Since 2025, a key systematic approach cutting across both facilitation and coaching has been my forward-oriented application of the "*OECD DAC Six Evaluation Criteria Framework*" (6C). I and others have already seen how immensely useful and helpful this framework is for focused exploration and actionable follow-up.

1) With respect to **facilitation**, my experience includes:

- Design and implementation of all forms of **capacity strengthening, learning and exchange activities and programmes** (e.g., workshops and seminars, both long and short). This includes e.g., preparation, agenda design (including as specific to the Lao context), participant and speaker identification, active facilitation, summary of findings and follow-up, reporting etc. – throughout my entire career, including especially with Luxembourg Aid and Development (2021-2024) and with the Danish Institute for Human Rights (1997-2013).

  This has involved engaging with a broad scope of individuals, stakeholders ranging from partners in the field to senior agency and organisational staff and teams, board level and diplomatic leadership, as well as the corporate sector – in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

- As above, but with a particular focus on **strategy and action planning** development as well as other aspects of **organisational** strengthening. This requires an even higher degree of stakeholder participation and ownership, and the facilitation will include various modalities and "tools" drawn from my coaching experience.

Specific successful examples include strategy facilitation for the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, Oxfam, and University of Pretoria.

- A related yet distinct aspect of my long-term competence is **project and programme development**, including scoping, formulation, framework and Theory of Change development; and participatory mid-term and final reviews and evaluations.

- Lastly, I include a new area of expertise under development, **"Story telling for Impact illustration".** Drawing on my new Diploma in Modern Journalism (2026), coupled with appreciation for the challenge of documenting Impact in project reviews/evaluations, the aim is to facilitate the narratives of the stakeholder (partners and beneficiaries), capturing and documenting them in such a way that the value added by an intervention is honestly reflected and allowed to accurately present itself.

2) In terms of **coaching**, I also have a solid base of qualifications and experience:

- I am an internationally (ICI) accredited life-, team and stress coach (EmpowerMind and Bjarne Toftegaard) (2015-2021)

- Actually, all of the facilitation for **teams and organisations** outlined above have involved some degree of coaching of partners and stakeholders, i.e., providing an explorative space, asking questions and allowing the answers to organically unfold; and ensure that they are captured and form the basis for focused action and follow-up.

- In addition, I have undertaken a number of **individual** coaching processes, both in Denmark and, more recently Transformational Coaching, in Laos. Focus has particularly been on addressing issues relating to stress (as certified), burn-out and PTSD with clients in the social welfare system in Denmark.

Also, as mentioned briefly, earlier, since early 2025 a key focus has been on supporting individuals in navigating change and uncertainty, including my own unexpected agency job loss, especially in the context of the development sector "melt-down" globally and in Laos as part of a unique programme called PivotiN

(together with my business partner Steve Sharpley). As mentioned above, the 6C framework © has proven highly effective as a systematic framework for the process, in combination with a close adaptation to the needs of each coachee, their work/life situation, and their reflections on desired change.

For all the above, the process may include in-person engagement with both teams and individuals; as well as online via Zoom/teams.

References can be provided upon request.

For details, see LinkedIn profile (https://www.linkedin.com/in/lone-lindholt-0b18906/) with full CV and references.

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