EDGE5

INDEPENDENT DESIGN AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE BRIEF 01

THE EDGE5 SURVIVAL GATES™

A risk-assessment framework for post-handover viability in CSR and community programs — mining and resources.

For CSR managers, ESG leaders, community relations teams and mining executives responsible for long-term community performance.

AT A GLANCE

Five questions. One decision.

THE PROBLEM

Community programs are signed off at delivery. Whether they still function three years later is rarely tested — and by the time it shows, it is a grievance, a social licence issue or a reputational story.

THE TEST

Five constraints shape whether a program survives once company support reduces:

01	02	03	04	05
WATER	SOIL	LABOUR	SKILLS	AUTHORITY

THE DECISION

A serious weakness in any one gate can bring down the whole program. Passing all five is no guarantee, but it puts a program in the strongest position to last.

Mining companies invest heavily in community development, livelihoods and rehabilitation programs. Success is usually reported as money spent, activities completed and beneficiaries reached.

Those measures do not show whether a program will keep functioning once external funding, technical help and supervision are reduced.

The question is not only whether a program was delivered, but whether the community has the resources, skills and authority to keep it going.

IF SITE VISITS STOPPED TOMORROW, WHICH OF YOUR CURRENT COMMUNITY PROGRAMS WOULD STILL BE FUNCTIONING IN THREE YEARS – AND WHICH WOULD BECOME THE NEXT GRIEVANCE?

A program that has quietly stopped working can carry more risk than one that visibly failed, because everyone still believes it succeeded.

The EDGE5 Survival Gates are a diagnostic framework for assessing whether a CSR program will keep functioning after support reduces — before that belief is tested.

WHY THIS FRAMEWORK MATTERS

Delivery Does Not Equal Long-Term Success

A program can be photographed, reported and signed off as complete, and still fail the test that matters most: whether it keeps functioning once the visits, the budget and the supervision are gone. The five gates are where that failure most often shows.

ALL FIVE GATES HOLD

The program is well placed to keep functioning, building local capability and ownership and protecting social licence.

ONE OR MORE GATES FAIL

The program is at risk of stopping once support reduces, and the risk can surface as a grievance, a reputational issue or a social licence cost.

WHY PROGRAMS FAIL

The Pattern Behind Post-Handover Failure

Community programs rarely fail during delivery. When they fail, it is usually after support reduces. By then the cost is no longer operational — it is organisational.

RISK EXPOSURE

An unmanaged grievance. A stalled relationship. A problem that escalates instead of resolving quietly.

SOCIAL LICENCE EXPOSURE

The trust that allows the operation to run without disruption erodes quietly — until tested at the worst moment.

REPUTATIONAL EXPOSURE

A program publicly claimed as a success, visibly failing, is the story that reaches a journalist or an NGO report.

These pressures surface at exactly the moments a company can least afford them: after a CSR budget cut, after a community relations team change, during a licence renewal, or during an external audit.

The reverse also holds. A program that keeps working builds local capability and ownership, depends less on continuing assistance and gets more from the money invested. It gives the company a more credible community relationship and better information for deciding where to spend next.

BEYOND PROJECT DELIVERY

Measuring Long-Term Success

Most CSR evaluation stops at the point of handover. The Survival Gates start there — assessing what conventional measures do not.

TRADITIONAL EVALUATION

Was the project delivered?

Measures completion.

EDGE5 EVALUATION

Will the project still be functioning after support reduces?

Measures long-term viability.

THE FRAMEWORK, IN DETAIL

The EDGE5 Survival Gates

Five constraints shape whether a program continues to function once company support reduces. A serious weakness in any one can compromise the whole program.

01 WATER ACCESS

Will the water system survive the dry season without company logistics support?

Boreholes and irrigation often perform well while the field team visits — and fail the first dry season it doesn't. The fastest-surfacing failure on the list, and the easiest for a community to point to publicly.

02 SOIL & LANDSCAPE FUNCTION

Do land-based programs improve over time, or quietly degrade once inputs and supervision stop?

Gardens and rehabilitation plantings are photographed at handover as proof of success. Whether they keep improving is rarely checked again — until it's a visible failure on land the community sees daily.

03 LABOUR CAPACITY

Does the program fit inside real household routines, or get quietly abandoned once visits taper off?

Programs are designed against ideal participation, not the daily load households already carry. The gap doesn't show in a delivery report — it shows eighteen months later, on the ground.

04 SKILLS & CONTINUITY

Has the community's own capacity to run and adapt it been built — or does it still sit with rotating field staff?

Training delivered is not capability transferred. If only company or NGO staff can troubleshoot it, survival is tied to a posting, not the community. The single point of failure underneath the other four.

05 AUTHORITY & OWNERSHIP

Who decides, who pays and who owns the running costs once company support reduces?

This is where money sits. If the money isn't committed, or no one owns the running costs once the company steps back, the program doesn't pass. If every decision still routes back through the company or its contractor, the program hasn't really transferred. Projects rarely fail for lack of money at the start. They fail because no one owns the costs once the funding stops.

THE EVIDENCE BEHIND THE FRAMEWORK

Recurring Patterns of Post-Handover Failure

The five gates come from field experience. They were defined because the same failures kept recurring across sectors and countries:

Water problems usually show first. When a pump breaks or the dry season arrives, the failure is immediate and the whole community sees it.

Labour requirements are often underestimated. The hours a program asks of each household are rarely counted at design stage.

Skills often stay with company or NGO staff. The person who knows how to fix it is often the one who leaves.

Authority is often not transferred. Decisions, and the running costs, still route back to the company long after handover is declared complete.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Is Your Program Already at Risk?

Tick any that apply to a program you are responsible for.

EDGE5 WARNING INDICATORS	TICK ANY THAT APPLY
If **any** box is ticked, look closer. This is a first screening, not a risk score. One serious weakness, such as an unreliable water supply, can be enough.	
☐ No independent post-handover review has been undertaken since delivery	
☐ Maintenance or repair still depends on company or contracted NGO staff	
☐ Field visit frequency has reduced, and participation has not been re-measured since	
☐ No one in the community has agreed to own the program and its running costs	
☐ Program success is measured by output or activity count, not verified ongoing function	
☐ No one has asked the community directly whether they consider the program theirs	

BOXES TICKED: ____ OF 6

Request a Survival Gates Review at **greg@edge5.com.au**

HANDOVER IS NOT PROOF OF SUSTAINABILITY. THE REAL TEST BEGINS WHEN EXTERNAL SUPPORT REDUCES.

THE EDGE5 SURVIVAL GATES REVIEW

What a Survival Gates Review Delivers

A review is staged, and its exact scope depends on the agreed engagement. The aim is a decision, not another report.

Stage 1 — Preliminary screening. Review of project documents, operating arrangements and known risks.

Stage 2 — Field verification. Where commissioned, water, soil, labour, skills and authority conditions are checked on the ground, through observation, operating evidence and talking with the people who run the program.

Stage 3 — Corrective action. Priority weaknesses, practical fixes, who is responsible and what follow-up is needed. Potential deliverables:

01

Independent Assessment

An evidence-based view of which programs are well placed to keep functioning after support reduces, and which are at risk.

02

Gate-by-Gate Risk Profile

Each program assessed against all five Survival Gates, showing where viability is at risk.

03

Priority Vulnerabilities

A ranked view of which gaps carry the greatest exposure — so resourcing follows priority, not assumption.

04

Practical Recommendations

Specific, field-tested actions to close the gaps identified — not generic guidance.

05 **Executive Report for Leadership and Board Discussion**

A single, decision-ready report suitable for board and investor scrutiny.

WHEN TO SEEK A FULL REVIEW

A structured review is appropriate where multiple programs have not been independently reassessed since delivery, where CSR spend is under board or investor scrutiny, where a budget or staffing change is approaching, or where a licence renewal, expansion approval, or external audit is on the horizon. The gates can also be applied at design stage, before money is committed. That is the cheapest point to fix a gate that would otherwise fail.

IN PRACTICE – GHANA

Greg Knibbs helped set up the Ghana Permaculture Institute in 2004. More than 20 years later it runs independently, including Australian Government-funded programs. Local people run it and make its decisions: the Skills and Authority gates in practice.

WHY EDGE5

Applied across mining, government and NGO programs over more than three decades in diverse operating environments.

30+

YEARS ADVISORY EXPERIENCE

Mining, government and NGO sectors

18

YEARS IN THE MINING INDUSTRY

WMC / BHP

13,000+

HOUSEHOLD GARDENS

Reported by ADRA Rwanda; established through locally trained trainers

PROJECTS ARE HANDED OVER ONCE. THEIR CONSEQUENCES REMAIN FOR YEARS.

WHAT'S NEXT

Start With a Survival Gates Review

EDGE5 helps organisations design, assess and strengthen community programs for long-term viability, before or after handover. The first step is a conversation.

GREG KNIBBS

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The EDGE5 Survival Gates™ framework was developed by Greg Knibbs, founder of EDGE5.

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