Place-based approaches

A guide for the Victorian Public Service

ANZSOG

VICTORIA
State
Government

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we all rely.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs, and we respect this. We acknowledge the continuing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in striving to redress inequality and disadvantage and the catastrophic and enduring effects of colonisation.

How to use this guide

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for all Victorian Public Service (VPS) employees interested in place-based approaches. It may also be useful to stakeholders from other sectors and can be shared with organisations, groups and community members working as part of a place-based approach.

Governments have a critical role in setting policy, providing funding and delivering services, but just as importantly, to support and enable community members, organisations and networks to be at the centre of place-based initiatives. This guide supports the Victorian whole-of-government Place-based Reform Agenda and builds on the Victorian Government's _A framework for place-based approaches_ released in 2020. It outlines how governments, community groups and other stakeholders can collaborate effectively to achieve meaningful impacts for their local communities.

How was it developed?

This guide presents best-practice for place-based approaches that put the community[1] at the centre. It has been developed in consultation with stakeholders and is based on research and the most up-to-date evidence on how government can support place-based initiatives more effectively to achieve local impact.

---

1 Community can mean different things to different people. A community may refer to a group of people living in the set location, or a group of people with a shared set of values or perceptions. In this guide, the term 'community' includes both understandings, with an emphasis on identifying and strengthening what is shared and of benefit to the end goal of place-based approaches.

This includes:

- the 2020 Victorian Government *A framework for place-based approaches*

- literature on leading place-based practice, including Australian and international case studies and evaluations, and the literature review produced by the What Works for Victorian Place-based Approaches research project

- workshops and engagement with VPS staff and partners with experience working in place

- the 2019 Department of Health and Human Services' departmental guide for place-based approaches, also developed in consultation with place-based initiatives across Victoria and VPS staff.

It provides practical ideas, advice, case studies, tools and resources to help you effectively design, implement and evaluate place-based initiatives.

How is it structured?

Place-based approaches are dynamic and community-specific so there is no single model. The guide is arranged by topic to help you easily find the information you need. You can read the whole guide or focus on the topics relevant to your situation or interests. Each topic provides an overview of key concepts and how each element works, supported by case studies, tools and additional resources.

If you don't have the resources available to follow the steps exactly as described, see this as a starting point. You can adapt the recommendations and use the information that is relevant to your role.

If you are just getting started, refer to *Chapter One: Understanding place-based approaches and how they evolve over time* to get a better understanding of place-based approaches.

Case studies

The guide includes case studies of place-based initiatives in action to help you explore key concepts and ideas. As you read through each case study, consider:

- What is the challenge or opportunity the place-based initiative is trying to address? Who defined it?

- What is the specific role (delivering, enabling, coordinating, resourcing, promoting, securing, advising) of the government department(s) and partners?

- How is the initiative implemented, and its impact understood and measured?

- How might the funding, structure and timeframe of the case study's approach differ from your context?

The best available research on Victorian place-based approaches

As part of the whole-of-government Place-based Reform Agenda, the Victorian Government funded a research project to consolidate and review evidence and build a better understanding of what works for place-based approaches in Victoria. The in-depth report *What works for Place-based Approaches in Victoria* aims to support decision-makers, funders and partners to increase the effectiveness of place-based initiatives to improve the wellbeing of Victorian communities.

Contents

In this guide, place-based approaches describe community-led initiatives that target the specific circumstances of a place.

Hands Up Mallee, a placed-based initiative in Mildura, Victoria, established highly successful pop-up testing and vaccination clinics to respond to diverse community needs during an acute Covid-19 outbreak in 2021. Read the case study in Chapter One.

Chapter One:
Understanding place-based approaches and how they evolve over time

Overview

What are place-based approaches?

In this guide, place-based approaches describe community-led initiatives that target the specific circumstances of a place.

Place

The term 'place' commonly refers to a specific geographic area where people live, learn, work and recreate. 'Place' in the context of place-based approaches has no universal definition. The key is that the definition used by any initiative is meaningful and resonates with the local community.

Place-based approaches

The term 'place-based approaches' describes a diverse range of activities that target a place or location, to build on local strengths or respond to a complex social problem.

While there is no agreed definition of a place-based approach, the following definitions outline the main characteristics:

- "A collaborative, long-term approach to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. This approach is ideally characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship, and shared accountability for outcomes and impacts." (Dart, 2019).

- "An approach that targets the specific circumstances of a place and engages local people as active participants in development and implementation, requiring government to share decision-making." (Victorian Government, 2020).

Why are they important?

Place-based approaches are recognised across the world as an important platform to respond to complex social and economic challenges, including the impact of natural disasters and pandemics.

Beyond immediate crisis and recovery needs, Victorian government departments are increasingly adopting place-based approaches to help achieve their objectives, including:

- implementing Recommendation 15 of the Royal Commission into Mental Health to establish place-based collectives in every local government area

- the expansion of 'Our Place' sites by then Department of Education and Training in partnership with the Colman Foundation

- establishing 20-minute Neighbourhoods as part of Plan Melbourne 2017-2050

- the Suburban Revitalisation program in 47 locations across Melbourne, where government partners with community, local government and businesses to support communities to thrive economically and socially

- continued support and advocacy for local place-based initiatives by Regional and Metropolitan Partnerships.

What do place-based approaches look like?

Place-based approaches are different from traditional, government-initiated programs or policy development processes. They go beyond service delivery to encompass social, economic and environmental governance and practice. Place-based approaches focus on building readiness and identifying shared desired outcomes to enable collaborative implementation (Victorian Government, 2020).

In contrast, 'place-focused approaches' (as defined in the Victorian Government's *A framework for place-based approaches*) plan and adapt government services, programs and infrastructure to ensure they are meeting local needs. Government listens to community to adapt how business is done, but ultimately, has control over the objectives, scope and implementation.

> Place-based approaches may be initiated by the community or by government; or even start out as a government-led, place-focused initiative and evolve to a more community-centred approach over time.

Place-based initiatives take a holistic approach, connecting existing government investment and services and building cross-sector collaborations that tackle the root causes of local challenges and build on opportunities. They can also build community resilience, trust, and cohesion, and empower communities through a sense of belonging, connection, and purpose.

Aboriginal communities have led the way in articulating and demonstrating the strength of community empowerment through self-determination. Place-based approaches share these same principles to provide impact to a broader range of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Place-based approaches drive actions based on what local knowledge shows will make a real difference for the community. Because of this, no place-based initiative looks the same. Their strength lies in harnessing local community leadership, ideas and capacity to develop tailored and long-term solutions. Action might include coordinating and identifying gaps in local services, building grassroots social infrastructure and networks, or embedding policy changes in local institutions. Often a combination of strategies are used to address challenges and leverage opportunities for a local community.

Examples of place-based initiatives that have driven meaningful and outcomes and impact include:

- The _Geelong Project_, which has supported at risk young students from becoming homeless, disengaging in their education and leaving school early through building a 'community' of schools and service providers. It coordinates an accessible, integrated suite of services that a single organisation or sector could not achieve alone.

- _Flemington Works_ which, as at June 2022, has supported 200 paid employment outcomes for 127 women and 73 young people residing at the Flemington Housing Estate, the establishment of 40 micro-enterprises in social change, hospitality and creative industries, and social procurement clauses being included in five Moonee Valley City Council labour force tenders.

Initiatives such as _Go Goldfields_ in Victoria and _Logan Together_ in Queensland are focused on creating a strong foundation for children, to give them the best chance in life. Logan Together has reduced smoking and overweight/obesity rates during pregnancy, improved newborn health, and increased the uptake of antenatal care. Since opening the 'Village Connect' maternity hub in Logan City in 2020, engagement has increased with over 85 per cent of mothers also participating in other activities offered, such as playgroups and gestational diabetes education sessions.

Place-based initiatives not only address the immediate and short-term needs of communities, but seek to breakdown structural barriers that trap communities in cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

Scotland's _New Deal for Communities Program_ and Victoria's _Neighbourhood Renewal Program_ (2001-2013) have helped address the inequality gap between communities by reducing unemployment, overall crime rates and feelings of social exclusion among residents in intervention locations.

When to use them?

A place-based initiative can be a powerful tool where an issue, problem or opportunity faced by a community:

- is multifaceted and complex

- cannot be addressed through services or infrastructure alone – existing government interventions have not had the desired impact

- does not have a clear solution and needs local people and organisations to be actively involved to find and develop meaningful responses

- requires a whole of government or cross-sectoral response

- requires a long-term response.

It's important to remember that place-based approaches are not suitable in all circumstances. They should complement rather than replace traditional government services and infrastructure and local community action.

Refer to *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies* to learn more.

Collective Impact

The Collective Impact (CI) framework is a method of place-based working that takes a structured approach to collaboration to address social challenges. This approach leverages all the resources and assets in a community to achieve change. It puts communities and people with diverse lived experience at the heart of defining local problems, using their strengths, voices and perspectives to co-create local solutions.

CI is a key methodology used internationally to address complex problems at the local level and achieve sustainable change with communities. The Tamarack Institute, based in Canada has identified that the approach is effective where complex disadvantage is experienced by a community and there is high community capacity and readiness to address the disadvantage.

An influential 2011 paper in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, outlined five core elements of the CI framework (Kania and Kramer, 2011):

- common agenda – defined by all partners

- shared measurement – with a focus on accountability and ongoing learning to support adaptative ways of working

- mutually reinforcing activities – leveraging resources across all partners to achieve shared priorities and achieving the best possible impact from available investment

- continuous communication and engagement – across partners to enable effective collaborative working, as well as engaging broadly and in an ongoing way, including with those with lived experience

- independent backbone structure – to facilitate and mobilise the collective effort. See more on backbone organisations below.

Since then, there have been further iterations of the CI framework, including the development of principles and phases of work, and a stronger recognition of the central importance of addressing equity. In 2021, the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* published a series of articles looking at the 10 years of the Collective Impact framework. The series was sponsored by *the Collective Impact Forum*, a program of *FSG* and the *Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions*, and documented the thinking as to how local practice has evolved as communities responded to their local context.

A range of articles have been published that reflect on the evolution of the CI framework, including *Power and Collective Impact in Australia* (Graham, Skelton and Paulson, 2021). It talks to how collective impact work has evolved in Australia, including how initiatives have adjusted the approach to address Australia's community context, culture, and history

The *Collective Impact 3.0* paper (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016) was a significant evolution of the CI framework. It included a broader focus on measurement, evaluation and learning (MEL) and a more explicit focus on the importance of inclusive community engagement.

Role of government in collective impact efforts to achieve social change

Government can play a supportive and enabling role within each of the elements and phases of the CI framework. This can include the provision of funding and working internally across portfolios to bring a more 'joined-up' approach to engagement at the local level.

In Victoria, government funding has been provided to support the backbone functions of local place-based initiatives – for example, *Go Goldfields*, *Beyond the Bell* and the *Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project*, as well as working internally to support local collaborative efforts.

Backbone organisations

Supporting 'backbone' organisations help to ensure that place-based initiatives can achieve their objectives.

The functions of a backbone need to be flexible and will evolve over time in response to the context and collaborative effort. Key functions include:

- guiding vision and strategy
- facilitating collaboration across partners
- coordinating key actions and priorities
- managing shared measurement and learning practices to track progress and impacts
- enabling broad, inclusive engagement across the community, including those with lived experience
- mobilising resources to support the sustainability of the initiative.

Backbone functions can be held by a stand-alone organisation or distributed across local partners (with dedicated roles identified) depending on the size, scope and context of the Collective Impact effort. The Tamarak Institute has a great resource about *different approaches to backbone structures*.

You can find a further range of resources to better understand how to establish and support effective backbones by visiting the *Collective Impact Forum* and the *Tamarack Institute*.

How they work

The importance of government and community partnership

An innovative approach

Government is traditionally the largest service provider in communities, such as through schools, health, police and human services, and the largest funder of other service providers. This policy and funding dominance creates power imbalances. In addition, all levels of government often engage with local communities in ways that are disconnected and fragmented.

Place-based approaches provide a crucial platform for a more equal power relationship between governments and communities. Government must take the role of partner and enabler and genuinely share decision-making to define the outcomes that matter locally and the best ways to achieve them.

In placed-based approaches, governments go further than listening to or consulting with communities – they must actively support and enable local people and organisations to be involved in the decision making for their communities (Graham, Skelton, and Paulson, 2021).

This approach can challenge government systems, culture and staff. Traditional programmatic ways of working generally have more rigid accountability structures and contracts that can unintentionally undermine collaborative relationships and lead stakeholders to compete.

Effective place-based approaches challenge prescriptive and centralised processes by facilitating a more enabling and flexible operating environment where government agencies and staff work collaboratively with communities and across programs and portfolios.

A new type of role for government

Government needs to work differently to realise the full potential of place-based approaches. While each place-based initiative is unique in terms of place, design and objectives, they often require similar capabilities from governments.

Government agencies will not always be the 'drivers'; but instead, will enable and support local community action, which includes removing barriers that are sometimes created by government itself. Government agencies and staff need to relinquish some control and accept a level of uncertainty around priorities and implementation. They must work with community partners to provide:

- **flexibility –** so local partners can tailor their actions to what has the most impact on their community

- **commitment –** so community partners and government agencies have stability as they work over the long term (often 10 years or more) to tackle complex, multi-faceted issues

- **trust –** to support innovation and an environment where it's safe to fail and learn.

The specific role (or roles) of government in a place-based initiative may evolve over time as the needs and preferences of the local community change, and at different stages of development and implementation.

Building the case for place-based work in the VPS

As place-based approaches can challenge traditional government ways of working, at times your role might be about building a coalition of support within government or securing authorisation to work in a non-traditional, more collaborative way to support a place-based initiative. It is important to:

- engage with leaders across government who will champion the work at the executive level

- design governance structures that enable the work

- build and maintain networks with staff across government who can advise, support, and authorise work

- utilise effective mechanisms to track impacts being achieved.

Building the case for place-based approaches within government often needs an assurance that a place-based initiative is robust and effective in its approach, and capable of achieving real change for community. Pointing to the evidence underpinning an initiative's approach and supporting and promoting approaches that align with the evidence and best practice – as set out in this guide – is an important part of this process.

Key stages of development and implementation

There are some common stages typically involved in developing and implementing place-based initiatives. It is important to remember that many place-based initiatives are initiated by community players at the grass roots and government may not be involved at all in the early stages, but asked to provide support over time. Equally, the role of government will vary at any given stage according to the changing needs and priorities of the place-based initiative.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the common stages of a place-based approach. These stages are interlinked, rarely linear and there will often be a need or desire to loop back through one or two of the stages before moving to the next.

Table 1.1 also provides an overview of the potential role of government at each stage. Government's role is always to work in partnership as supporter and enabler with the community, rather than to take the lead.

A place-based initiative is a long-term undertaking and the steps that take place before on-the-ground action are critical to success. Some practice leading place-based initiatives spend up to 18 months in the first two stages.

An alternative yet similar approach is the 'Collaborative Cycle' developed by _Collaboration for Impact_ which outlines key stages of a place-based initiative, from the 'Readiness Runway' to 'Achieving Transformation'. It highlights the role of government and the critical enabling capabilities (such as expertise and skills) at each phase to achieve and sustain progress.

For more on this, see _Platform C_.

Table 1.1 – Common stages of a place-based approach

Stage	Approach	Potential role of government (Subject to the needs and preferences of the community)
1. **Identify if a place-based approach is beneficial**	Work with local community stakeholders and use in-depth local knowledge to assess if a place-based approach is an appropriate response to local opportunities or challenges.	• Listen and learn – refer to *Chapter Three: Working with diverse communities*. • Share knowledge, including government-held data and information – refer to *Chapter Five: Data and evidence*. • Engage, connect and convene - help connect people and organisations at the local level (collaborative engagement) and across portfolios and levels of government (joined-up work) – refer to *Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance* and *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies*. • Help identify local strengths as well as local capability and capacity gaps.
2. **Assess readiness**	Work with the community to assess if it is ready to, or is already, self-mobilising around an opportunity or issue, and if government can meaningfully contribute. This considers if the required resources, leadership, connections and mindsets exist, or if they can be built.	
3. **Develop a shared vision and plan for change**	All community members and organisations with an interest come together to identify the change they want to make in the community. This is articulated with clear outcomes, measures of progress and impact, and a plan for making it happen, monitoring, evaluating and learning.	• Listen and learn – refer to *Chapter Three: Working with diverse communities*. • Share knowledge, including government-held data and information – refer to *Chapter Five: Data and evidence*. • Convene, influence and champion – use the convening power of government to promote collective buy-in for the shared vision and approach – refer to *Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance*. • Plan for capability gaps through the provision of technical expertise or access to funding or resources. • Provide flexible funding for action – refer to *Chapter Six: Funding and resourcing models*. • Support the adoption of robust methodologies, tools and processes and the design of a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework – refer to *Chapter Four: Monitoring, evaluation and learning*.

Stage	Approach	Potential role of government (Subject to the needs and preferences of the community)
4. Implement together	Local partners such as community organisations, business, philanthropy and potentially government work collaboratively to resource and implement the plan. A local collaborative governance group oversees the implementation and can make changes.	• Listen, learn and support an adaptive approach – refer to *Chapter Three: Working with diverse communities*. • Support the establishment of collaborative governance arrangements – refer to *Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance*. • If appropriate, establish governance arrangements within government. • Respond to identified capability gaps through the provision of technical expertise or access to funding or resources. • Support the adoption of robust methodologies, tools and processes – refer to *Chapter Four: Monitoring, evaluation and learning*. • Support the initiative to overcome system barriers and work collaboratively to improve system enablers – refer to *Chapter Eight: Skills, capabilities and mindsets*.
5. Embed a culture of learning and continual improvement	All partners embed a culture of learning to bring in new ideas and keep the initiative effective and relevant. Evaluation enables them to assess if work is progressing shared outcomes, learn from failures and consider how practice and policy changes can be embedded into their organisations over the long term.	• Adopt a learning mindset – refer to *Chapter Eight: Skills, capabilities and mindsets*. • Support a robust monitoring, learning and evaluation approach to capture and share learnings – refer to *Chapter Four: Monitoring, evaluation and learning*. • Share knowledge, including government-held data and information – refer to *Chapter Five: Data and evidence*. • Work collaboratively to identify and progress opportunities for improvement – refer to *Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance*.
6. Celebrate and communicate success	Everyone should be supportive of each other and ensure achievements are recognised and celebrated.	• Help to communicate well and widely

Key considerations

Be open to an ongoing, adaptive way of working as initiatives evolve

When working with a place-based initiative, processes and actions are dynamic and generally not linear. To be most effective, collaborative ways of working need an adaptive and flexible approach.

Clearly define your role and seek authorisation to work differently

Working in government, your traditional role may include contract management and/or performance monitoring. Holding these roles whilst participating in a collaborative initiative that asks you to disrupt business as usual to achieve better outcomes is challenging. Be clear that you will be taking a different role as part of the collaborative initiative and seek authorisation from your executive to do so.

Leverage existing capacity and knowledge

When working with communities, consider their existing platforms, groups or networks to help build capacity. Encourage natural leaders in the community and people with relevant skill sets or expertise, including those with lived experience, to get involved. These leaders often have a good understanding of the strengths and opportunities, wicked problems or underlying issues within their communities.

> Refer to *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies* to learn more.

Build trust

Be mindful of the signals you send early in the process. Ensure that community voice is heard and valued and take the time to listen, learn and build relationships. This will help build trust that the intent to collaborate is genuine.

Help partners to navigate the complexity of government

Place-based practitioners report that government can sometimes seem impenetrable and confusing to navigate. Community members often don't know who they need to speak to, how government priorities are determined or how decisions are made. You can help by connecting people to your colleagues in relevant government portfolio areas and explaining how government works, as well as setting up supportive internal governance arrangements (if appropriate).

Case study: Hands-up Mallee (Victoria)

History

Hands Up Mallee (HUM) is a place-based initiative in the Mildura local government area (LGA) that supports local responses driven by community-identified priorities, research and data. In 2016-17 HUM had over 1600 conversations with community members to determine its community aspiration of a 'connected community, where families matter and children thrive'.

HUM partnerships

HUM brings local leaders and the community together to address social issues and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and their families.

HUM negotiated Victorian Government funding through the adaptation of funding under Primary Care Partnerships in 2014. Since May 2020, HUM has been funded through the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* (SPSP) initiative, that involves a partnership with the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. Alongside philanthropic funding and significant support from the Mildura Rural City Council, HUM is resourced to build trusting relationships and local partnerships over time and can work flexibly and responsively with the community.

The Victorian Government's partnership with HUM and the Commonwealth Government through the SPSP initiative is a unique opportunity to understand how to best work with a broad range of stakeholders to support place-based approaches, including partnerships across three levels of government. By participating in SPSP, the Victorian Government seeks to understand what policies, funding approaches, culture changes and partnership approaches we need to make us better at this critical way of working.

HUM approach

A collaborative approach to boosting Covid-19 vaccination rates

In 2021, during an acute Covid-19 outbreak in the Mildura LGA, HUM was a key partner in a collaboration to develop and mobilise targeted community testing and vaccination clinics. The response model was based on the need in the local community to create equitable access and cultural safety for members of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities and people living in locations with lower vaccination rates.

HUM was able to leverage existing trusting relationships with community members, local services, funders and government to collaboratively set-up testing and vaccination clinics to meet community needs. The collaboration developed an adaptive pop-up clinic in neighbourhood parks and known community locations such as the Ethnic Communities Council. The clinics operated for several days at the same location and engaged trusted people from local communities to support community members in accessing the service. This way of working was key to the success of the model. Trusted community members like Aunty Jemmes Handy, a respected Aboriginal Community Elder, were willing to work with the collaboration due to her existing and ongoing relationship with HUM's work and way of working:

"We started talking about what was going on in our community, the whole community, not just one part of it. The organisations involved actually listened and took notice of what we wanted for a change".

**Aunty Jemmes Handy –
Aboriginal Community Elder**

HUM and its partners Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Sunraysia Community Health Services, Mildura Rural City Council, Mallee District Aboriginal Service and Sunraysia Medical Clinic understood the importance of the clinic location, representation of people running the clinic and the way of operating:

"You need a well-organised venue, bilingual staff, consent forms in different languages, all of that needs planning. I couldn't do that by myself, neither could any of the other partners, but together we could do it. Together we did amazing work."

Dr Mehdi – Sunraysia Medical Clinic GP

Food relief

During the initial Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020, HUM drew on their existing relationships to convene more than 16 local organisations to respond to the community's food security challenges. HUM and their partners quickly created a joint approach to emergency food relief through organisations pooling resources to respond more effectively to local needs and to strengthen the state-funded food relief approach. HUM and partners developed an adaptive system that saw food and essential supplies delivered to community members who needed them in a timely and targeted way to address identified gaps.

By the end of the lockdown period between March and November 2020, the collaborative work of HUM and their partners had supported a total of 3354 people through almost 900 immediate food parcels, 171 activity packs, and 194 referrals between organisations.

Visit *www.handsupmallee.com*

Case study:
Our Place (Victoria)

ourplace
education is the key to the door

History

The Colman Foundation (Colman), a philanthropic organisation, established the 'Our Place' approach based on the lessons learned from their work at Doveton College since 2012.

Our Place is a holistic place-based approach to support the education, health and development of all children and families in disadvantaged communities by utilising the universal platform of a school.

DET and Colman partnership

Based on the outcomes at Doveton College, in 2017 then Department of Education and Training (DET) and Colman signed a Partnership Agreement to establish the Our Place approach at 10 sites in vulnerable communities across Victoria for a period of 10 years.

Our Place approach

The Our Place approach supports children and families in vulnerable communities by providing:

- a single, welcoming point of entry to the school and early learning centre to engage with families and support continuity for children in their transition from kindergarten to school

- shared spaces to offer services such as maternal and child health, playgroup, general practitioners, paediatricians, immunisations, parent support groups, and adult education, training, volunteering and job-seeking services

- access to tailored health, wellbeing and community services for families and children from one location

- community facilitators working on site to foster collaboration between service providers and help families and children connect to early childhood, education, health and wellbeing services.

As part of the establishment process, Colman consults with local service providers and the community to identify the services to be delivered at the site. This ensures they respond to the need of that specific community, avoid duplicating existing services and address any gaps in service delivery.

Governance

The DET and Colman Partnership governance structure is designed to:

- provide strategy and direction for the Our Place approach

- facilitate collaboration between partners, and oversee the establishment and implementation of the Our Place approach at sites

- support local implementation through the establishment of Site Partnership Groups.

Roles

DET has funded and built infrastructure at Our Place sites to provide a single point of entry for children and their families, and shared spaces for health service providers and community activities.

Colman employs two community facilitators who work at Our Place sites to engage families and the community, identify and address barriers to implementation, and evaluate what is working and where further effort is needed.

A partnership manager is also on site to support partner organisations to implement the Our Place approach. Colman has developed a central team to oversee all sites and support the implementation of the Our Place approach and the partnership.

Partnerships with local service providers and community groups are a key feature of the Our Place approach. These partners include:

- early childhood services

- local government

- other government departments

- community health services

- adult education providers

- community and cultural organisations.

Visit *www.ourplace.org.au*

Additional tools and resources

Victorian Government framework

A framework for place-based approaches, Victorian Government, 2020

Efficacy and history of place-based approaches

- *Place-based approaches*, Queensland Council of Social Service

- *The effectiveness of place-based programmes and campaigns in improving outcomes for children: A literature review* National Literary Trust, 2020

- *Place-based approaches to regional development: Global trends and Australian implications,* Australian Business Foundation, 2010

- Kania, Kramer and Senge, *Waters of system change*, FSG, 2018

- Lankelly Chase, *Historical review of place-based approaches*, funded by the Institute of Voluntary Action Research (IVAR), London, UK, 2017.

Robinvale, one of ten 'Our Place' sites in Victoria

Chapter Two:

Working with local communities and government agencies

Overview

> Trusting relationships are critical to effective place-based work.

From a government perspective, these relationships are broadly understood as:

- 'collaborative engagement' in place – with community members, local leaders, and local organisations across sectors

- 'joined-up work' – relationships and ways of working with other public sector staff and organisations across portfolios and levels of government.

What is collaborative engagement in place?

A core part of a place-based initiative is finding the best way to connect with communities to achieve the desired outcomes. Collaborative engagement involves working with the community to identify existing strengths and capabilities by connecting with local leaders, networks, organisations and those with lived experience. Knowledge and experience is shared and an approach for solving the identified problem or leveraging an opportunity, is developed together. This chapter outlines how to understand and engage with diverse communities.

What is joined-up work?

The success of place-based approaches often depends on how well communities, stakeholders and government can take a 'joined-up' or holistic approach to achieve positive outcomes.

For the purpose of this guide, joined-up work is defined as 'the coordination and collaboration of work by the VPS to support place-based approaches, and the authorisation to do so, within governments and external partners, including communities'.

The distinguishing characteristics of joined-up work is that there is an emphasis on objectives shared across organisational boundaries, such as design and delivery of a wide variety of policies, programs and services, as opposed to working solely within an organisation (Victorian State Government - State Services Authority, 2007).

Joined-up work can be through formal and informal partnerships or strategically structured governance arrangements. It can also include different ways of working across boundaries, ranging from interpersonal interactions based on relationships and networks to formal and interdependent arrangements based on mutual benefit and a common purpose (Buick, 2012).

Read more about how to support this way of working in *Boundary spanning to improve community outcomes: A report on joined-up government.*

Why is collaborative engagement and joined-up work important?

Local people and organisations are experts in their own experience and potential solutions. Communities need genuine ownership of a place-based initiative for it to harness local community leadership, ideas and capacity to develop tailored and long-term solutions. Therefore, government partnerships that empower the community to drive solutions are the most effective for place-based initiatives.

Joined-up government (at all levels) is critical to develop meaningful partnerships with community organisations and networks, and to drive solutions that span portfolio boundaries.

Five strategies for collaborative engagement and joined up work across government

Five strategies are recommended for effective collaborative engagement and joined-up work:

1. **Build readiness for change**

2. **Plan for meaningful collaboration and engagement**

3. **Adopt an appropriate collaboration and engagement approach**

4. **Establish governance and power-sharing mechanisms**

5. **Adopt mindsets for working in place.**

When progressing work as part of a collaborative approach with communities, sometimes the pre-conditions and capacity to fully implement them will not be present, and decisions may need to be made on what to prioritise. Remember:

- a place-based initiative is long-term, and working collaboratively with communities to build readiness for change before on-the-ground action is critical to sustainable outcomes

- although place-based approaches have common stages, often the process is non-linear.

Refer to the 'Key stages of development and implementation' section in *Chapter One: Understanding place-based approaches and how they evolve over time* to learn more about the phases of place-based initiatives.

Strategy ①
Build readiness for change

It takes time and effort to build community and government readiness for change. This includes the preliminary steps to get people on board, build capacity and progress ways of working together in line with a shared agenda for change. Communities should be at the centre of any place-based approach and have the capacity to make decisions and drive action.

1.1   Leverage to build capacity

Think about existing platforms, groups or networks that can be leveraged to build capacity. Are there natural leaders in the community, or people with relevant skill sets or expertise that might be willing to get involved? Are there champions across government that could be engaged to support and promote the initiative? Identify opportunities for local people and organisations keen to be involved in leading the change process and working with the community and other stakeholders to design and implement the place-based approach.

> Refer to *Chapter Eight: Skills, capabilities and mindsets* for tips on building teams for place-based approaches.

1.2   Build collaborative and shared effort

Work collaboratively across the community to build a shared understanding of the local context and identify and define the key local issue to focus on. This process is important to help local people build a connection with their 'place' and each other. The quality of these connections matters more than the number of relationships; people need to feel understood and accepted. Improved connectedness can lead to better health and wellbeing outcomes, especially for some of the most disadvantaged population groups in a community.

Think of opportunities to capitalise on connections and relationships across departments, with funded agencies and thought leaders to help build a coalition of support for the initiative.

1.3   Build social capital

Building the social capital of communities is a central feature of place-based approaches. High social capital drives thriving communities and builds individual and community resilience. This requires a balance of:

- bonding – close personal connections with family and friends, or people who are similar in crucial respects (inward-looking)

- bridging – ties with groups of individuals who differ (outward-looking)

- linking – ties with formal institutions.

Support and empower local leaders and community groups throughout the life of a place-based approach to serve and work with their communities. Plan from the start to deliver learning experiences and opportunities for community members and groups who are keen to participate.

A simple way to build social capital is to provide opportunities for people in a community to come together for a common purpose in their usual settings. For example, a gathering, such as a BBQ in a local park; places young people meet; an open access community facility such as a local library, or place of worship; or community celebration can help people connect in a comfortable, safe and meaningful way.

Many Victorian place-based approaches have successfully built social capital through a series of 'kitchen conversations'. A kitchen conversation is when local community members connect informally with neighbours or friends, to talk to them about what the place-based initiative is trying to achieve. These events have a 'multiplier effect', where participants then engage with their own circles to carry the conversation and strengthen the community connection further. This peer-to-peer contact becomes self-sustaining and ultimately empowers the community to drive action.

Strategy ②
Plan for meaningful collaboration and engagement

Close, positive collaboration across a range of partners is critical to the success of a place-based approach. Think about who should be engaged and how?

2.1 Identify key partners, networks and platforms

Work with the place-based initiative to think broadly to identify the diversity of key partners, including those with lived experience, cultural diversity, and existing networks and platforms relevant to the place-based approach. Consider how to encourage a diversity of cohorts to participate or be represented, including groups that are less likely to be engaged in these processes: LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal people/s, CALD, people living with a disability and young people.

Always work to:

- ensure partners have the capacity, interest and positioning to take on the work at hand (Lankelly Chase, 2017)

- allow time to develop trust and build relationships from early on – the way trust and relationships are built will differ from group to group

- support and facilitate both formal and informal working structures with and across local partners.

Remember that other areas of government might be engaged or consulting with a community and that streamlining between government portfolios is good practice. Try to develop a good understanding of existing government work underway in an area or community, including through the Victorian Regional Partnerships and Metropolitan Partnerships.

It is also important to undertake due diligence and communicate clearly with stakeholders around accountabilities and the expectations of engagement, just as in working with partners in other areas of government business.

2.2 Map stakeholders

A key part of scoping an approach is to understand what the problem looks like for the community. Stakeholder mapping can help with this. This process should be ongoing and will identify affected community members and organisations, and how best to engage with them throughout the initiative. Think about leveraging the knowledge and expertise from across government in mapping and working with diverse cohorts and communities including be connecting with areas across government that have ongoing relationships with stakeholder groups such as the Office for Disability or Regional Partnership and Metropolitan Partnership teams.

Local councils should ideally be involved and considered a critical partner in working in place. People with lived experience are also critical partners to provide an expert perspective to help guide design and implementation. Local academic institutions could also be engaged to build local capacity and leverage local knowledge and expertise.

Tips for mapping stakeholders:

- The usual suspects – start with those already engaged in the issue.

- The unusual suspects – complex issues often require looking beyond immediate stakeholders to work across industries and sectors so consider thinking 'outside the box' about who could be involved.

- Internal and other departments – reach out to program areas within the department in the target area, other departments and agencies.

- Community members – who are the people directly and indirectly experiencing the problem or who could benefit from the opportunity?

- Organisations, bodies and groups – which groups, businesses and organisations can contribute to the discussion and provide insight and knowledge?

- Check and revisit your list – ask who is already engaged and who else needs to be consulted, and revisit the list throughout the initiative, as it could change over time.

- Agreement – seek broad agreement on the stakeholder list, with the option to be flexible and change scope.

2.3 Engage local business and industry

There can be a lot of goodwill among local businesses around tackling social issues that affect their community, and a willingness to be involved. Local businesspeople can bring skills and insight into place-based approaches but may be unsure how they can contribute. You may need to tailor your approach to engaging local businesses to generate trust and explore how they can contribute at different stages of the initiative.

2.4 Leverage community and government champions

Most communities have existing local leaders who can work with you to champion the initiative, bring in new volunteers, advertise engagement activities and assist with day-to-day activities. More importantly, these people can be crucial to building trust and credibility in the community you are working in.

It is also critical to engage with the network of government champions at local, regional and central levels with prior experience working with communities and place-based approaches.

The Victorian Government's *How-to guide for public engagement* is a great resource to help plan engagement.

Strategy ③

Adopt an appropriate collaboration and engagement approach

In some cases, government's role may be to collaborate with a place-based initiative to effectively engage directly with community members. As a collaborative partner in this work, design and test an overall engagement approach, including a clear definition of the purpose of your engagement activities. A range of tools and methodologies can be drawn on to do this.

Things to include in communication to the community:

- the reasons for the place-based initiative

- why it is important

- why local people should be actively engaged and drive the initiative.

It is important to be aware of consultation fatigue. Work with the place-based initiative to identify opportunities to ask the community how they want to be involved and what support they need – enable a spectrum of engagement.

Communities of Practice are a great platform for networking, relationship building, and knowledge sharing and could be considered as part of the engagement approach.

3.1 Work collaboratively to develop an engagement plan

Elements of a good engagement plan include:

- understanding the engagement to date – what has the community already undertaken and how have they been involved? What is the context of this engagement?

- the decision-makers – who has the authority to make decisions?

- purpose and objective – what are the challenges, and what are the desired outcomes?

- negotiables and non-negotiables – what aspects can the community have influence over, and what are driven by broader government policy settings?

- key questions – what information can the community provide to help with decision-making?

- identifying stakeholders – who are the stakeholders relevant to the initiative and what influence will each stakeholder have on the outcome?

- engagement roadmap – how will you report back on the information collected through engagement activities?

The Victorian Auditor General's _Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide_ is a helpful resource to plan engagement.

Use the following six Victorian Government principles to help guide the engagement process:

- We are purposeful and our engagement is meaningful – we know why and who we are engaging

- We are inclusive – we provide opportunities and support to enable participation

- We are transparent – we clearly communicate what community can and cannot influence

- We inform communities – we provide relevant and timely information to the public

- We are accountable - we provide regular updates and complete the feedback loop

- We create value for the community and government – we value participants' knowledge and time and their inputs in the decision-making process.

When engaging with First Nations communities and organisations, the principles of Aboriginal self-determination, as outlined in the Victorian Government's _Self-determination Reform Framework_ should be applied.

> Refer to the 'Working with First Nations communities' section of _Chapter Three: Working with Diverse Communities_ to learn more.

3.2   Public Participation Spectrum

A helpful tool to understand and plan collaboration and engagement is the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) _Public Participation Spectrum_. The Spectrum helps define the public's five potential roles in any participation process: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

You could work collaboratively with the place-based initiative to use these roles to define the level of participation required for each stakeholder group and individual. For example, some stakeholders may collaborate with the team to help propose solutions.

The Victorian Auditor-General's _Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide_ includes a high-level framework which can help you decide how best to involve the public in decision making.

3.3   Co-design

Co-design is a process that uses creative and participatory methods that can meaningfully empower community stakeholders to design new products, services, and approaches in the context of place-based work.

> For more on Co-design, see the _'Methodologies, models and tools'_ section of this chapter.

Strategy ④
Establish governance and power-sharing mechanisms for working in place

Establishing appropriate governance and power-sharing mechanisms is vital to ensuring inclusivity and transparency, which underpin many foundational principles for effective collaboration, engagement and joined-up work across government.

4.1 Establish governance structures

Governance arrangements create the basis for collective action and should enable meaningful involvement by the community and relevant government partners. Effective governance structures allocate responsibility, enable issues to be escalated and addressed, and guide the direction of place-based initiatives.

Also think about governance arrangements within government that could be established or leveraged to build support and buy-in; troubleshoot issues where government holds levers; coordinate across portfolio boundaries; or drive system change in response to barriers faced by place-based initiatives.

> Refer to *Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance* to learn more.

4.2 Create power-sharing mechanisms

Governments can share control, influence and accountability with community by partnering in decision-making with local people and organisations. Ensuring that communities have authority within the initiative is a defining feature of place-based approaches. Consider how you and your team will share decision-making, influence, control and accountability with community members and other stakeholders.

For example, this can happen through:

- collaboratively defining outcomes and objectives

- active participation in governance groups

- flexible funding that allows for local decision-making control over design and ongoing implementation

- designing evaluations and the process for incorporating learning.

Awareness of the structures and systems that produce or reinforce power is key to doing this work well. Power-mapping can be a useful tool to help you.

The scope of power-sharing will vary according to government's appetite for risk and the capacity or readiness of local partners. Remember that local and broader systemic circumstances might change throughout the life cycle of the place-based initiative. This includes the political, economic and social conditions experienced by a community, such as the closure of a major local industry, a natural disaster, disturbances or other major events such as a community conflict.

> Throughout a place-based initiative you should continually consider whether you are sharing the right level of decision-making, influence, control and accountability and if you are sharing them in the best way.

Things to ask when considering power-sharing:

- Are the people with the most knowledge and expertise supported to determine how to engage with an issue or opportunity?

- Who is not participating in power-sharing and why?

- Are Aboriginal peoples and communities being empowered consistently with the principles of self-determination, the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework* and the Victorian Government *Self-Determination Reform Framework*. Refer to *Chapter Three: Working with Diverse Communities* for more information.

- Is partnered decision-making supporting stakeholders to progress towards an outcome? (Victorian Government, 2020).

Strategy ⑤

Adopt mindsets for working in place

The following mindsets are helpful when working in place.

5.1 Listen to the community and act accordingly

Government's work with a place-based initiative is unlikely to be successful if it assumes what will be best for the community or imposes its ideas and priorities on the community. While research, evidence and data are all important when understanding issues in communities, context expertise – that is, community experience and understanding – is crucial.

Provide plenty of opportunities for community members to be heard by government and key stakeholders, including what they would like to achieve, the outcomes they would like to see, and how they think change should happen.

5.2 Take an evidence-informed approach

Evidence-informed policy is about synthesising the best available data from a range of sources to guide decision-making and support a learning culture across all phases of a place-based initiative.

In the early phases, evidence informs the discovery of needs, what will be done and why. Communities should determine what it is that they want to achieve and – based on advice and information – how to achieve it.

Things to consider in the early phases:

- What is the problem, issue or opportunity? What does success look like? What outcome(s) are you seeking?

- How do you intend to respond to this problem, issue or opportunity?

- Is there evidence that this response works?

Remember, there are many different types of evidence, and the quality can vary depending on how the data was collected.

Refer to *Chapter Five: Data and evidence* to learn more about data quality and collection.

5.3 Foster a 'safe to fail; free to learn' environment

A place-based approach must have the flexibility and permission to make mistakes, fail and learn – this is part of their appeal. They provide an opportunity for small scale, relatively low-risk investment in innovative solutions to long-term and often enduring challenges, based on local evidence and expertise.

Place-based approaches provide a platform for collaborative work between a range of experts within a place, including the people whose lives the initiative is aiming to impact. It's a platform to test and try new approaches, based on local evidence and expertise. Even if the approach experiences some failure, there will be valuable learnings, which brings the initiative closer to future success.

Working collaboratively to build an authorising environment – supported through governance, local decision-making and funding arrangements – that fosters a 'safe to fail' and learning culture, will help ensure that the place-based initiative can reach its full potential.

5.4 Progress with a systems-thinking frame of mind

When working collaboratively with a place-based initiative, try to think about the broader system rather than thinking about issues and solutions in terms of individual programs. A programmatic solution, such as an additional or bolstered service is not wrong, but it may not be sufficient to solve the problem or capitalise on an opportunity. Try to consider the system levers you think may create impact at the local level, and what system change might be required to better support a place-based initiative or place-based approaches more broadly.

These key principles of systems thinking may be helpful to understand and implement a place-based approach:

1. The political, social, economic, and cultural systems impacting a local community are complex and cannot always be fully known.

2. The understanding of any system comes from:

   • drawing together diverse perspectives and utilising diverse methodologies

   • focusing on the behaviours and dynamics of the system

   • regular reflection and adaptation of process and continued, consistent assumption checking.

For more on systems change thinking, see _The Waters of System Change_ by John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge (2018).

5.5 Foster the conditions to support joined-up work

Government's traditional approaches to policy and programs, including centrally determined targets and top-down performance management, can present barriers to joined-up work. Research confirms that fostering key supporting conditions can enable more effective collaboration and coordination across government portfolios and levels of government.

The central supporting condition is an 'enabling culture, values and ethos' for joined-up ways of working. Other key supporting conditions include:

• an enabling and flexible operating environment that supports joined-up and partnership ways of working

• strong and supportive authorisation from central government and local community leaders to undertake joined-up ways of working across government and with local communities

• VPS staff capabilities to confidently engage in joined-up and partnership ways of working.

For more on these supporting conditions and how to foster them, refer to _Boundary spanning to improve community outcomes: A report on joined-up government_, and _Chapter Eight: Skills, capabilities, and mindsets_ for more on staff capabilities required for effective joined-up work.

During the 2021 Covid-19 lockdown, almost 20,000 Greater Shepparton residents were placed in Tier One, 14-day isolation with little warning. Read more about how the place-based Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project mobilised to support the community in the case study at the end of this chapter.

How to work with key partners as part of a place-based initiative

Collaborative approaches support and guide people to achieve change, with an emphasis on working in agile and adaptive ways on cycles of small-scale testing and learning. Government partners can contribute to place-based initiatives by working with the community to draw on a broad range of methodologies and tools — whether established or newly developed (Victorian Government, 2020).

Methodologies, models and tools

There are many methodologies, models and tools to help as you collaborate with a place-based initiative to design and implement change.

The most suitable methodology and tool will depend on your purpose, context and objectives. A place-based initiative may draw primarily on one or use a mix to achieve agreed goals.

Methodologies

Methodologies that offer a structure to guide the implementation of place-based approaches through the different stages include:

- Collective Impact Framework – used for population-level and cohort-specific change outcomes (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

- Smart Specialisation Strategy – used for regional development outcomes (European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2011).

- Asset-based community development – used for local community-level strengthening (Nurture Development, 2018).

Models and tools

The following models and tools can help enable a place-based initiative to achieve its objectives. It is good to understand the differences and nuances of each to determine which is best suited to a given context.

Adaptive cycle

The _Adaptive Cycle_ model is a useful way to think about the place-based 'journey.' It suggests a robust place-based approach is one that continually develops and adapts over time, as a cyclical process based on continuous improvement.

The model features five stages, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. It commences with exploration to develop options and then progresses into the development stage. As an initiative becomes more established, it will experience growth before reaching a state of maturity. Should processes become too rigid, the initiative may be unable to adapt to changing circumstances, leading to a decline its effectiveness.

While decline may appear to represent a 'failure,' it provides an opportunity to pause for reflection. This release regenerates the initiative as those involved begin to explore new options.

Figure 2.1: The adaptive cycle model (adapted from Cabaj, 2016)

The rigidity trap:
The initiative begins to decline as processes have become too rigid.

Growth

Exploration
You may experience:
Creativity, prototypes, uncertainty, different perspectives, research.

The insights you gather present options to you

Development
You may experience:
Flexibility, trial and error, adaptivity, inefficiency, tolerance.

Your patience is becoming effective

Release
You may experience:
Chaos, loss, blame, little structure.

Heavy reflection leads to new energy and hope

Maturity
You may experience:
Efficiency, certainty, stability, predictability, fast returns.

Performance is highly predictable

Co-design and human-centred design

Co-design and _human-centred design_ (HCD) puts people front and centre when designing a solution to an issue. The place-based initiative may find it useful to draw on co-design and HCD principles as it works with local stakeholders to identify the solutions that are best suited to the local context and desired level of change.

Auckland Codesign Lab has further information on how to effectively use co-design and a range of resources.

Place-based system change approach

A _Place-based Systemic Change_ (PBSC) is defined by "the area it covers and the relationships, practices, assumptions and ultimately systems which shape that place. It's not something that skims the surface nor something that is simply replicable from place to place" (Hitchin, 2020).

A PBSC approach often focuses on digging deeper into issues, relationships and the dynamic nature of a place to learn how social problems can be shifted.

Case study:
The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (Victoria)

History

The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (Lighthouse Project) is a community-driven place-based initiative that aims to systemically address the issues impacting children and young people living in Greater Shepparton.

Lighthouse Project and Victorian Government Partnership

The six-year funding commitment by the Victorian Government has enabled the Lighthouse Project to build cross-sectoral relationships across the local community.

Lighthouse Project approach

The Lighthouse Project utilises volunteers, data interrogation, collaboration, innovation and systems thinking to create change and develop responsive solutions to support all children and young people to thrive. These were critical in harnessing local 'know-how', resources and expertise to respond to food shortages experienced by the local community during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The emphasis by the Lighthouse Project on community voice – from the 1000 conversations and ongoing engagement through their 'Collaborative Leadership Tables' (community decision-making forums) – meant that they stay attuned to community needs and strengths.

During the 2021 lockdown, almost 20,000 Greater Shepparton residents were placed in Tier One, 14-day isolation with little warning. The impact of this was widespread, leading to the closure of several schools and the collapse of supermarket delivery systems due to overdemand and staff shortages. A large proportion of families and residents were forced to self-isolate without access to essential food supplies or their own support networks.

The Lighthouse Project has a strong history of activating community volunteers, with over 500 volunteers contributing to their initiatives prior to the impacts of Covid-19 in 2020. The 2021 outbreak activated their network of volunteers to support GV Cares, a Lighthouse Project driven local network for critical food relief that factored in the differing needs of Greater Shepparton's diverse community.

Through the outbreak in September 2021:

- 300+ community members offered their support, with 150 volunteers directly assisting with food deliveries

- at the peak of need, volunteers delivered to approximately 570 homes a day

- approximately 50% of people isolating were beneficiaries of the food relief

- over 2000 individual requests were processed

- a total of 4814 deliveries were completely processed through the Triage Team

- approximately $150,000 donated to GV Cares initiative.

Through this work, the Lighthouse Project supported the public health response by ensuring community members had key supplies and connections to be able to stay at home during this critical time.

> The Lighthouse Project credits this success to activating 'local people with high social capital [who helped] to make this happen' and believes that the power of place-based initiatives is 'the local 'know how' that government can sometimes struggle to tap into'.

Visit *www.gslp.com.au*

Additional tools and resources

- *Social Capital Building Toolkit*, Sander and Lowney, 2006

- *Tools for Systems Thinkers: Systems Mapping*, Acaroglu, 2017

- *Collaborative Change Cycle*, Platform C

- *Human-centred design Playbook*, Victorian Government, 2020

Chapter Three:
Working with diverse communities

Overview

What is diverse community?

> Community empowerment and effective, ongoing collaboration and engagement is essential for successful place-based approaches. However, there are many different communities in Australia. So, when working with a place-based initiative, it's important to consider diverse community needs and their cultures while working with them.

Diverse, inclusive and liveable communities create the social and physical environments which support people to thrive. Being able to safely identify with culture and/or identity is empowering for individuals, families and communities. Valuing and respecting diversity means people accept differences amongst individuals and groups, which fosters wellbeing and is part of the social capital of a community.

This chapter provides guidance around working with diverse communities including:

- First Nations communities
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- people with disability
- people of different ages
- LGBTIQ+ communities.

This chapter also highlights the importance of understanding intersectionality – appreciating that many factors combine to form an individual's identity and experience, and that different aspects of a person's identity can expose that person to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. This includes gender, class, ethnicity and cultural background, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

Why is it important?

Communities are not homogenous, and individuals within communities may experience overlapping and interdependent forms of discrimination, vulnerability and disadvantage (Victorian Government, 2021). Engaging and collaborating with diverse communities will also help to ensure that the full spectrum of a community's strengths, skills, perspectives and talents can contribute to the success of a place-based initiative.

Working with diverse communities and population groups

Groups within a community can experience place differently, so try to recognise and find ways to work with less prominent or marginalised groups. A one-size-fits-all approach to collaboration and engagement can unintentionally discriminate against parts of the community, limiting valuable contributions. Using engagement methods that are responsive to people's needs helps make it possible for different community members to fully participate in place-based approaches.

The Victorian Government's *How-to guide for public engagement* is a great resource to help plan engagement.

Working with First Nations communities

The key starting point to working with First Nations communities is to work in a way that enables self-determination as outlined in the Victorian Government's *Self-Determination Reform Framework*.

It states that future government action to advance Aboriginal self-determination will be driven by 11 guiding principles:

- human rights
- partnership
- investment
- cultural integrity
- decision making
- equity
- commitment
- empowerment
- accountability
- Aboriginal expertise
- cultural safety.

The Victorian Government has also identified four self-determination enablers which it must act on to make self-determination a reality:

- prioritise culture
- address trauma and support healing
- address racism and promote cultural safety
- transfer power and resources to communities.

Self-determination goes beyond engagement and consultation, to Aboriginal ownership, decision-making and control over the issues that affect their lives.

The _Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework_ self-determination continuum provides a powerful representation of working in place with Aboriginal communities to advance self-determination ranging from informing community through to transferring decision-making control.

When working with an Aboriginal community, ensure that the methods of engaging are agreed on by the community before engagement commences.

You should also be mindful of the wider context of collaboration and the process of trust building in progress. _Treaty in Victoria_ is a significant component of this broader context.

> Cultural safety is also vitally important when working with Aboriginal communities. Cultural safety is about shared respect, knowledge and understanding, empowering people and enabling them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.
>
> **(Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2010)**

It is important to acknowledge and be respectful of the deep experience and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, their diverse communities and cultures.

Things to consider when working with Aboriginal communities

Be aware of attitudes to and previous experiences of consultation

Aboriginal communities may view consultation negatively, as they may have been asked to participate in numerous consultation processes, have experienced poor consultation, or might be doubtful about how their opinions will be respected. They may be concerned there is no avenue for genuine change.

Seek a range of views

A place-based initiative will benefit from working with a range of different Aboriginal organisations, communities, cultural and language groups and respected individuals. Involve Aboriginal peoples from the very outset of your initiative and use informal communication channels where appropriate.

Develop trust and rapport with the community

Develop positive relationships with elders, local Aboriginal role models, peak organisations and their senior management and build trust – take sufficient time and resources to communicate how the advice/ information given by Aboriginal communities will be used and how you will report back on outcomes. Choose appropriate catering and venues and consider transport needs for elders in the Aboriginal community with whom you are working.

Communicate carefully and respectfully on sensitive issues

Be mindful when working with Aboriginal people around difficult issues that may have touched their lives, and of their spiritual and cultural beliefs, including protocols around 'men's business' and 'women's business'. Use the right words and forms of address and ensure that all relevant information is accurate and clearly presented. Refer to the Victorian Public Sector Commission *Aboriginal Cultural Capability Toolkit* for more information.

Where to start

Start with key local groups, networks and organisations such as:

- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

- Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs)

- Aboriginal Engagement Networks

- Local Aboriginal Engagement teams in your department

- Local Aboriginal Governance engagement structures

- The Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance

- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

- Aborigines Advancement League

- Aboriginal cooperatives providing health and community services.

Engaging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

Place-based approaches must carefully consider the cultural and linguistic diversity of their set location. Some initiatives may focus on working with particular groups within an area on a locally identified challenge, and other initiatives may seek to consider the needs of diverse groups as part of a whole-of-community approach.

It is critical to clearly define the target cohort of the place-based initiative to effectively engage Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community members.

Things to consider when working with CALD communities

A key element to effectively engage with CALD communities is to define the local populations' language needs and preferences. For example, some communities may need or prefer the use of bicultural workers. Bicultural/transcultural workers can be particularly helpful in building trust with communities when needed. Other communities may require an accredited interpreter and/or translated materials, both can help to make your resources and services more accessible.

> You may also consider engaging trusted community leaders or community organisations to facilitate communications and engagement with CALD communities.

Cultural safety is also an important consideration and ensuring people feel comfortable and safe to engage with your services.

Where to start

A wide variety of community organisations and key agencies have strong connections with CALD communities, including:

- *Centre for Multicultural Youth*

- *Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia*

- *Victorian Multicultural Commission*

- *Refugee Council of Australia*

There are also many multicultural community organisations that represent specific communities.

The Department of Health and Humans Service *Language Services Policy* has good information about planning and providing language services.

Engaging people with disability

Disability can take a range of forms, being 'any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility functions and could be caused by accident, trauma, genetics, or disease' (Australian Network on Disability, 2018). There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to engaging with people with disability, and to foster an inclusive space for people with disability you will need to understand and tailor your approach to the people you are working with.

Things to consider when working with people with disability

It is important to understand that disability can be 'permanent or temporary' and is something that an individual can be born with, or they can acquire over the course of their life. In addition, disability can be visible, such as a physical impairment or blindness, or it can be invisible, such as deafness or a mental health condition.

Another important distinction is that not all people with disability are a part of a community. Partnering with people with disability and increasing collaboration in program design and delivery is vital to increase inclusion and support more informed decision making and investment. This approach is sometimes referred to as co-design, and is one of six systemic reforms outlined in the Victorian *State Disability Plan*.

Some broad measures that place-based approaches can implement to support people with disability include:

- using clear and appropriate language
- using inclusive language
- asking people if they require any reasonable adjustments to fully participate or engage
- ensuring promotional, educational and other materials are available in accessible formats
- engaging with a disability-led organisation to help design comms and engagement

- using venues that are fully accessible and close to public transport
- providing Auslan interpreters where needed
- providing closed captions where needed.

Where to start

These resources are a starting point for engaging with people with disability:

- *Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022–2026)*
- *Australian Network on Disability website*

Engaging with different age groups across the community

Think about the different age groups in the community, including young people and older people, and how best to engage with them.

For older people, present information in formats that everyone can access (not exclusively in digital formats), select suitable venues and even reach out to retirement homes and nursing homes to increase participation.

For young people, use a diverse range of platforms and methods. Refer to the *Victorian Youth Strategy* for more detailed information on engaging with young people.

Engaging with LGBTIQ+ communities

There has been increased awareness of LGBTIQ+ communities in recent years, however people from these communities continue to face discrimination. Being LGBTIQ+ is often only one layer of an individual's identity, so it's important to recognise that those who identify as LGBTIQ+ come from a wide variety of backgrounds and life experiences. Many people who identify as LGBTIQ+ also live with other forms of discrimination and inequality. Living with more than one form of inequality is referred to as 'intersectionality'.

Things to consider when working with LGBTIQ+ communities

When engaging with LGBTIQ+ communities, consider the following:

- use clear and inclusive language, and familiarise yourself with the LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide (see below)

- ensure your promotional and other materials use appropriate and inclusive language

- understand intersectionality and the overlapping layers of disadvantage that LGBTIQ+ people can face

- design, develop and refer to infrastructure in a way that is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ communities (for example, gender-neutral toilets and change rooms).

Where to start

These resources may help you understand more about LGBTIQ+ communities and how you can support them:

- *Pride in our Future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy*

- *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide*

Key considerations

Be inclusive

Inclusivity is central to community engagement on all initiatives, including place-based approaches, and should be considered through all stages from planning to evaluation. This includes:

- being culturally responsive and aware

- planning how to make engagement opportunities accessible to everyone

- allocating extra resources and time to those who need it.

Develop a language services policy and guidelines

Consider translating resources to other languages or using interpreters in meetings or community consultation sessions, otherwise target audiences may not have opportunities to fully engage with the initiative. Translation or interpreters can also help prevent misunderstandings on sometimes sensitive community issues.

The Department of Health and Human Services provides helpful resources on *language services policy and accompanying guidelines*.

Design for diversity

The Department of Health *Designing for Diversity* framework and suite of resources provide excellent guidance on how to embed diversity considerations in all aspects of policy and service design. It encourages you to consider intersectionality and place, and how a policy or service may impact different groups of people over the life course. It includes the following resources:

- Principles – four key principles that underpin diversity responsive service design: access and equity, inclusiveness, responsiveness, empowerment and self-determination.

- Key elements – practical examples of implementing diversity responsive design, recommended for use with the rapid review resource.

- Rapid review – a tool that uses a sequence of questions to help recognise diversity considerations, identify strengths and areas requiring more attention on an initiative – to be used alongside the key elements resource.

- Minimum data set guide – outlines a leading practice approach to collect information relating to cultural and linguistic diversity, gender, Aboriginality, disability, and LGBTIQ+ identification.

- Key documents summary – a list of key national and state resources relating to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, gender, Aboriginal communities, disability, and people from LGBTIQ+ communities.

Case study:
Kaiela Institute (Victoria)

History

The Kaiela Institute is a leading First Nations think tank, based in Shepparton, Victoria. Since 2017, the Kaiela Institute has focused on addressing systemic and structural barriers that hinder First Nations employment opportunities. The Kaiela Institute has achieved sustained success by partnering with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses in Shepparton, including the Rumbalara Football Netball Club (Rumbalara) and the Greater Shepparton City Council (Council) to lift the number of Aboriginal people in the local workforce.

DJPR and Kaiela Institute's Partnership

The Algabonyah Business Development Unit (ABDU) at the Kaiela Institute is the lead entity in which place-based approaches are driven. Since 2017, the Kaiela Institute has been funded through the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Region's (DJSIR) Community Revitalisation program. Reimaging the relationship between government and community organisations, particularly those operating in the First Nations space requires careful and considered approaches. DJPR's work with the Kaiela Institute supports its right to self-determination and agency to achieve positive outcomes for community. However, as government operates primarily as a funder, it poses difficulties to truly share power between partners. To overcome this, DJPR collaboratively works to build trust in relationships with local people and organisations, by respecting community-led approaches.

Roles

The Kaiela Institute, as an organisation drives implementation and strategic direction of Aboriginal-led approaches in the region. Government acts as an enabler by resourcing and promoting their work.

The Kaiela Institute has a focus on overcoming barriers experienced by potential Aboriginal entrepreneurs while building a menu of supports in the areas of skills and network building, research and strategic planning.

Two key examples that demonstrate the success of ABDU's work are:

1. Greater Shepparton City Council (Council) lifted their Aboriginal employment target from 2% to 5% elevating staffing numbers to 19 by 2020. Community Revitalisation funding enabled Kaiela to facilitate and promote culturally safe environments in partnership with key local employers, such as Council. This work is critical in overcoming structural barriers to employment for First Nations people in the region by addressing racial prejudices and entrenched disadvantage.

2. By mid-2020, Kaiela Institute, in partnership with Rumbalara Football Netball Club, assisted 81 of 188 employment program participants into employment of greater than 26 weeks, with 51 of those 81 going on to secure meaningful employment outcomes.

Governance

The Kaiela Institute works with all levels of government, the community, individuals and business.

Critically, the Kaiela Institute has secured the support of more than 20 organisations to champion the implementation of the Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity and Productivity Plan (the Plan) from a variety of sectors. The 'Plan Champions' include universities (Melbourne and La Trobe), utilities (Goulburn Valley Water), agriculture and food production (AgBioEn and SPC), First Nations controlled organisations (Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, Kaiela Arts), not-for profits (Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project), as well as variety of small, medium and large businesses. Plan Champions actively influence change by promoting the vision and intent of the Plan, whilst working closely with the ABDU to develop an Aboriginal Participation Action Plan.

> Achieving sustained success relies on the development of comprehensive governance structures that capture a diverse range of voices and experiences. The Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity and Productivity Plan Implementation Committee is an example of this in operation.

A shift to enabling systemic change: The Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity and Productivity Plan

The _Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity and Productivity Plan_ (the Plan) is a bold and courageous, whole-of-region approach to building shared prosperity and reaching First Nations parity in the region.

It brings innovative thinking to empower communities by addressing social challenges that will deliver a significant economic return to the wider regional economy. Through Yorta Yorta and First Nations' economic inclusion and the achievement of parity, the Plan will bring an additional $150m gross regional product (GRP) per annum.

In its implementation, the Plan will foster, promote and amplify the positive cultural and economic contribution that Yorta Yorta and First Nations people can and do make to the Goulburn Murray region.

Visit _www.kaielainstitute.org.au_

Additional tools and resources

Frameworks

- *Self-determination Reform Framework* Victorian Government, 2019

- *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework,* Victorian Government, 2018-2023

- *Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework,* Victorian Government

Strategic Plans

- *Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing plan* Victorian Government, 2017-2027

- *Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan* Victorian Government, 2017-2027

The Algabonyah Business Development Unit at the Kaiela Institute is leading place-based interventions to lift the number of Aboriginal people in the local workforce.

Chapter Four:
Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Overview

How do government agencies and local communities see the impact of a place-based initiative, what works and what does not? How do they promote a focus on outcomes and progress towards them? How do they ensure that resources are invested effectively?

Place-based approaches can be challenging to evaluate because they are community-led, long-term, complex and evolving in nature. This chapter outlines how to develop and implement a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework.

What is a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework?

A MEL framework combines monitoring, evaluation and learning into one integrated system so partners can reflect, adapt and continuously improve.

- **Monitoring –** involves the ongoing collection of routine data.

- **Evaluation –** involves responding to key questions about processes and outcomes using relevant evidence. It can be defined as "the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of place-based approaches to make judgments about the place-based approach, improve the effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future activities" (Australian Department of Social Services, 2019).

- **Learning –** involves using both monitoring and evaluation data to answer key evaluation questions and build understanding to inform strategy, practice and delivery adaption.

It is key to develop a robust MEL framework in the early stages of an initiative and clearly align it with a theory of change agreed by all partners. The _Better Evaluation website_ has more information about theories of change.

For further information, tips and advice, see the _MEL Toolkit_.

Types of evaluations

There are various types of evaluations, including:

- Developmental evaluation – the initiative is evaluated and adapted as needed while being implemented. Read more about developmental evaluation on the _Better Evaluation website._

- Process evaluation – focuses on whether the place-based initiative has been implemented as intended. Find out more about _Victorian standards for process evaluation._

- Impact evaluation – focuses on the longer-term changes because of place-based initiatives. See more about _process and impact evaluation_.

Evaluating place-based approaches provides better learning and impact outcomes when conducted in three overlapping phases, using three different types of evaluation as suggested by the Collective Impact model (Parkhurst and Preskill, 2014; Cabaj, 2014):

- developmental evaluation to provide real-time feedback on strategies and actions and how they are being implemented

- process or formative evaluation to evaluate the design and implementation of the initiative itself

- impact or summative evaluation periodically or at the end of an initiative to examine an initiative's influence on systems and outcomes, or to inform decisions about whether to continue, discontinue, replicate or scale up an initiative.

Note that Collective Impact is an overall place-based design and implementation approach, but not an evaluation method.

Why is evaluation important?

Through evaluation, the place-based initiative can show the changes made during its life span. It also provides a learning opportunity that others can use for any initiatives which follow.

How is a place-based initiative monitored and evaluated?

Evaluating place-based approaches is not always straightforward. Research identifies several reasons:

- they are continuously evolving, and often complex

- the initiative's desired outcomes and the changes expected can be hard to measure (Munro, 2015). For example, behavioural shifts and the quality of relationships

- funding for monitoring and evaluation is not always available

- they have long-term, phased and dynamic objectives

- related to the above, it is difficult to prove that changes to outcomes were caused by the place-based initiative and not other factors

- appreciating and embracing cultural diversity, and respecting the range of perspectives, experiences and knowledge is critical but challenging.

For these reasons, place-based initiatives often find it difficult to provide evidence about their impact. However, the following may help address these common challenges:

- Consider how the place-based initiative will monitor, evaluate and learn from the very start. This will help to ensure meaningful evidence of outcomes is documented.

- Plan early to embed the practice and mindset of MEL into processes and ways of working across the initiative's lifespan. This will help put systems in place to collect data throughout the process.

How it works

The following process will help you work collaboratively with a place-based initiative to design a MEL framework to monitor and evaluate the impact of the initiative.

Stage ① Develop a logic model and theory of change

What are they?

It is important for a place-based initiative to define what it is setting out to achieve, and how it will get there. One way is to develop a program logic or a theory of change. These terms are often used interchangeably, however there are some differences:

- logic model – describes what you expect to happen but does not address why it will happen

- theory of change – identifies how your activities and interventions will create the outcomes you have identified. See the _Better Evaluation website_ for more information on theories of change.

How should they be used?

Both can be a starting point to guide place-based action and provide a basis for evaluation – a theory of change is particularly helpful for place-based initiatives due to their complexity. Remember, the community should be fully engaged in defining the problem or opportunity being addressed and setting the outcomes it wants to achieve. Co-designing a MEL framework with community members and stakeholders can harness local expertise and build community ownership.

Refer to _Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies_ to learn more about collaborative engagement and consultation.

Logic models

A logic model shows how an initiative works and sets out the resources and activities required to achieve expected outcomes. A logic model is often presented visually to show the relationships between different elements of a place-based approach, including:

- inputs, goals and activities
- operational and organisational resources
- techniques and practices
- expected outputs and impacts.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies provides a good *example of a logic template*.

Theory of change

A theory of change is the 'story' of how you will create change; it explains how a place-based approach will lead to the desired outcomes. Theories of change are often represented using a pathway of change diagram. This diagram shows:

- intended outcomes – how communities will be different because of the place-based approach
- causal pathway of change – what changes are necessary and when they need to happen to achieve the outcomes (Taplin and Rasic, 2012).

Remember, most outcomes are also preconditions – meaning they need to happen before outcomes further up the chain can be achieved (Taplin and Rasic, 2012).

A theory of change will help to monitor and report changes, and progress against the intended outcomes. You should revisit the theory of change throughout the life span of a place-based initiative as part of a continuous cycle of learning and sharing knowledge.

For more on this, see the *MEL Toolkit*.

Before you begin

It is helpful to start with the following questions for a place-based initiative:

- What assets and strengths do the community have and how can they be leveraged for the intended outcomes?
- What activities (for example, skills training, establishing partnerships, developing local leadership) are required to achieve the outcomes?
- What additional resources (for example, funding, staffing, materials) are needed to achieve the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes?

Stage ② Develop a MEL plan

A MEL plan outlines the why, what, where and how of the information you plan to collect.

What needs to be included?

This section draws on the Clear Horizon *Place-based Evaluation Framework* to outline how you might develop a MEL plan with a place-based initiative.

As shown in Figure 4.1: The planning steps, there are four steps – frame and scope; clarify the theory of change; plan the evaluation; plan for strategic learning and reporting. Consider applying them in an iterative manner.

For detailed advice on these steps, see the *MEL Toolkit*.

> Refer to *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies* for more information about strong and meaningful community engagement as part of this process.

Figure 4.1: The planning steps

Step 1: Frame and scope the evaluation task	Step 2: Clarify the theory of change and principles	Step 3: Plan the monitoring, evaluation and learning	Step 4: Plan for strategic learning and reporting
• Clarify the 'thing' you are evaluating	• Clarify the high level theory of change – the population level changes you are seeking to improve	• Select your key evaluation questions	• Key mechanisms for data consolidation and strategic learning
• Clarify the audience for the MEL plan and their requirements	• Clarify the outcomes and theory of change	• Develop your sub-questions and key indicators	• Strategy to ensure findings get used for strategic learning
• Clarify the purpose of the MEL	• Clarify the locally developed practice principles and enablers for change	• Select suitable methods	• Consider the need for evaluation studies
• Clarify what success would look like for your MEL plan			• Consider what reports may be needed
• Clarify resourcing and degree of investment in evaluation and choose your 'level'			• Plan governance and sign-off
• Determine who should be engaged in MEL			• Operational considerations
• Clarify which aspects of context you need to consider			

Stage ③
Measure outcomes

Measuring change with large or complex place-based initiatives that have multiple partners and activities can be difficult. One of the biggest challenges is to determine to what extent the changes that emerge in a community are attributable to the activities of the initiative or to other factors.

This is a major dilemma for participants and evaluators of place-based approaches. The traditional 'gold standard' method for assessing attribution is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) where randomly selected groups receive different interventions to determine impact. Place-based approaches do not meet the requirements for RCTs as they are not designed to assess a discrete intervention, but focus on multiple, often intersecting activities. Best practice evaluation of a place-based initiative instead seeks to understand its relative contribution to achieving a defined outcome, acknowledging that the initiative is one of many factors behind a community change (Cabaj, 2014).

Researchers recommend mixed method evaluation approaches that include 'rigorous adaptive designs' to measure impacts (Christens and Inzeo, 2015). This means not relying on one method, but testing which method helps you to answer your evaluation questions better.

Remember to include a timeline for evaluating impact as part of the MEL framework.

What should be measured?

When deciding what to measure, think about:

- the type of evaluation being done

- its intended users

- its intended uses (purposes)

- the evaluation criteria being used (BetterEvaluation, 2016).

When developing the theory of change, think about which outcomes should be evaluated and which indicators to use to measure them. An indicator is something that can be measured to demonstrate if a change has occurred. For example, an evaluation question may be 'How well was the service delivered?' and an indicator of whether a person is satisfied with a service is how likely they would recommend the service to a friend.

Defining what constitutes a positive impact, outcome or indicator is important. For example, if a participant drops out of an education access program, it may be measured as a negative outcome. However, the participant may have dropped out because they secured employment, implying that the program was in fact beneficial. It is important to consider the framing of measures and how they can be analysed together to capture the impacts and outcomes of the initiative accurately.

The _MEL Toolkit_ provides more detailed guidance.

How will I measure it?

There are many ways collect qualitative and quantitative data, such as:

- routine monitoring data

- structured interviews

- surveys

- using existing administrative data.

Refer to _Chapter Five: Data and evidence_ to learn more about data collection methods.

Where will I collect data from?

Common sources of data include:

- records of activities

- participants

- other stakeholders.

> Refer to *Chapter Five: Data and evidence* to learn more about sourcing data.

What will I do with the data?

Ongoing data collection and reflection can be used by a place-based initiative as part of its learning approach, including to adjust action where necessary (an adaptive approach or developmental evaluation). The information can also feed into small cycles of test, review and adapt.

It's important to communicate evaluation results and learnings to various audiences:

- the community – to inform, respect their contribution and communicate future steps

- funders – for accountability and reporting

- across government and stakeholders – to provide feedback around their contribution and shape future changes to the program.

Think about how you can work with the place-based initiative to communicate findings to each stakeholder group. For example, video can be a very powerful way to tell stories and convey impact, but some funders may require a written report; social media may be helpful to reach the wider community but would not be appropriate for VPS staff.

> Share the learnings broadly, including the initiative's successes and what did not work. See the 'Communicate with stakeholders' section in *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies*.

The *MEL Toolkit* provides more detailed guidance.

Key considerations

Embed MEL from the beginning and regularly review

Work with the community to embed evaluation, monitoring, reflective practices, and adaptive approaches into the design and processes of the place-based initiative. Dedicate time to regularly re-visit the MEL to ensure it meets intended objectives and needs.

Build your team's MEL capability

Organisations need the right skills and mindset to:

- conduct evaluations effectively

- establish regular monitoring

- adopt a developmental (adaptive) approach

- embed a culture of reflection and learning in their program.

Dedicate time and resources to building this capacity and capability. It may be helpful to partner with academic institutions or specialists with technical skills in place-based evaluation and measurement. They can contribute their expertise, and help the backbone and community organisations develop these skills.

MEL with First Nations communities

It is critical to recognise the importance of culture in MEL when working with First Nations communities. Culture underpins values, processes, findings and, ultimately, outcomes. It is impossible for MEL to be meaningful to a community if the worldviews that underpin the approach to MEL are not expressly acknowledged and questioned.

The *MEL Toolkit* provides more detailed guidance.

More funding usually pays for better MEL

A lack of long-term investment is a common barrier to understanding the longer-term impact of place-based approaches. Not all place-based initiatives will have the necessary resources to undertake a 'gold-standard' MEL. One solution is a proportional approach, focussing on priority outcomes and being transparent about the MEL's parameters and constraints.

Be realistic about demonstrating impact

Place-based initiatives use long-term strategies for complex challenges and typically work toward systemic change. As shown in Figure 4.3, this kind of change takes time to achieve outcomes and make meaningful impacts. It's important to set fair and realistic timeframes to achieve outcomes, and distinguish between attribution and contribution to change in the community.

Figure 4.2 provides an indicative timeline for the design, implementation and evaluation of place-based initiatives. Adapted from Dart (2019), it aligns with the development of places-based approaches that are evidence informed and use practical logic models and theories of change (Dart, 2019). It also provides a guide to changes that can be measured in the shorter term to demonstrate progress towards achieving impact.

Figure 4.2: High level timeline for design, implementation and evaluation of place-based initiatives

Set-up phase	**Foundations** The readiness of people to begin the change journey is being built. As every place-based initiative will start from a different point and require different foundations, the length of this phase will be different for each but will take at least one to two years.
Initial years 1–3	**Enablers for change** Things are being put in place (for example, community priorities are driving government funding and investment, capacity building, transparent governance, or an integrated learning culture) to enable an approach to create systemic change.
Middle years 3–5	**Systemic changes in the community** Instances of impact for individuals and families, or a specific cohort, are being observed. How the community leads action is changing at a systemic level (for example, better flows of money and resources, improved policies and practices). Action is beginning to make systemic ripples beyond place (for example, policy influence).
Late years 5–9	**Local population impact** Sustainable positive outcomes are being observed in the whole of the community or the targeted cohorts (rather than specific users), showing how people's lives or places have changed and inspiring others to become involved in the approach.
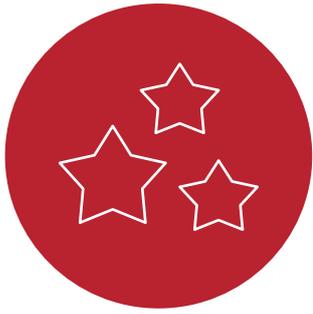
Case study:
Logan Together (Queensland)

History

Logan Together is one of the best examples of a place-based approach bringing local services and community members together in a coordinated way to help 5000 more Logan kids thrive by age eight. Logan Together is a 10-year community movement that began in 2015 aiming to improve the lives of children and families in Logan, Queensland. It builds on a genuine collaboration between the community, service providers, community organisations, government partners and the business community.

Logan Together approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning

Clear Horizon and The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), partnered with the Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) to develop a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework (the framework) to evaluate the impact of the Logan Together movement. This was co-designed with stakeholders as 'proof-of-concept' for the development of the place-based evaluation framework. The framework was designed to provide a flexible and rigorous methodology for monitoring, evaluation and learning across the 10-year movement; however, Clear Horizon also provided a short-term (two year) plan to accompany the framework.

The framework followed the Collective Impact model which favours shared measurement to monitor and evaluate changes which involves tracking progress, usually for population level outcomes. In this approach all partners collect data and measure results at the community level in a consistent way against a short list of quantitative indicators.

A Roadmap was also developed as a way of organising how population outcomes would be measured against Logan Together's shared vision. The Roadmap's focus areas are:

- Ready to have kids
- Good start in life
- On track at 3 years
- On track at 5 years
- On Track at 8 years
- Family foundations
- A strong community
- Effective systems.

The *Logan Together Progress Report* published in July 2020 evaluated the implementation and progress of the Logan Together Collective Impact initiative from mid-2018 to early 2020. It showed that Logan Together had made sound and positive progress towards the longer-terms goals of their Roadmap via a Collective Impact approach. It also contributed to community level and systemic changes, and the local governance group ('backbone team') has played a catalyst and enabling role.

Visit *www.logantogether.org.au*

Additional tools and resources

- Victorian Government resources (available internally to VPS, not publicly accessible)

  - *Monitoring and Evaluation Guide,* Department of Health and Human Services.

- Commonwealth Government guides and frameworks

  - *Place-based Evaluation Framework*, Department of Social Services, Australian Government.

  - *Indigenous Advancement Strategy Evaluation Framework* Australian Government, 2018.

- Other resources

  - *Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Strategy: Logan Together 2018 – 2025* Clear Horizon and The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, 2018.

  - *Learning in Action: Evaluating Collective Impact*, Marcie Parkhurst & Hallie Preskill for the Collective Impact Forum, 2014.

  - *Evaluating Collective Impact: 5 Simple Rules* Mark Cabaj, *The Philanthropist* (Vol 26, 2014).

Flemington Works is a place-based initiative that works with residents of the Flemington and Ascot Vale housing estates to identify bespoke pathways to employment and economic participation. Read more in the case study in Chapter Seven.
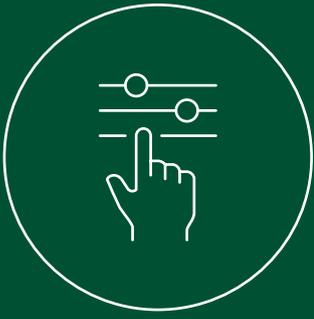
Chapter Five:
Data and evidence

Overview

How does data and analysis support place-based approaches?

Data and analysis are critical throughout place-based approaches to enable partners to:

- see opportunities or challenges unique to that community

- identify and map potential solutions

- demonstrate the impact on the local community as part of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework.

If you are working with a place-based initiative, it's important to have a high-level understanding of how data can support an initiative at every stage – from gathering data, to interpreting and presenting data to stakeholders.

What is meant by data, analysis and other key terms?

Table 5.1: Key data and analysis terms below provides definitions of key terms used when talking about data and evidence. These definitions are critical to understanding what can be shared outside government, and the role government plays to help community partners access, analyse or interpret information as part of a place-based approach.

Table 5.1: Key data and analysis terms

Term	Definition
Data	The facts and statistics captured according to agreed standards for reference or analysis: - qualitative data – non-numerical data that can be observed and recorded, such as interviews or case studies about the local community's experience. This can include Indigenous knowledge systems, experiential knowledge and expertise (lived experience), and practice-based knowledge. - quantitative data – expresses a certain quantity, amount or range, such as the number of presentations to a local hospital's emergency department.
Analysis	Brings order and structure to data by cleaning, transforming, manipulating, summarising, and reducing it to an interpretable form.
Information	When data is processed, organised, structured or presented in a particular context to make it useful.
Interpretation	Meaning is given to data by drawing statistical conclusions, building relationships and implications, and making decisions.
Evidence	A body of facts and information that show whether a hypothesis is true or not true.
Insight	What is gained by analysing data in an organised way, to understand the context of a particular situation, draw conclusions and find opportunities for improvement.
Bias	When the data collection, analysis, information or interpretation is not reflective of the real world.

What can data tell us?

Data and information can support place-based approaches in many ways. For example, helping to identify and prioritise opportunities or challenges in an area and to track progress towards identified outcomes and impacts achieved.

The four major categories of data analytics are shown in Table 5.2: Categories of data analytics and how they relate to place-based approaches. The type of analytics you use will depend on the question you need to answer.

Table 5.2: Categories of data analytics and how they relate to place-based approaches

Category	Asks	Example in a place-based approach
Descriptive	What is happening?	Real-time data showing the rate of people experiencing disadvantage in a specific community.
Diagnostic	Why is it happening?	Exploring the unique cause(s) of disadvantage in community.
Predictive	What might happen in the future, based on analysis of previous trends?	Forecasting future rates of disadvantage in that community, with or without certain responses or supports.
Prescriptive	How can we make it happen?	Exploring different responses or supports to identify the most effective or appropriate for this unique community.

Data throughout the lifecycle of a place-based initiative

Data and evidence can help you measure progress, support continuous improvement and evaluate an initiative. It is important to be aware that data and information will be used differently at different stages to continuously enhance the relevance and success of the place-based initiative (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015).

Table 5.3: Opportunities to use data and analysis in a place-based approach shows how data and analysis can be used at each stage of developing and embedding a place-based approach.

Table 5.3: Opportunities to use data and analysis in a place-based approach

Stage	How data and analysis can be used
1. **Identify if a place-based approach is beneficial**	• build consensus • understand local challenges and strengths
2. **Assess Readiness**	• measure the current state
3. **Develop a shared vision and plan for change**	• define scope • match resources to needs • forecast key dates and milestones • define and measure success • develop benchmarks
4. **Implement together**	• track output or outcomes • report against key performance indicators • build and enhance forecasts • identify potential issues or challenges
5. **Embed a culture of learning and continual improvement**	• identify opportunities for improvement vs cost and impact of changes • measure benefits of improvements • generate connection, shared understanding, and innovation across place • analyse impact/outcome as part of evaluation and review • map investment to impact • reflect on lessons learned
6. **Celebrate and communicate success**	• present data to demonstrate progress and impact

Key principles of data collection and analysis

Data sources

Data and information can be used to provide a picture of a community's experience, how a place-based initiative is tracking against agreed outcomes, and to inform decisions around next steps. To best achieve this, use a range of data sources, including quantitative and qualitative.

The types of data used to effectively track progress with place-based approaches include Indigenous knowledge systems, experiential knowledge and expertise (lived experience), practice-based evidence and qualitative research.

Data quality

Data needs to be a sufficient quality to support evidence-based planning, decision-making and review. The information you collect should be authentic and relevant to place or practice, gathered with care and respect for the source (in line with privacy requirements), able to be understood and described, and have sufficient breadth and/or depth.

Planning

Data needs and objectives should be planed early, such as when you design the MEL framework. This will help ensure that the data is valuable to the work. When thinking about the MEL framework and the kind of data needed, consider the following:

- What data or information will you need, and when, to monitor the initiative?

- What impact are you aiming for and how will it be demonstrated?

- What is already known about the target community or cohort, and how can you develop an accurate understanding of the current state?

- How can problems in the initiative be detected after it has commenced?

Refer to *Chapter Four: Monitoring, Evaluation and learning* to learn more about planning a MEL framework.

Diversity

Use a wide range of data sources to capture a sufficiently diverse range of experiences and avoid data bias. This is different to the question of quality: a high-quality data set may not sufficiently capture the full range of perspectives you need for your work.

Remember that many factors combine to form an individual's identity and experience, and intersectionality should be considered in data collection, analysis and use.

Ensure your datasets and analysis report a high-level perspective, as well as the impact of key priority groups within the community, for example, LGBTIQ+, CALD, people living with disability and young people. Experiences within small subsets of the community may significantly differ from the average or majority experience. For example, population-level statistics may not capture:

- cyclical variations such as seasonal agriculture workers

- impacts of unusual situations such as pandemics

- unique experiences, such as the multitude of reasons a student may disengage from education.

Tips to incorporate diversity into your data collection and analysis:

- use a variety of data sources, including government-owned data and community-owned data

- ensure your data adequately reflects the make-up of the community and can offer deeper analysis than just population-level outcomes

- utilise data from many different departments and levels of government, and from local organisations and partners

- look for case studies and quotes from community members in addition to data, as well as capture stories of impact at the local level. These can add a powerful new dimension to your analysis, help unpack the impact of certain outcomes, and capture new perspectives

- use a combination of traditional data sources and stories of impact to build a more complete picture.

First Nations Data Sovereignty

When working with First Nations communities, it is critical to understand what data sovereignty means to the First Nations communities you are working with and how to operationalise it.

Principles for Aboriginal data sovereignty are outlined in the *OCCAAARS Framework*:

- ownership

- control

- custodianship

- access

- accountable to First Nations

- amplify community voice

- relevant and reciprocal

- sustainably self-defining.

The MEL toolkit provides further guidance regarding First Nations Data Sovereignty, and includes has case study where the OCCAARS Framework has been applied to data governance in a process involving government stakeholders.

Collaborative sense-making

Place-based initiatives provide an opportunity for 'collaborative sense-making'. You may already use a collaborative approach to gather data, and broaden how it is conceived and used. For example, valuing community collected data and information that reflects the needs and opportunities within a local community.

> Involve the community in the analysis and interpretation of this data to help ensure their unique experiences directly inform decisions and actions.

Collaborative work with communities should involve outreach with local community members and groups, local government, service agencies and Aboriginal agencies. This can provide richer detail and complement existing datasets by providing greater context.

> Refer to *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies* and *Chapter Three: Working with diverse communities* to learn more about stakeholder collaboration.

Relevance

Be clear about the purpose and value-add of data before you gather, analyse and disseminate it. Your MEL framework will help you plan your data needs and objectives.

The Victorian Government has published *guidance specifically in relation to the Victorian Family Violence Data Collection Framework*.

Permission

Data sets can contain private or sensitive information about people's health, lives and experiences. Read the 'Sharing data' section in this chapter for more detail about what to consider.

The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner has published guidance about *information privacy and sharing*.

You may wish to consult with your department's internal ethics and review boards (or similar function) to ensure that you are abiding by expected standards.

Publicly available data

DataVic contains a range of existing, publicly available Victorian Government data that may help inform the place-based approach. There are additional tools and resources at the end of this chapter with other sources of information.

Sharing data

Ensuring safe and secure data sharing to support community outcomes

The Victorian Government has made a commitment to increase public access to government data and ensure it is easy to find and use, through DataVic:

> "The Victorian government recognises the benefits associated with mandating a whole of government approach to the availability of Victorian government data for the public good.
>
> The _DataVic Access Policy_ provides direction on the release, licensing and management of Victorian Government data so that it can be used and reused by the community and businesses.
>
> The purpose of the DataVic Access Policy is:
>
> - to enable public access to government data to support research and education, promote innovation, support improvements in productivity and stimulate growth in the Victorian economy
>
> - to enhance sharing of, and access to, information-rich resources to support evidence-based decision making in the public sector"
>
> The full policy and supporting guidance help clarify which data sets are to be made available and which must not.

The Victorian Government is committed to embedding the effective use of data and information in place. Recent whole-of-government initiatives and work underway through the Victorian Centre for Data Insights, the Victorian Public Sector Data Sharing Framework, _Victorian Data Sharing Act 2017_ and the Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, are demonstrating how data can be used for localised policy planning and service design.

This relies on departments and agencies taking steps to comply with the _DataVic Access Policy_ and making data available. However, the process for releasing data may differ depending on the proposed use for the data. Restrictions that may apply to making datasets available include what the end-product or result may look like, the sensitivity of the data, or the data management standards of the organisation(s) set to access that data. This is discussed further below.

> You should carefully consider data sharing legislation guidelines and frameworks to make sure data can be safely shared and consult with your department's data custodian or business area.

What do I need to do before I share any data?

You should develop an information (or data) sharing agreement before developing any interfaces or providing data securely by electronic means. The agreement should stipulate what data can be shared for what purposes and under what conditions. It should be approved by the custodians of the data being shared. If data you plan to share includes personal or sensitive information, the agreement should clearly specify the permitted purpose for sharing the information, and how this complies with privacy legislation, as well as any restrictions on use or access including any on-sharing permissions or restrictions.

Where can I go for more information?

The *Victorian Public Sector Data Sharing Framework* provides guidance for sharing data across the Victorian public sector, as well as a *Heads of Agreement* for Victorian agencies to share data.

The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) also provides a helpful high-level overview of information sharing including potential risks and why protecting data is so important. The links to three of these guides are include below:

- *Information Sharing and Privacy – Guidance for Sharing Personal Information*
- *Information sharing flow chart*
- *Practitioner Guide: Assessing the Security Value of Public Sector Information*

> Relevant Victorian and Commonwealth legislation, regulations and guidance are also included in the 'Additional resources' section of this chapter.

Presenting and interpreting data

The way you present and interpret data helps others to see the conclusions you are trying to draw based on your analysis. Always present data with the appropriate context and supporting information so it is not open to misinterpretation.

Geospatial mapping

Geospatial mapping means pulling together a variety of datasets about a place to solve a problem or identify solutions. Assembling and looking at data from a place-based perspective can provide a more comprehensive picture of place and be particularly useful to identify and pinpoint areas of need and potential solutions.

A geographic information system (GIS) can be used to plot data on a map, visually integrating locational data (where things are) with all types of descriptive information (what patterns, services, people or other characteristics are there). Geospatial mapping can help to understand relationships and context, or interpret the interaction between space and place.

For example, geospatial mapping could help you see the range of services available in the local area compared to the level of service usage, particular demographics and the rate of access to adequate transport.

Your department may have a spatial infrastructure system including web and desktop mapping applications together with spatial databases and services that can integrate location into business applications or workflows.

Visualising data

Data visualisation can be an effective way to show complex information in a simple, digestible way. It can help you tell the 'story' of a place-based initiative, including why it exists, and what it is aiming to achieve.

Visualisation can include:

- graphs
- flow charts
- Venn diagrams
- infographics.

Best practice principles for data visualisation include:

- Quality – base visualisations on high-quality data and capture a diverse range of datasets to present an accurate picture of the whole.

- Accuracy – provide an interpretation that is accurate within the context of the whole dataset – that is, avoiding any bias.

- Match visual to data type – choose the right chart or visual to ensure your interpretations are clear to the audience. This _guide by TowardsDataScience_ provides further advice.

- Description – Where possible, provide a written interpretation or description of the visual, so the audience cane make sure they understand the graphic correctly.

- Clarity – Ensure your visual provides an unambiguous interpretation, meaning different readers would draw the same conclusion based on your graphic. This _information by HubSpot on data visualisation_ may help.

- Consistency – Use the same set of visual rules to compare data. This allows the audience to read the entire set of visuals as a story, and easily understand and draw conclusions.

- Accessibility – Design with equality of access in mind to ensure a diverse range of users can easily, confidently and accurately interpret your content. This is about inclusivity, not disability. Any presentation or visualisation of data must meet accessibility standards, and Victorian Government legislation requires all internal and external documents and services to comply with the _WCAG 2.0 Accessibility standards_ and the Australian Human Rights Commission's _Disability Discrimination Act 1992_. Your department will have resources and training on how to create accessible content.

Brand Victoria guidelines

The _Brand Victoria Guidelines_ set expectations and standards for publishing materials with Victorian Government logos, including colours, fonts and layouts, which are already approved under accessibility standards.

Challenges with place-based data gathering

Some common challenges to keep in mind when collecting data in place-based approaches include:

- Access to meaningful and up-to-date data about the local area is consistently raised as a key challenge by place-based initiatives.

- It is often difficult to find data that is sufficiently detailed at the community level and it may not exist or be collected regularly by any organisation.

- Some initiatives are unable to source sufficient expertise in data or data analytics. Think about your role in supporting an initiative's capability and capacity in this area.
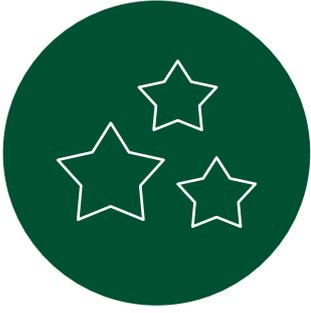
Case study:
Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project (New South Wales)

One recent notable example of efforts to monitor and report data at the local and regional comes from Bourke, NSW, where a community-led collective impact initiative has been developing a Justice Reinvestment approach from 2013, to reduce the high rate of offending and incarceration.

The Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project, as with collective impact approaches generally, aims to provide data-driven interventions, so data collection and analysis are needed to inform local community decision-making about how and where to deploy resources.

Significant effort has been put into setting up local data monitoring systems, as under a collective impact approach outcomes are monitored by a shared measurement system, ensuring they are valued, used and transparent for the community and all project stakeholders involved. This case highlights the benefits of external `data experts' working with local communities and government agencies to build effective and accessible local data platforms to support place-based approaches.

Visit *www.justreinvest.org.au/justice-reinvestment-in-bourke/*

Additional tools and resources

Victoria-specific

Data sharing enablers
Victorian Public Sector (VPS) Data Sharing Framework
VPS Data Sharing Policy, Victorian Government
DataVic access policy, Victorian Government
Victorian Government Risk Management Framework, Victorian Government, 2020
Victorian Public Service Information Management Framework

Legislation and compliance
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
Information Privacy Principles, Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC)
Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017
Health Records Act 2001 including the HPP's (Sched 1)
Freedom of Information Act 1982
Public Records Office Act 1973
Victorian Data Sharing Act 2017
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
Victorian Protective Data Security Standards

Guidance
Guidance for Sharing Personal Information, Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC)
Information Sharing Flow Chart OVIC
Victorian Protective Data Security Standards – Implementation Guidance
Practitioner Guide: Information Security Risk Management, OVIC, 2020
Public Records Office

Tools
VPS Data Sharing Heads of Agreement Victorian Government, 2022
VPS API Gateway and Developer.vic portal
VPS Open Data Portal
VPS Data Directory
Practitioner Guide: Assessing the Security Value of Public Sector Information, OVIC, 2019

National level

Data sharing enablers
Best Practice Guide to Applying Data Sharing Principles, Australian Government, 2019
Five Safes Framework, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021
Intergovernmental Agreement on Data Sharing, 2021

Legislation and compliance
Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022
Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988
National COVID-19 Privacy Principles, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Guidance
Technical White Paper on Data Sharing Frameworks, ACS
Australian Notifiable Data Breach Scheme, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Publicly available data

This table outlines data sources not (yet) available on DataVic, including state and federal government data.

Area of interest	Potential relevant public data sources	Frequency of updates
Rental affordability	*Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria | Rental report*	Quarterly
	Rental Affordability Index - postcode | Rental market | Housing data	Every 5 years
Community safety	*Latest crime data by area | Crime Statistics Agency Victoria*	Annually
Population and forecasted changes	*Victoria in Future*	Every 5 years
Student health	*AEDC public data tables - LGA, SA2, SA3, SA4, GCCSA, Remoteness, GIS and SEIFA*	Every 3 years
Community health challenges	*Victorian Population Health Survey 2020 – Dashboards | Victorian Agency for Health Information*	Approximately annually
Community unemployment	*Small Area Labour Markets (SALM)* Note that future data and content on LMIP will be moving over to the National Skills Commission (NSC) website in 2022: *Small Area Labour Markets | Labour Market Insights*	Quarterly
Community disadvantage	*2033.0.55.001 - Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016 (abs.gov.au)*	Every 5 years
	Victorian Population Health Survey 2020 – Dashboards | Victorian Agency for Health Information (vahi.vic.gov.au)	Annually
	School ICSEA values (school by school) are also available on the *Myschool website*	Annually

Chapter Six:
Funding and resourcing models

Overview

What does place-based funding typically look like?

Effective funding is a key enabler to successful place-based approaches, this has been shown through many reviews, including the _Independent Review of the Australian Public Service_.

Place-based approaches are typically based around a 'backbone' or lead organisation (or group of organisations) in the local community which hold the government funding and coordinate local partners to meet their shared outcome.

Community leaders can also establish place-based initiative without the involvement of government and put in place a clear backbone and focus before government comes into the funding conversation.

Why is it important?

How government invests in a place-based approach can significantly impact its success.

You may be responsible for determining the outcome the funding is seeking to achieve and the lead organisation that will receive the resources.

It is important to be clear on what is already happening in a local area and the role you want to play. Also think about which elements are already funded, for example by existing partners or organisations, and what government can fund to enable local action on the ground.

The Place-based Funding Toolkit

To complement this guide, a comprehensive _Place-based Funding Toolkit_ is available for VPS who are designing or managing funding agreements with place-based initiatives. It provides in-depth tools and tips.

How it works

Activities and functions

There are many different activities and functions that need resourcing during the development and implementation of a place-based approach.

Backbone organisations and functions

Backbone functions can be undertaken in a stand-alone organisation or distributed across partner organisations depending on the size and scope of the collective effort and its specific context.

Refer to _Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies_ for further information.

Backbone functions involve coordinating activities and resource such as:

- strategic direction and governance
- stakeholder communication and engagement
- monitoring data collection and analysis
- managing funding and communications.

Activities of the backbone need sufficient funding to support successful implementation and sustainability.

Refer to _Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance_ to learn more about the key elements of governance structures.

Partnerships

It's important to invest in building partnerships in the early stages to enable collaboration, rather than adopting a funding approach that promotes competition between organisations. Funding partnerships will allow time to develop trust and build relationships, and mechanisms for accountability.

People

Common roles in a backbone include:

- project officer/s to coordinate the initiative and the team

- staff involved in the implementation

- leaders to drive and promote the work.

Some lead organisations, such as backbones, directly employ staff. Other staff may be involved as part of their existing role in an organisation. This can be through dedicated funding or an in-kind contribution from a partner organisation. For example, a partner might allocate one of their staff to collect data to identify local issues without asking for a contribution to the staff's salary.

> Refer to *Chapter Seven: Collaborative governance* and *Chapter Eight: Skills, capabilities, and mindsets* to learn more about building teams and capacity for place-based approaches

Community engagement and development

The success of a place-based approach relies on meaningful engagement with the community to understand the local issues and shape the solutions – but this can require significant time and resources. These activities are key for a co-designed approach, and you should also fund community members' participation.

Capacity building

Place-based approaches require a different way of working from traditional programs so your team and partners will need support to work in new ways and actively participate. For example, developing the capacity of community members to participate in decision-making.

You should also develop the capacity of participating organisations and their workforce to deliver a program or service in a new way. This requires investment in training and mentoring. Community development activities can also be a great way to build local capability and readiness to participate.

> Refer to *Chapter Eight: Skills, capabilities and mindsets* to learn more about building capability.

Project activities

Resourcing is needed for the project activities that make up the initiative, such as the day-to-day running of the service or place-based initiative that is being implemented.

Overheads

Overheads include office space, meeting space, IT systems and other basic operational resources, which will be needed for the backbone functions and project activities undertaken by the initiative. You could fund these through the initiative's formal funding, or they could be provided in-kind by a participating organisation.

Communications

You will need to communicate the initiative's purpose, activities and progress to several audiences, including the community, partners, funders and other stakeholders.

> It is recommended that a strong place-based initiative identity and visual brand is created, and adequate resources are provided to communications and branding. This function would usually sit in the backbone.

Time

Place-based initiatives are long-term – the desired outcomes usually involve systemic change, which takes time. Your funding approach should recognise this and allow the necessary time.

Key considerations

Traditional government funding approaches can be a major barrier to true collaborative working. It's critical that funding for a place-based initiative can be used flexibly.

Be adaptive

The 'emergent' nature of place-based ways of working means that actions will evolve over time in collaboration with the community. Adopt a flexible funding model to provide scope to adapt in line with a developmental approach. This will allow you to accommodate periods where an initiative is active.

Adopt a long-term outlook

Funding should support the long-term nature of place-based work and commit resources to a realistic timeframe. For example, a yearly funding cycle may not provide enough time or stability for your required work. Yearly contracts may also impact staff retention and the continuity of the initiative, when building relationships and trust are fundamental.

Safe to fail; free to learn

Ensure funding is flexible enough to allow for innovation and promote a 'safe to fail and learn' environment.

> For more on this see *Chapter One: Understanding place-based approaches and how they evolve over time.*

Focus on outcomes, not outputs

Funding that is based on measuring and reporting on outputs doesn't work with place-based approaches. Focus on outcomes instead of outputs to allow a deeper understanding of your place-based initiative's contribution or impact (Smart, 2017).

Be prepared to pivot

Flexibility in your organisational structure is key, so staff can pivot between their existing roles and roles in the initiative.

Case study:
Latrobe Valley Authority (Victoria)

Background

The Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) was established in November 2016 following the announcement that the Hazelwood Power Station would close in March 2017. Acknowledging that a different approach was needed to make real improvements to social and economic outcomes for the region, the Victorian Government made a commitment to the Latrobe Valley community that the establishment of the LVA was a 'line in the sand' to ensure long-term delivery, not more short-term plans or promises.

Approach

The LVA's purpose is to be a catalyst for place-based transition, transformation and long-term sustainable prosperity. This involves taking a whole-of-community approach to fostering the conditions necessary for successful transition, and is a genuine place-based response to how government works with a region.

The LVA was empowered with a high level of autonomy and discretion in decision making and funding allocation. There was also a clear mandate to do things differently; to bring community, business and government together to develop and progress a common agenda of shared priorities. This involves building on identified strengths and empowering local stakeholders to take greater control of their future.

Crucially, this does not start from a deficit perspective or a view that regions are a problem for government to fix. It is a genuinely collaborative process that builds multi-level governance and leadership, local knowledge and capability, and empowers communities to develop and implement change. With a team of local staff established in Morwell to work with and for the region, this has helped rebuild community trust in government and reshape perceptions about the potential to secure a strong and prosperous future for the region.

This approach is based on global best practice in place-based regional development and is aligned with the Victorian Government's *A framework for place-based approaches*. The LVA has been cited internationally to illustrate that while it was established as a top-down initiative, its success is largely due to its inclusive and collaborative, bottom-up approach (European Commission, 2019).

Evolution

The LVA's initial focus following the Hazelwood closure was supporting impacted businesses, workers and their families. In addition, a suite of major and community infrastructure, events and programs was delivered to provide a local economic stimulus and boost to liveability.

Over time the focus has evolved to recovery and capability building, and driving system change by enabling the essential conditions for regional growth and transformation across the community and economy.

This evolution is characteristic of true place-based approaches – long-term, collaborative efforts that empower communities to guide change and contribute to a cycle of learning and transformation.

The LVA has drawn on the European model of Smart Specialisation as a strengths-focused, place-based framework to boost growth and employment by supporting the region to identify and develop its own unique assets and resources.

More than 2000 people in Gippsland have been involved across four key sectors which were identified as having key strategic importance and future growth potential - Health and Wellbeing, Tourism, Food and Fibre, and Energy.

Central to the approach is government (state and local), education, industry and the community working together. Joining up government departments and agencies in this collaborative approach has influenced how they, often based and led out of Melbourne, think about their role and contribution as equal partners and decision makers working in a region. There is greater emphasis on collaboration and innovation and providing longer term solutions within and across sectors.

An example

The LVA is maximising outcomes from major projects across economic and industry development, liveability, social connection, employment, training, healthcare and wellbeing, by staking a systems approach to ensure cross-sector collaboration.

The Gippsland Regional Aquatic Centre (GRAC) is contributing to liveability by providing a world-class health, fitness and sports facility for families across the region. The project also provided a boost to the local economy through 450 jobs during construction and 100 ongoing operational and support roles.

However, GRAC is more than just a short-term stimulus.

The Centre is piloting the use of geothermal energy for heating – providing significant operational cost savings as well as establishing future opportunities in the new energy sector.

The LVA commissioned modelling of the future workforce needs and opportunities in Gippsland's health and community services sector. This identified a current skills gap, but community need for, and job opportunities in, allied health services. Federation University has created new courses and GRAC is the site of a Wellness Centre used to deliver training in physiotherapy, exercise physiology, occupational therapy and speech pathology. The Wellness Centre will allow local residents to train and upskill within their own community rather than needing to travel to Melbourne or beyond, before finding a rewarding job in the local healthcare sector.

Visit *www.lva.vic.gov.au*

Additional links and resources

Place-based Funding Toolkit,
Victorian Government, 2022
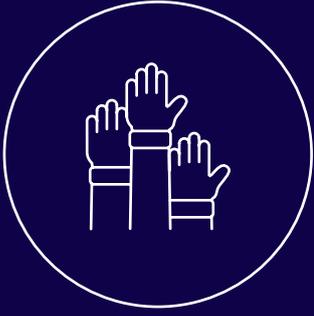
Chapter Seven:
Collaborative governance

Overview

What is collaborative governance?

Governance refers to the structures, processes and relationships that enable work to be organised and decisions to be made. Collaborative governance describes the cooperation between various stakeholders to plan, implement and monitor the place-based initiative.

For a place-based initiative, collaborative governance can be seen as "a formal or informal process where partners representing different interests make decisions together, share resources and strategically align to solve problems" (Weaver, 2021)

In the same paper, the Tamarack Institute outlined key collaborative governance principles:

- transparency and accountability – decisions take place in the public eye

- equity and inclusiveness – all interests who are needed and willing contribute to solution

- effectiveness and efficiency – solutions are tested to make sure they make practical sense

- responsiveness – public concerns are authentically addressed

- forum neutrality – different perspectives are welcome; the process itself has no bias

- consensus-based – decisions are made through consensus rather than majority rule.

Why is it important?

Due to the complex nature of place-based approaches, good governance is critical to success. The Victorian Public Service Commission describes good governance as "the processes by which public entities are directed and held to account" (Victorian Public Sector Commission, 2015). This is important because it makes government and non-government stakeholders accountable for their roles.

How it works

Choosing a governance structure

Governance structures will naturally be different and locally adapted – there is no one-size-fits-all approach. If you are working with a place-based initiative on a collaborative governance structure, think about the unique strategies and goals:

- its scale

- the organisations and communities involved

- the local context.

A governance structure should account for each stakeholder's existing roles and strengths. It should also set a foundation for collaborative action.

Collaborative governance is a critical element of a place-based initiative. Governance influences how policy and operational decisions are made, but also changes policy and provides a framework for cooperation and implementation.

The Tamarack Institute's _Collaborative Governance Framework_ outlines key principles for and core elements of a collaborative governance structure.

The _Indigenous Voice Co-design Process: Final Report to the Australian Government 2021_ provides specific guidance in the context of First Nations governance.

Key elements of governance structures

Every place-based initiative needs a unique governance structure, which may include many of the following elements:

Backbone organisation

Backbone functions can be undertaken in a stand-alone organisation or distributed across partner organisations depending on the size and scope of the collective effort and its specific context. The backbone organisation(s) is a key governance mechanism for place-based initiatives.

The Tamarack Institute's resource on *different approaches for backbones* infrastructure design has further information.

> You can also refer to *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies*.

A strategic governance group

This decision-making body could be a board, council or steering committee. It is responsible for the overall direction and strategy of the place-based approach.

Membership could include all key stakeholders with decision-making authority including community representatives who will represent the views and interests of the local community.

A place-based initiative may also create a separate, more local advisory group to gather and report community views to the strategic governance group and communicate decisions back to community members.

An operational governance group

This is a second form of governance to oversee the practical implementation. It could include subgroups (for example, subcommittees, action groups, reference groups, working groups) that address different goals or aspects.

Each subgroup could regularly contribute information and ideas to the operational governance group and escalate issues or risks as needed. Members could include representatives from service providers, the department and other partners with detailed knowledge of, and responsibility for, program implementation and operations, such as program or operations managers.

See the Go Goldfields 'Collaborative Table' model of governance case study at the end of this chapter for an example.

Key considerations

It takes time and resources to build strong and effective governance

Dedicate adequate time and resourcing to properly engage with stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the challenges and a common agenda. The governance structure should reflect this approach.

Governance structures should build on existing mechanisms and relationships

The governance structure should be purposeful, efficient and straightforward. If appropriate, consider building on an established governance mechanism to maximise opportunities through existing networks, connections and structures. You may have to tailor the structure depending on the context. Always consider local history, relationships and power dynamics within and between the sector and the community.

Try to ensure that governance structures link into broader governance mechanisms as appropriate, including the Victorian *Regional Partnerships* and *Metropolitan Partnerships*.

Governance should balance flexibility with set processes

Governance arrangements need to provide structure and stability, but be flexible, responsive and a reliable source of guidance, decision-making and accountability for resourcing decisions. This can be created through clear and thorough processes, well-organised systems and good communication.

A place-based initiative may need to amend its governance arrangements if it is not achieving its outcomes, not meeting the needs of the initiative, or if a there is conflict.

It can be helpful to map stakeholders to ensure diverse representation

Stakeholder mapping can help you consider what level of representation and involvement is required, and from who. Think about what position people hold, and what they can offer in terms of resources, knowledge, connections and authority, as well as who they will represent. For example, it may be relevant to include an organisation's chief executive officer for strategic insight and resourcing authority and their position on other governance groups, an operations manager for operational considerations, or a program leader for knowledge on program implementation.

> Refer to the 'Stakeholder Mapping' section in *Chapter Two: Working with local communities and government agencies* for more detail.

The Victorian Government *Diversity on Victorian Government Board Guidelines*, ensuring appropriate representation on governance bodies.

Aboriginal self-governance

Self-determination

Aboriginal people as decision-makers is central to the principle of self-determination. This should guide all aspects of the Victorian Public Sector's relationship with Aboriginal Victorians.

Self-governance

Self-determination is central to self-governance. When working with Aboriginal Victorians, a governance structure that is representative of the community is critical to its legitimacy.

It is important to be aware of existing Aboriginal governance groups and engage early with local Aboriginal elders when seeking to engage Aboriginal communities in your place-based initiative. What Aboriginal self-governance looks like may differ depending on the focus and nature of each initiative, and you should always seek advice from local Aboriginal community and organisations.

> Refer to *Chapter Three: Working with diverse communities* to learn more about working with First Nations communities.
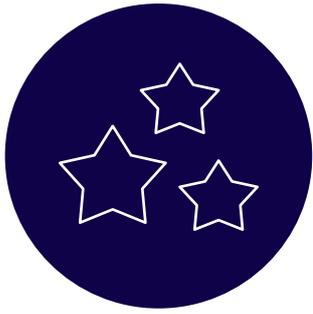
Case study:
Go Goldfields (Victoria)

History

Go Goldfields is a community-driven, place-based partnership which recognises that intergenerational poverty and disadvantage continue to have a profound impact on many people in the Central Goldfields community.

Using the principals of Collective Impact and authentic engagement, Go Goldfields has focussed on positive change through innovation and collaboration. This has involved working with a range of organisations from different levels of government, philanthropy, services providers, community organisations and researchers to improve outcomes for the community.

Go Goldfields approach

Go Goldfields uses a collaborative approach to drive long-term social change for children and families under its new strategic direction 'Every child, Every chance'. It works towards five priority change areas: healthy and supported pregnancies; confident and connected new parents; safe and thriving children; valued early years' education and care; and a great start to school for all kids.

Go Goldfields governance structure

Go Goldfields draws on the Collective Impact approach to guide their collaborative work with diverse partners including government, service providers, community members and advocates, and business. Figure 7.1 shows this in greater detail.

New Leadership and a new initiative

In 2019, the Go Goldfields Collaborative Table engaged with the community, and service, local and State government partners, to understand the most pressing issues facing the Central Goldfields community - and where collaborative, place-based action would make the biggest impact.

After robust discussion, it was agreed to adopt a refined focus on children and their families.

In 2020, the Collaborative Table endorsed a new initiative focussing on children and their families. It employed and built on the rich experience of the Go Goldfields approach and was underpinned by a comprehensive strategy. This included:

- a commitment to the 'Every Child, Every Chance' initiative

- a comprehensive community engagement program

- development and monitoring of an early years change plan

- a revised governance structure to reflect the renewed focus including a new Leadership Table.

- The Leadership Table plays a critical role in providing strategic direction, engaging in joint decision-making and problem solving, and facilitating greater information sharing between partners. It was set up recognising the importance of cross-sector collaborations and partnerships to address intersecting and multifaceted issues affecting the local community. Membership comprises:

- local community advocates, including a community member who is the Chairperson

- Executives from:
  - three Victorian Government departments
  - local government
  - health and family service providers
  - community organisations.

The collaborative work of Go Goldfields is underpinned by a set of guiding principles, set out in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Go Goldfields guiding principles
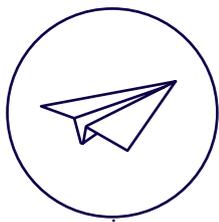
We lead through actioning our belief that we can bring about change

We bring the right people around the table to build and share power
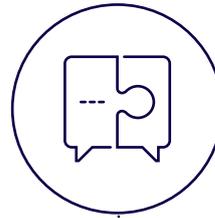
We authentically engage and co-design solutions with those whose lives are impacted
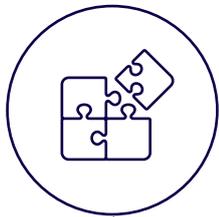
We achieve action through alignment, coordination and resource cohesion

We invest where we see a block or a project action is needed

We learn and innovate to solve a problem when needed

We advocate by using our collective voice to influence policy development
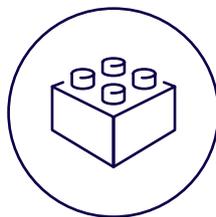
We build capacity and capability to increase knowledge, skills and confidence to implement change

We measure impact and use data to drive the change that is needed

Go Goldfields governance structure

Go Goldfields draws on the Collective Impact approach to guide it's collaborative work with diverse partners including government, service providers, community members and advocates, and business. Figure 7.2 shows this in greater detail.

Members of the Leadership Table work together to influence service systems and policies by using their capabilities and organisational influence to maximise impacts for the community.

Outside the Leadership Table, the Victorian Government also contributes to the initiative in many ways including:

- resourcing – funding for the community driven approach towards its priority change areas, including funds to support backbone functions and staffing

- achieving influence – generating buy-in across sectors, including government, to support the implementation of priorities and to enable joined-up ways of working

- capacity building – advisory support and guidance on the initiative's strategic direction and measurement framework

- shared learning – increasing understanding of how government can work more effectively with communities to better support community-led priorities.

Backbone team

Backbone functions are auspiced by the Central Goldfields Shire Council. The backbone plays a critical role in convening key stakeholders, facilitating collaboration, communication and knowledge, and reducing risk of innovative solutions through demonstration. The Victorian Government has provided a series of grants since 2011 to support the backbone functions. This has enabled Go Goldfields to make substantial progress and adapt their local work to be responsive to emerging needs.

Figure 7.2: Governance structure of Go Goldfields

Measuring our Work

Community Check-In Evaluate the Change Plan, Harvest and Share Outcomes

Our enablers

Leadership Table
- Independent chair
- Community members with lived experience
- Executive representation from:
  - Anglicare Victoria
  - Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative
  - Central Goldfields Shire Council
  - Centre for Non-Violence
  - Committee for Maryborough
  - Department of Education & Training
  - Department of Families, Fairness & Housing
  - Maryborough District Health Service
  - Department of Health

How we Work

Collaboration, Communication and Community Participation

Our executive

Executive

Major Funding Partner
Regional Development Victoria

Auspicing Partner
Central Goldfields Shire Council

Go Goldfields Leadership Table
Chair

Go Goldfields Backbone
Manager

Informing our Work

Research and data, Community Engagement Practice

Our collaborators

Priority Area Partnership Groups
25+ Organisations and Individuals across 5 priority areas
- Healthy and supported pregnancies
- Confident and connected parents
- Safe and thriving children
- Valued early years education and care
- A great start to school for all kids

Go Goldfields approach

Go Goldfields uses its collaborative approach to drive long-term social change for children and families under its new initiative 'Every child, Every Chance'. It works towards five priority change areas: Healthy and Supported Pregnancies; Confident and Connected Parents; Safe and Thriving Children; Valued Early Years' Education and Care; and A Great Start to School for all Kids.

Community representation

The initiative uses a variety of methods to ensure community voice and perspectives drive the strategic vision and are reflected in the initiative's priorities and work plan. For example, in 2015 the backbone team ran a series of community engagement events, called HATCH, with over 300 community members, service leaders, and decision-makers to 'hatch' ideas about what was needed for long-term change. A shared plan of action was developed with input from participants to guide the design and work of the initiative which in turn fostered community ownership of the initiative. In mid-2021, Go Goldfields engaged with over 200 parents and carers of children aged zero to eight years to better understand the Central Goldfields community experience, views of raising children, and what could make it easier. This input is directly informing the local work under the five priorities of 'Every Child, Every Chance'.

Improving outcomes for children and families through cross-sector collaboration

Under 'Every Child, Every Chance', Go Goldfields brings together its diverse partners to identify a common and coordinated approach to enhance service accessibility and flexibility. This is informed by feedback from local families including the need for better community connections; a focus on early prevention rather than delaying to a point of crisis; better access and awareness of available services; options for less formal supports in the community; and services that are welcoming, flexible and understanding.

The priorities under 'Every Child, Every Chance' complement Victorian Government investments – in Enhanced Maternal and Child Health, Orange Door services, School Readiness Funding, funding for the Shire's early learning infrastructure planning, and free three and four-year-old kinder for 2021 onwards – by ensuring these services are better coordinated and more flexible in responding to the needs of local families and children.

The initiative is also partnering with Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) to be the first regional Victorian town to deliver an evidence-based, peer-led parenting program called Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC), developed in the UK.

This focus on driving increased coordination and links across services and sectors has contributed to positive outcomes particularly in the areas of child literacy, family safety and stronger communities including:

- improved childrens' readiness for literacy at school by introducing a new speech pathology service

- improved awareness of the importance of early communication, literacy and numeracy skills among parents and early years providers, with many incorporating these skills into their interactions with children

- improved social connections, confidence and skills in parenting through increased opportunities for vulnerable families to be involved in social and capacity building activities

- empowering and activating the local community to contribute to the Central Goldfields Literacy Strategy consultation by holding 255 Literacy Conversations across the Shire in 2018.

Visit *www.gogoldfields.org*

Case study:
Flemington Works

History

Flemington Works is an initiative of the Moonee Valley City Council (MVCC) to address the employment barriers of women and young people living on the Flemington housing estate. Residents are predominately from refugee and migrant backgrounds with constrained employment opportunities. The initiative works with residents to identify bespoke pathways to employment and economic participation.

MVCC and DJSIR partnership

Flemington Works is funded through the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions' (DJSIR) Community Revitalisation initiative (CR).

Flemington Works Approach

Since its establishment in 2018 to June 2022, Flemington Works has achieved a broad range of economic outcomes for women and young people from the Flemington public housing estate:

- 200 paid employment outcomes for 127 women and 73 young people who reside at the Flemington housing estate

- 40 micro-enterprises established in social change, hospitality and creative industries

- five social procurement outcomes.

Creating social enterprise for migrant women with limited employment options

A Flemington Works co-design process identified that women had cultural knowledge and aspirations to work in the food industry. Following the codesign process, Community Revitalisation funding enabled Flemington Works to provide bespoke food entrepreneurship training that included business mentoring and coaching through the Food Business Boost initiative.

The training culminated in the establishment of 11 micro-catering businesses. These businesses delivered over 42 catered events between mid-2019 and early 2020, generating $40,000 in revenue, and developed four food products for retail sale. The Food Business Boost initiative also supported the women to identify additional distribution channels for their products.

Key outcomes include:

- East African Sisters now runs a stall at Kensington Market

- local café Icecream Social sells a sauce developed by participant pies across its three outlets

- all women sell their products weekly via wholesale food distributor Wholefoods Unwrapped Collective.

The women who participated reported increased confidence and connection to their community:

> "We never would have developed a catering business if we didn't have this support – running this business has made us more confident."
>
> **Participant – Food Business Boost initiative**

Social procurement driving change

Flemington Works has also driven a significant change agenda to reform the social procurement processes of MVCC. Through the MVCC's *Social and Sustainable Procurement Guidelines and Policy,* social procurement has been embedded in the practices of MVCC.

Specific employment targets to employ residents living in social housing have been included in service contracts awarded by MVCC. These contracts have resulted in 23 employment outcomes for local residents. Additionally, the women who have developed their own micro-catering enterprises have been promoted as preferred suppliers and engaged by MVCC, in line with the revised policy and guidelines, further unlocking social and economic benefits for them and their families.

Additional tools and resources

Australian resources

Aboriginal governance and accountability framework, Victorian Government, 2017

Community services quality governance framework, Victorian Government, 2018

Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group case study, Maranguka Community Hub

VPSC Governance Framework

International resources

Collaborative Governance Framework, Tamarak Institute, 2017

Sustaining Collective Impact Efforts Tool, Tamarak Institute, 2017

Constellation Collaboration Model of Governance, Centre for Social Innovation, Canada

Flemington Works is a place-based initiative that works with residents of the Flemington and Ascot Vale housing estates to identify bespoke pathways to employment and economic participation.

Chapter Eight:
Skills, capabilities and mindsets

Overview

What capabilities are needed in place-based approaches?

> Place-based approaches by their very nature require innovation. In the context of government, this requires many capabilities, as well as knowledge, behaviours and the right underlying attitudes. These take time to develop.

Technical skills such as implementing monitoring, evaluation and learning or understanding flexible funding models are important, but equally so are often less championed capabilities. These include connecting and convening, building shared accountability and trust, or capabilities like working collaboratively and systems thinking.

These skills and capabilities need to be developed and fostered for the effective design and implementation of place-based approaches. Capability and willingness to work with the broader institutional systems, across sectors (including government, private sector, community and health sector) and with community, is also key. This can be challenging and requires 'out of the box' thinking and the skills to work with local communities.

The *Place-based Capability Framework* defines and describes those capabilities (skills, knowledge and behaviours) required by the VPS to work effectively in place. The *Victorian Public Service Capability Framework* also includes capabilities that enable place-based approaches.

Building and sustaining a more collaborative and 'joined-up' cross sector culture, complemented by supportive systems and processes, are key enablers of place-based approaches (O'Flynn, Buick, Blackman, and Halligan, 2011).

How it works

Key capabilities

There are many things you can do to build the capabilities required to successfully implement a place-based approach.

Capabilities can be used throughout the employee 'life cycle' from developing position descriptions when recruiting new team members, to the onboarding of teams and the creation of learning and development initiatives.

Understanding the capabilities required to work with place-based approaches at the outset will help you develop these as the initiative matures.

The following capabilities are important for VPS staff and teams working with place-based approaches.

Adaptive and facilitative leadership

Contributing to and fostering a culture of iteration and learning from successes and failures, will support place-based approaches to succeed. The following capabilities support this required leadership:

- **Demonstrates adaptive and facilitative leadership -** understands different viewpoints and creates an environment where stakeholders have an equal voice and contribution to decision making. Creates a culture of learning from successes and failures.

- **Moves groups of people toward a goal -** Identifies common goals and facilitates diverse stakeholders towards the goal, balancing group motivations, needs and values to find common ground.

- **Promotes a test and learn culture -** creates opportunities for government and community stakeholders to share successes and failures and learn from them.

- **Encourages an iterative, learning approach -** creates a culture of continuous improvement, participating in regular review and evaluation to surface lessons learned and applies these to next steps.

Balancing power and sharing accountability

Balancing power and sharing accountability is critical to place-based approaches. By understanding and using power dynamics effectively, shared accountability and trusting relationships can be built between government and community partners. These capabilities are key:

- **Awareness of own power -** able to identify and declare own power and agenda to create transparency in power dynamics. Balances power to ensure all stakeholders are empowered to make decisions.

- **Shared accountability and trust -** builds and maintains trusted relationships that encourage shared accountability and transparency.

- **Flexibility during co-creation -** is open to working with new ideas during collaborative engagement, role modeling good collaboration with others.

- **Awareness of power dynamics -** understands, articulates and maps intersecting power dynamics to achieve better outcomes for place-based initiatives. Promotes ethical use of power dynamics in place-based approaches.

- **Balances government and community needs -** balances listening and contributing and government priorities with community needs, seeking alignment amongst stakeholders. Understands how changes to government priorities may impact various stakeholder groups and manages relationships accordingly.

Information and data sharing

Improving the quality of information and data that is shared with communities, in line with privacy standards and legislation will enrich place-based approaches. The following capabilities support this:

- **Information and data sharing advocacy -** able to describe information and data sharing requirements and why they exist, appropriately accessing and sharing information. Creates a culture of greater data transparency.

- **Accessing information and data through others -** works with relevant stakeholders to obtain, share and interpret information and data. Proactively develops and maintains relationships with government and community stakeholders to build a culture of information and data sharing, championing ongoing and sustainable data sharing arrangements.

- **Improving data quality, access and relevance -** Recognises the importance of quality and relevance when collecting information, ensuring data received is appropriate and relevant. Identifies data access, quality and relevance issues contributing to a culture of continuous improvement in this area.

- **Adheres to relevant legislation -** Appropriately applies and communicates privacy standards and other relevant legislation related to own work., complying with privacy standards and other relevant legislation, noting or addressing concerns.

Joined-up work

Balancing government and community needs to deliver effective place-based outcomes is critical to place-based approaches and requires capabilities such as:

- **Connecting and convening -** acts as a conduit between government and community to ensure the communities needs are met providing seamless solutions and promoting collective buy in.

- **Working better in government -** uses organisational politics and lateral relationships to break down internal silos to achieve effective community-led outcomes.

Knowledge and application of place-based work

Capabilities that support the specialist knowledge to establish, support and enable place-based approaches are:

- **Application of place-based knowledge, tools and methodologies -** understands the principles of place-based approaches, tools and methodologies to identify and interpret emerging trends and support community-led work

- **Enabling place-based approaches -** identifies when place-based approaches might be useful to a community and identifies local strengths and capabilities and any gaps.

- **Flexible funding models -** partners with funders seeking flexibility and alignment where possible. Advocates for change to government funding systems to ensure best practice flexible funding principles are met.

Place-based monitoring, evaluation and learning

Capabilities that support the monitoring, evaluation and learning of place-based approaches are:

- **Implementing place-based monitoring, evaluation and learning -** develops monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches with stakeholders to enable collaborative outcomes.

- **Leverages lessons learned -** Uses lessons learned to leverage opportunities for continuous improvement.

- **Communicating the benefits -** shares monitoring, evaluation and learning outcomes with the community so that all parties can benefit equally.

The following VPS Capabilities also enable place-based approaches:

Influence and Persuasion

- Adapts the content style and message or tone of communications to suit the audience to gain agreement to proposals and idea using an effective written and verbal communication skills

Systems thinking

- Considers the wider context, breaking complex topics or situations into smaller parts to gain better insights and inform actions required

Partnering and co-creation

- Builds effective partnerships with the client/ customer/community throughout problem solving process to gain critical insights and develop effective solutions.

Promotes inclusion

- Embraces diversity, drawing on insights into the community's beliefs, needs, and values to inform required actions

Working collaboratively

- Builds trust and rapport with others

- Sets common goals through a high degree of empathy

- Display willingness to share control and responsibility with peers (the service, external partners, and community) in the delivery of work and outcomes.

Key considerations

Building your team

As you build your team, consider whether the mix of members engaged covers the key stakeholders and interests. If not, this could be addressed by recruiting people who work in different institutional contexts, as they understand cultural/organisational interests and can act as a conduit for recruitment and capacity development.

> Think about assigning a dedicated project coordinator role to a team member who has expert knowledge of the issue and area concerned, to play an intermediary role, facilitate partnership working, be a principal contact and support the integration of people and information.

For more information on skills, capabilities and mindsets to support your team and colleagues to develop in priority areas, see the *Place-based Capability Framework* and tools and the *Victorian Public Service Capability Framework*.

Case study
Community Support Groups

History

Community Support Groups (CSGs) work with culturally specific communities to strengthen services for individuals at risk of youth disengagement or antisocial behaviour. The government funds this initiative to link young people with existing programs, co-design new activities and build the capacity of community to work together.

There are several CSGs across metropolitan Melbourne:

- Social cohesion CSGs in Dandenong, West Heidelberg, and 'The Huddle' which includes Flemington, Kensington, North Melbourne and Wyndham.

- The Northern CSGs, which reach into Dandenong, Melton, Brimbank and Wyndham.

CSG Approach

The CSGs vary in their focus between locations, but all use community-led, place-based prevention and early intervention approaches to build protective factors against youth disengagement. Government funding is delivered to community-led auspice agencies, staffed by community members to oversee the day-to-day operations of the CSGs.

Governance

At each location, Local Reference Groups (LRGs) including community members and government representatives from relevant departments/agencies which advise the auspice agency to develop and prioritise activities and programs.

CSGs exemplify how government representatives can engage with stakeholders meaningfully by listening to them and prioritising activities and programs based on their advice.

Additional tools and resources

- *Victorian Place-based Capability Framework*, Victorian Public Sector Commission

- *Victorian Public Service Capability Framework*, Victorian Public Sector Commission

- *Skills, attitudes and behaviours that fuel public innovation*, Nesta, 2019

- *Capability Framework, Institute of Public Administration Australia*

Robinvale College is one of ten 'Our Place' sites in Victoria. Read the case study in chapter one.

Chapter Nine:
Sustainability of place-based approaches

Overview

What is sustainability?

Sustainability in this context means the settings to enable the work to continue without requiring significant shifts in resourcing, leadership or direction.

Why is it important?

Sustainability should be a focus through all phases of a place-based approach. Sometimes it can be easy to focus on immediate actions and getting things done, without regularly monitoring the long-term impact on the community. However, meaningful change requires a focus on planning and investment to maintain the commitment of key partners over the long haul.

Research shows that public sector staff often continue to experiment and trial 'new' ways of working, including place-based initiatives, without considering the findings or lessons from previous efforts.

Considerable time and effort are often spent in establishing place-based approaches including building trust and relationships with local communities and external partners, only for funding to be cut due to changing government priorities.

How it works

Use the following five steps to work with a place-based initiative to embed sustainability.

Step ① Tackle sustainability issues early on

Consider sustainability from the start. This includes thinking through and mitigating against risks that may affect different stages of the initiative.

Step ② Plan for sustainability

Use a self-assessment project sustainability tool to identify, think through and plan for potential sustainability issues. To learn more about this, refer to the _Tamarack Sustainability Tool_

Ask the following questions to help guide this process:

- What is the place-based initiative planning to sustain? Has the initiative communicated this directly with all stakeholders? Has a shared understanding of sustainability been developed among partners?

- Has the place-based initiative engaged with the community to collaboratively determine which work to sustain and prioritise, and which work to let go?

- If appropriate, how will government exit?

- How will you measure the outcomes? How will you define successful sustainable impact?

- How will the initiative sustain positive change over the longer term?

Step ③ Secure long-term commitment

Ensure the community, partner organisations, governance groups, funders, backbone organisations, government and other stakeholders are committed for the medium- to long-term. This will help the place-based initiative endure and achieve real and lasting outcomes.

Where possible, discuss, articulate and formalise commitments with all key partners early on. Organisations' priorities may change; without formal commitment resources may be pulled away to focus on other things, leaving a few to do a lot.

Keep in mind that if there is interest in, but not a commitment to, creating a place-based initiative, it may not be the right time to launch.

To strengthen commitment to a place-based initiative you could:

- embed place-based approaches into organisations' strategic plans

- work with the place-based initiative to align it with government policies.

Step ④
Plan for succession and knowledge retention

Staff turnover is a natural feature of the work, particularly as place-based initiatives are focused on the medium to long-term. When working with people from a range of partner organisations, there may be a risk that an organisation's involvement or commitment to the initiative may wane when a key person leaves their role.

Without formally defined and established processes in place, important knowledge can be lost when someone leaves, making it difficult for a new person to get up to pace quickly. This can be managed well through good succession planning.

To address 'knowledge drain' you could:

- maintain up-to-date records and written details on processes that relate to the place-based initiative

- Embed effective hand-over and induction processes. Use 'warm handovers' with planned transition arrangements between departing and new staff, including a supported introduction to people, networks and organisations and a period of shadowing before handover.

- 'train-up' by providing project exposure to more junior staff across partner agencies and 'shadowing' opportunities for emerging community leaders over the life of the initiative.

These actions can also help the place-based initiative maintain momentum when staff move on or are called away to other responsibilities.

Step ⑤
Invest in the social capital of the community

Build social capital

Work with the place-based initiative to ensure that building the social capital of communities a central feature the approach. If the community is left dependent on a few key people running the place-based initiative, it will be very hard to maintain positive changes and self-sufficiency in the long term. Ideally, the community should have stronger bonds, more local leaders, be more resilient, feel more empowered and have a greater capacity to take ownership and work through local issues themselves.

> Refer to the section on building social capital in *Chapter One: Understanding place-based approaches and how they evolve over time* for more tips.

Focus on community development

Focus on community development and community strengthening to make your place-based approach 'the new normal'. This means equipping and supporting local leaders and community groups throughout the life of the place-based initiative to be able to serve and work with their communities. Build these priorities into the approach early on, to provide learning experiences and opportunities to community members and groups who are keen to participate.

> Refer to the section on strategies for meaningful engagement in *Chapter One: Understanding place-based approaches* for more tips.

Additional tools and resources

- *Sustaining Collective Impact Efforts Tool,* Tamarak Institute, 2017

- *Healthwest Sustainability Toolkit*

References

Australian Department of Social Services (2019). *Framework for evaluating place-based approaches in Australia*. Retrieved from, Canberra, Australia.

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015). *'Commonwealth place-based service delivery initiatives – common elements of international place-based initiatives'*,

Australian Network on Disability (2018). *'What is a disability?'*, Australia.

BetterEvaluation (2016). *'Specify the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)'*.

Buick (2012). 'Panacea for joined-up working: the rhetoric and reality gap, doctorate thesis', University of Canberra.

Cabaj (2014). '*'Evaluating Collective Impact: Five Simple Rules'*, The Philanthropist, Volume 26:1, page 109. Retrieved from:.

Cabaj and Weaver (2016). *'Collective Impact 3.0 An Evolving Framework for Community Change'*, Tamarack Institute, Canada..

Christens & Inzeo (2015). *Widening the view: situating collective impact among frameworks for community-led change [PDF, 217 KB]*. Community Development, 46(4), 420.

Dart (2019). *'Place-based Evaluation Framework: A Guide for Evaluation of Place-based Approaches in Australia'*, Commissioned by the Queensland Government Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS) and the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

European Commission (2019). *'Platform for Coal Regions in Transition' [PDF, 232 KB]*.

European Commission Joint Research Centre (2011). *'What is Smart Specialisation?'*, Brussels.

Graham, Skelton, and Paulson (2021). *'Power and Collective Impact in Australia'*, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

Hitchin (2020). *'Funding Place Based systemic change'*, Renaisi, England.

Kania and Kramer (2011). *'Essentials of Social Innovation: Collective Impact'*, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 9(1), 36–41.

KPMG (2018). *'Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project – Impact Assessment'*, prepared on behalf of Maranguka and Just Reinvest NSW, Australia.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1996). *'Assets-based community development'*, National Civic Review. 85:4(23).

Lankelly Chase (2017). *'Historical Review of Place Based Approaches' [PDF, 4.2 MB]*, Lankelly Chase UK. p.42.

Munro (2015). *'Place-based Working'*, Iriss, Scotland.

Nesta (2019). *'Skills, attitudes and behaviours that fuel public innovation'*, England.

Nurture Development (2018). *'Asset-based community development'*, Ireland.

O'Flynn, Buick, Blackman, and Halligan (2011). 'You Win Some, You Lose Some: Experiments with Joined-Up Government', International Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 34: No. 4, pp. 244-254.

Parkhurst and Preskill (2014). *'Learning in action: evaluating collective impact'*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 12(4), 17-19.

Smart J. (2017). *'Collective impact: evidence and implications for practice'*, Child Family Community Australia Paper No. 45, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Taplin and Rasic (2012). *'Facilitator's source book: Source book for facilitators leading theory of change development sessions'*.

Weaver (2016). *'Collective Impact Backbones – Different Approaches'*, Tamarack Institute, Canada.

Victoria State Government - State Services Authority (2007). 'Victorian approaches to joined-up government, an overview', State Services Authorly, Melbourne.

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (2010). *'Building Respectful Partnerships, The Commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Competence in Child and Family Services' [PDF, 1,815 KB]*, Victoria, Australia.

Victorian Government (2018). *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*, Victoria, Australia.

Victorian Government (2020). *'A framework for place-based approaches'*, Victoria, Australia.

Victorian Government (2021). *'Understanding intersectionality'*, Victoria, Australia.

Victorian Public Sector Commission (2015). *'Governance'*, Victoria, Australia.

Weaver (2021). *'Solving the puzzle of collaborative governance'*, Tamarack Institute, Canada.