



Australian Government

Department of Social Services



Stronger Places, Stronger People Model

October 2019

Acknowledgements

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Section 1: Introduction



Purpose and scope of this report

This report sets out the methodology, implementation and evaluation approach for the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative. It also includes participation requirements for partnering governments and communities.

It is written for the information of the Australian Government, state and territory governments, prospective and partner communities, other partners, and interested stakeholders.

The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* Model is current as at October 2019 and will be reviewed every 12 months. The next scheduled review is October 2020.



Section 1: Introduction



Stronger Places, Stronger People model

This document should be read in conjunction with relevant frameworks, tools and resources that support the implementation and evaluation of the initiative.

The core components of implementation for *Stronger Places, Stronger People* are the:

1. National *Stronger Places, Stronger People* Implementation Framework, which includes:

- Theory of Change and Program Logic;
- Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (U-MEL) Strategy for the initiative, which includes indicators and key approaches for aggregated national and local levels.
- Cost-Benefit Framework;
- Governance Framework (including financial governance); and
- practical implementation tools.

2. Local place-based collective impact methodology in 10 communities

3. Policy, funding and systems reform



The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* Initiative

Stronger Places, Stronger People is an Australian Government initiative supporting place-based collective impact methodology in partnership with 10 Australian communities and state and territory governments.

The initiative seeks to demonstrate that a place-based collective impact approach can create better outcomes for children and their families and can disrupt disadvantage in participating communities over time.

The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative supports communities that have:

- ✓ Existing collaboration activity or collective impact practice, led by motivated and influential cultural and other community leaders capable of leading social change.
- ✓ Markers of disadvantage (including poverty, material disadvantage, and social and cultural exclusion, over the life course)
- ✓ A promising degree of readiness to work differently
- ✓ Significant family and children's service investments
- ✓ Current philanthropic support
- ✓ Promising economic/employment opportunities, with the right investment and support.



The policy challenge

Australia is a wealthy country boasting one of the highest performing economies in the world. Despite this prosperity, some places in Australia are marked by growing inequality. Many people in these communities feel isolated from one another, are unable to find meaningful work, and experience hardship and stress on a daily basis. Children living in these communities do not have access to the same opportunities as children living elsewhere in Australia.

For the past 40 years, governments have designed social policies and invested in programs to try and lift individuals or cohorts of people toward self-sufficiency, good health, safety and wellbeing. Longitudinal studies, such as Dropping off the Edge have tracked population level outcomes in communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage and suggest current policy settings and program interventions are not enabling the progress governments and communities seek.

Most experts agree that no single policy, government department, organisation or program can solve the complex and interconnected problems facing people living in communities where poverty and disadvantage is concentrated. They argue that solutions that offer most promise will be achieved through an integrated policy and investment approach, implemented through locally-tailored, evidence-driven solutions to local problems in partnership with local people.

Fry, R., Keyes, M., Laidlaw, B., & West, S. (2014). *The state of play in Australian place-based activity for children*. Parkville, Victoria: Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health.

Moore, T., & Fry, R. (2011). *Place-based approaches to child and family services: A literature review*. Parkville, Victoria: The Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health.

Smart, J. (2017). *Collective impact: Evidence and implications for practice*. CFCA Paper No. 45, November. Retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/collective-impact-evidence-and-implications-practice> on 4th June 2019.



The response

The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative responds to this challenge through a place-based collective impact model that combines locally-led social change with government-led policy reform. Collective impact drives a staged and structured long-term methodology to solving complex social problems. It makes collaboration work across governments, business, philanthropy, not-for-profit organisations, community groups and local citizens – all of whom have a key stake in the problems – to achieve significant and lasting change.

Stronger Places, Stronger People communities use the collective wisdom of stakeholders, share power and devolve decision-making to the community level, and have a local authorised governance group which is reflective of the diversity of the community organising and acting in the best interests of their children and families.

Government partners support communities to lead the work locally and meet communities where they are at. Communities build on what already exists – whether this be their approach to action planning and implementation, their understanding, measurement, evaluation and learning systems, or existing cross-sector forums.

Collective Impact

Collective impact is a community led movement to achieve large-scale change, informed by broad and inclusive community and stakeholder engagement which provides a framework and resources to address poverty and disadvantage.

It is informed by a shared vision and locally developed strategy and plan of action. It is a way of working with an emphasis on data, shared measurement, evidence-informed decision making, evaluation, and learning.



Goal and objective

The long-term **goal** of *Stronger Places, Stronger People* is to interrupt poverty and disadvantage in 10 demonstration communities across Australia through partnering with leaders, communities, local organisations, policy makers, and funders to create better outcomes for children growing up in these communities.

The **objective** is to demonstrate improved wellbeing for children and their families living in a *Stronger Places, Stronger People* community, achieved through the implementation of a place-based collective impact methodology that includes policy, funding, and systems reform.

What is a 'community'?

The term 'community' is used broadly to refer to place-based groups of people who partner with *Stronger Places, Stronger People*.

What constitutes 'community' in implementation will be defined by communities.

This may include people who live in, work in, or identify with a place, culturally defined communities, existing place-based collective impact collaborations and community movements (including backbone structures), and may cover small/micro or large geographic areas.



The approach

1. A long-term, whole-of-community approach at the local level.
2. Anchored to a life-course, 'cradle to career' framework, informed by values, evidence and local data.
3. Delivered through high-leverage social change strategies defined in the community's strategy and plan of action.
4. Authorised through governments and other funders devolving planning and decision-making to the local level.
5. Enabled by local strategic coordination through a local Backbone team to design a community's strategy and plan of action, facilitate transparent and collaborative local implementation, and lead local understanding, measurement, evaluation, and learning activities.
6. Powered by cultural and other local leaders, families, service providers, philanthropists, and government officials sharing accountability for planning, decision-making, and results.
7. Measured through annual analysis of progress to determine if the collaboration model improves lives and opportunities and delivers better returns on investment.
8. Scaled through evidence of what works and sustained through strong, supportive peer networks between *Stronger Places*, *Stronger People* communities.

What is a Backbone team?

Each community will have a local Backbone team – a sector-neutral local project team to facilitate local planning, inclusive engagement, evidence and data collection, measurement and evaluation, collaborative decision-making, governance, and local action.

The role of the local Backbone team is to support and coordinate work amongst the community and partners to develop and implement the community's strategy and plan of action. The team is accountable to the community's Local Leadership Group.



The funding commitment

The Australian Government has committed \$35 million over five years from 2019-20 to design and implement the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* model. The funding will support Backbone teams in 10 demonstration communities across Australia, capacity building support, and design and implementation of the national initiative, including an Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (U-MEL) Strategy.

State and territory governments match the Australian Government's contributions for the operational costs of each Backbone team through cash and potentially up to fifty per cent in-kind contributions, so the work is adequately resourced.

Backbone and capacity building funding

Each community will receive funding to support the work of their local Backbone team. This funding will be used to support backbone staff salaries and on costs, community engagement events, communications, data collection and analysis, understanding, measurement, evaluation, and learning activities (per the U-MEL Strategy), and other work that supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of the initiative.

Capacity building funding is provided to enable local Backbone teams to develop the skills and expertise necessary to implement community action plans. For example, capacity building funding could be used to develop the Backbone team's community engagement, communication, data analysis, or evaluation skills. Backbone team members will also be supported to participate in development and knowledge-sharing opportunities, including through access to *Stronger Places, Stronger People* resources on the Platform C website¹ and communities of practice.

¹ Platform C is a knowledge and learning platform being developed by Collaboration for Impact to offer support, learning and connections for people tackling complex social challenges and seeking to create large-scale impact through collaboration. It includes a *Stronger Places, Stronger People* portal to make systems change, knowledge, tools and resources available to the 10 demonstration communities.



Backbone Team funding model

The funding model below summarises the annual contribution from both the Australian and state or territory governments to the local Backbone teams. It sets out the allocation for the Backbone team in each demonstration community, which takes into account the population size, complexity/remoteness loadings, and how established the collective impact practice is in each community.

The funding amounts indicated below are on the basis of Australian Government funding being matched by the relevant state or territory government. Jurisdictions can provide up to 50 per cent of matched funding through in-kind support.

Year of Implementation	Community Population Size			
	Small <1,000	Medium >1,000-<20,000	Large >20,000-<100,000	Very Large >100,000
Year 0	Pro-rata year 1	Pro-rata year 1	Pro-rata year 1	Pro-rata year 1
Year 1 and 2	\$0.20m per annum	\$0.30m per annum	\$0.40m per annum	\$0.50m per annum
Year 3	\$0.25m per annum	\$0.40m per annum	\$0.70m per annum	\$0.90m per annum
Year 4 and 5	\$0.40m per annum	\$0.60m per annum	\$1.20m per annum	\$1.50m per annum

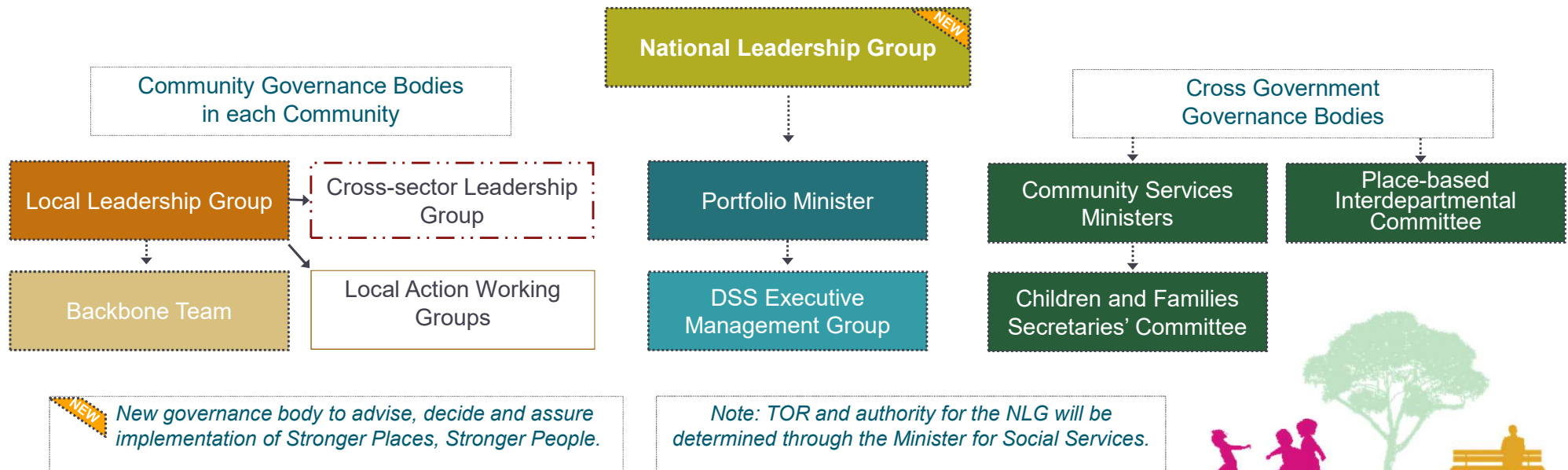
Note: Funding for local Backbone teams is for the implementation of collective impact methodology and practices in communities and not for projects, programs, or services.



Governance model

The diagram below shows the governance structures supporting the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative both nationally and in communities.

- A National Leadership Group will act as a direction-setting and advisory body to drive and shape the strategy, guide the design of high leverage national projects to generate system-level change and innovative solutions, and enrol its networks to accelerate or broaden the impact of the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative.
- Integration with existing governance bodies across governments at the initiative level will ensure alignment with related agendas.
- Community governance bodies in each demonstration site will be led by a Local Leadership Group who will manage the Backbone Team, Cross-sector Leadership and Local Action Working Groups, delivery of the local strategy and plan of action, and determine, with Ministerial agreement, where to invest discretionary grant funding.



Community governance

Each community will have its own governance structures which will include a Leadership Group, Cross-sector Leadership and Local Action Working groups, supported by the local Backbone team.

The **Local Leadership Group** is a locally defined group carrying cultural and community authority, trust, and credibility, representing people who live and work in and for the community. This will typically be community members, service providers, government representatives, philanthropists, and other funders. If government representatives are not members of this Group, it is recommended they be included at least three times per year, or a separate Cross-Sector Leadership Group be established to ensure government play an active role in the collective impact process.

Responsibilities of the Local Leadership Group include:

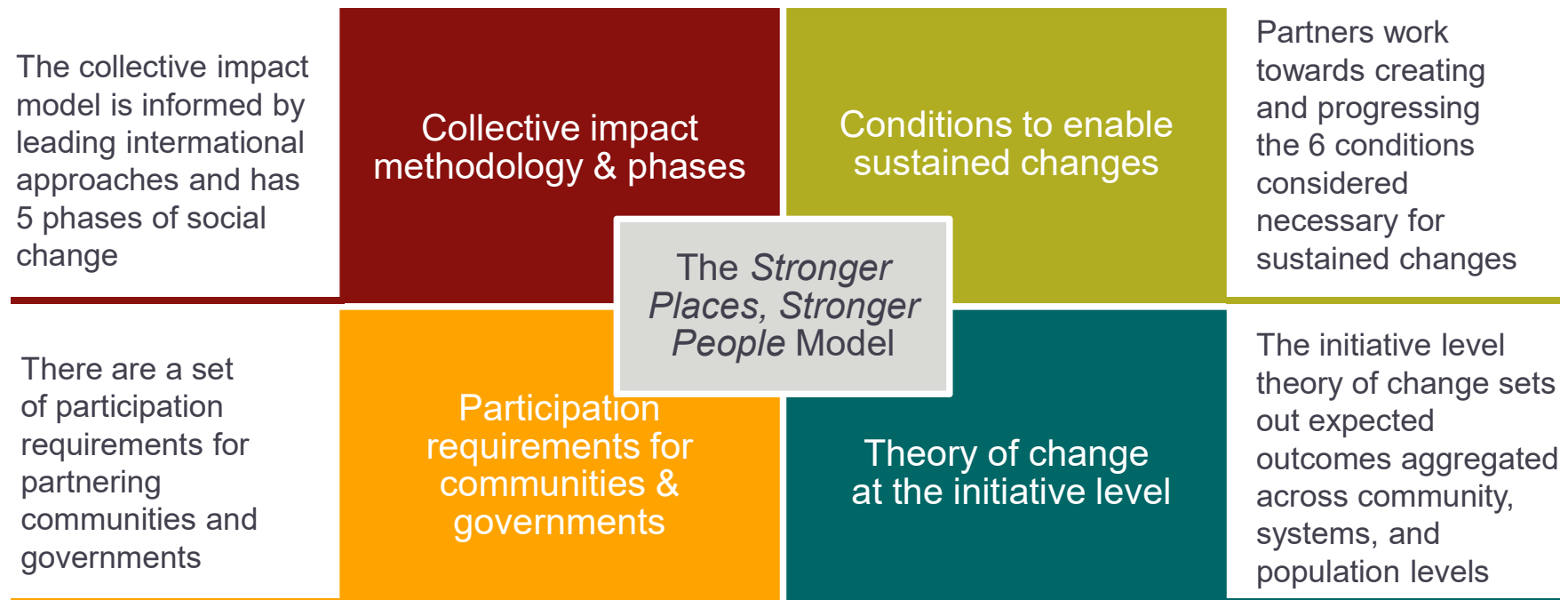
- Develop and endorse a co-designed community strategy and plan for action, taking responsibility for its planning, prioritisation, and implementation
- Set the culture, measure and monitor fidelity and expectations for community-led change through collaboration, accountability, creativity, energy, and collective momentum
- Monitor fidelity of implementation of the *SPSP* model at the local level (with support from the Australian Government)
- Navigate alignment of diverse activities of funders and organisations to ensure evidence-informed local decisions reflect the voice of cultural and community leaders and families
- Applying what is learned during *SPSP* implementation
- Measure progress and iteratively improve the effectiveness of interventions and service systems as informed through the local U-MEL strategy
- Influence policy and funding decisions so grants are directed to initiatives prioritised in line with the community strategy and plan of action.

Local Action Working groups will work with the Local Leadership Group and Local Backbone team to drive deep community engagement, co-design of implementation and change through operational coordination and collaboration. The establishment of these groups will be guided by the Local Leadership Group and formed around key themes of action and/or life course stages.

Section 2: The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* methodology



Overview of the model



Collective impact methodology and phases

Five phases of social change

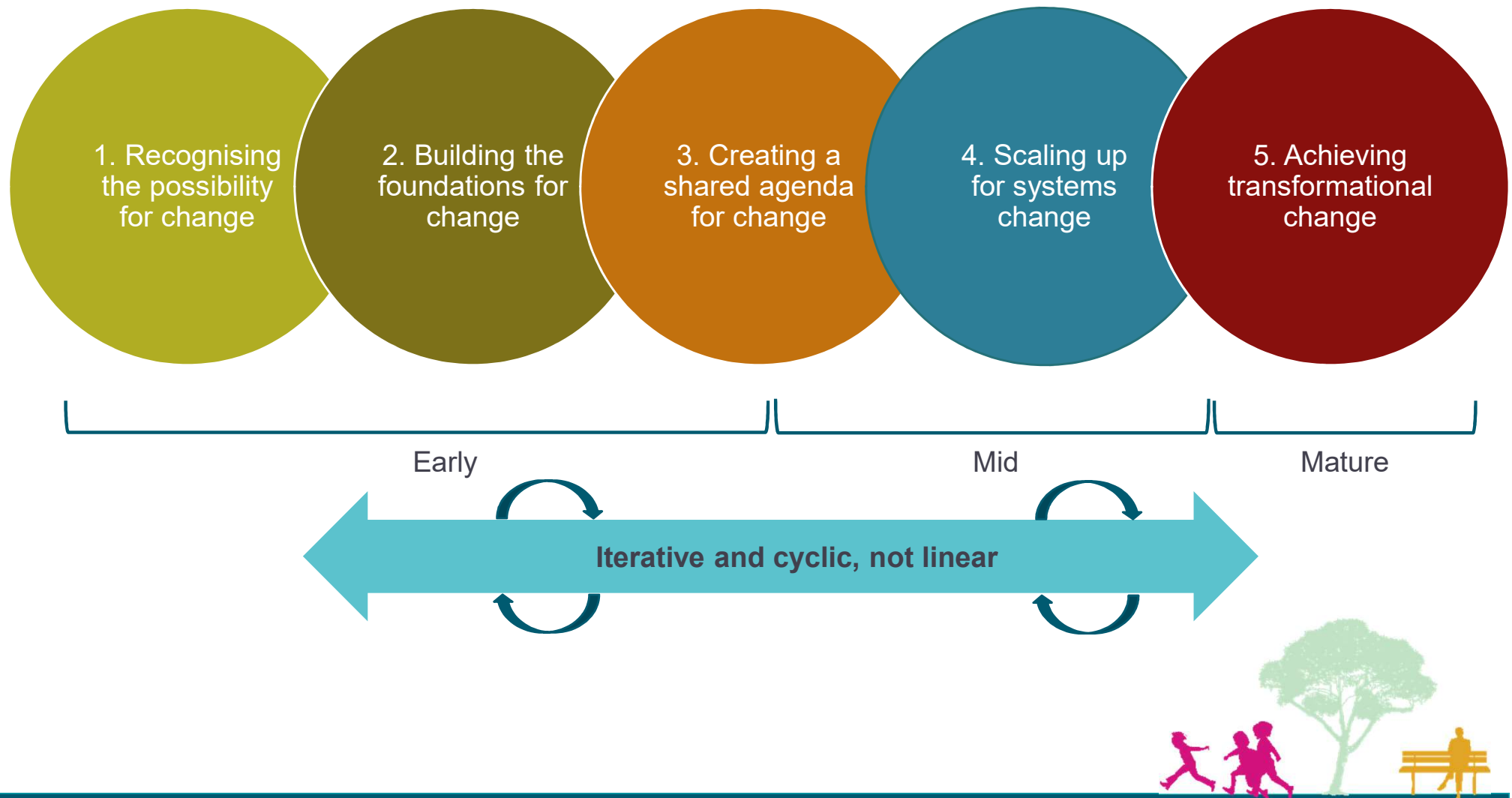
Collective impact provides a framework for community, government, the not-for-profit sector, and business to work together to solve complex social problems and create lasting solutions. Long-term, sustainable population level change can take years to achieve. Experts in collective impact, such as the Tamarack Institute in Canada, The Harwood Institute in the United States, and Collaboration for Impact in Australia, agree that social change movements using collective impact methodology tend to evolve over a series of progress phases of exploration, emergence, adaption, maturity, and sustaining.

Stronger Places, Stronger People uses Collaboration for Impact's 'collaborative change cycle', which articulates the phases and stages of an effective collaborative change process. The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* phases are not mutually exclusive - communities may be in different phases for different aspects of the work (e.g. they may be well advanced in community engagement, but less advanced in policy and system reform). The phases are also not linear - communities may move 'forward' and 'backward' over time.

The 10 demonstration communities for *Stronger Places, Stronger People* will be at different phases of collective impact practice and this will be taken into account with the implementation process.



Figure: Five phases of social change



What will change look like across the 5 phases of collective impact?

1 **Recognising the possibility for change**

Trust is low between community, government, service providers and other institutions. There is a catalyst for change that inspires people to talk about the need for change and to become aware of the problem. From this emerging context, a local champion or voice starts to emerge and there is a building sense of urgency that things can be different. Capacity building and support may be required to help communities move into 'building the foundations' phase.

2 **Building the foundations of change**

A small group of people are actively building a 'change hub' while the status quo remains in place. There are pockets of people and organisations who are open to new ways of working together. From this building context, a Backbone team emerges and begins the community engagement and convening role.

3 **Creating a shared agenda for change**

An agreement is brokered about what to focus on, people understand and articulate the issue, who is impacted, how and why. From this shared purpose, there is agreement about a community strategy and action plan for working together. This work is gaining momentum.

4 **Scaling up for systems change**

The community strategy is getting traction and authority, and the shared purpose keeps the collaboration on track. From this maturing context, a new narrative is emerging across the community and stories about the work are communicated, seen and valued.

5 **Achieving transformational change**

The collaboration has stabilised into a new state where there is constant hope and belief in the collaboration's ability to tackle more complex change to achieve a shared agenda. From this mature context, a new narrative about the community has emerged and there is excitement about 'what could be'.

(For more information see the Stronger Places, Stronger People Progress Mapping Tool.)



Theory of change overview

The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* model is underpinned by a “theory of change”. The theory of change is a conceptual model that describes how change is expected to happen over time. The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* theory of change is based on the generic place-based theory of change (Dart, 2019) and was developed internally and tested with various stakeholders, including backbone leads, state and territory government representatives, experts in collective impact and philanthropic organisations.

The theory of change suggests that systemic changes made in each community will flow onto population effects resulting in better outcomes for children and families across a range of measures included in this framework. It provides a guide for strategic planning, measuring and evaluating of the short, medium and long-term outcomes of the initiative, and shows the relationship between **low level conditions for change, mid level systems impacts** and **high level population outcomes**.

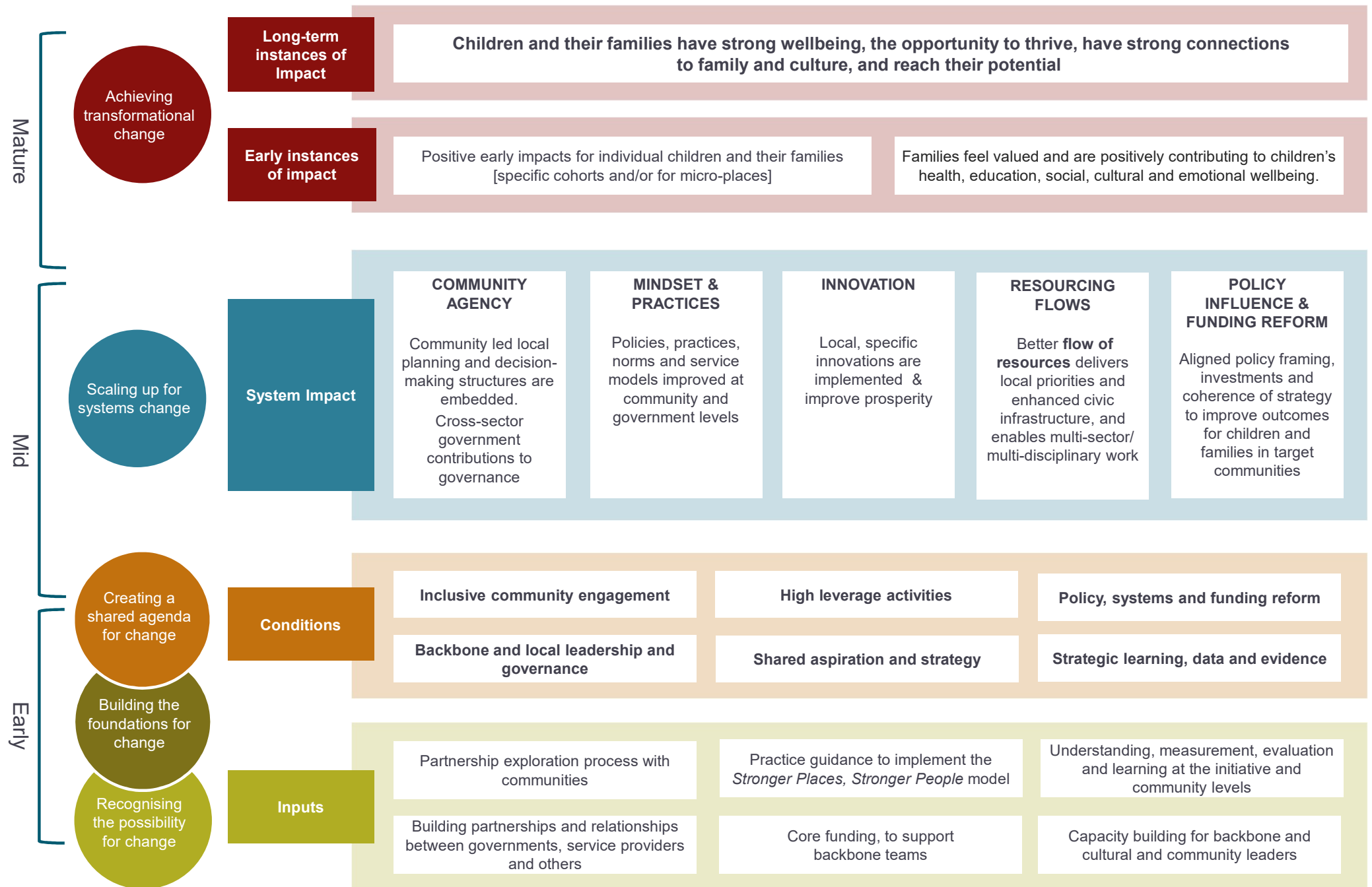
The following diagram shows how the **green** inputs, such as funding and resources establish the conditions for systems change. The **ochre** enabling conditions signify sustained change. The **blue** systems impact level focuses on community agency, innovation, better flow of resources, and policy and funding reform. The **red** level shows impacts for families and communities.

Importantly, the theory proposes that population level impacts will not be observed for some time, but that there may be early impacts on individuals, families or micro-communities preceding population level change.

Dart, J. (2018). *Place-based Evaluation Framework: A guide for evaluation of place-based approaches*. Report commissioned by the Queensland Government Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS) and the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). Canberra: The Department of Social Services.



SPSP Theory of Change



Role of communities in Stronger Places, Stronger People

A set of participation requirements has been developed for partnering communities based on the collective impact methodology and conditions. Partnering communities are required to commit to working toward all elements in a phase-appropriate way.

The model is flexible to support communities by meeting them where they are at, with the ability for each community to set their own arrangements and priorities such as:

- The community strategy, including issues and goals in focus for planning and actions
- How local implementation is structured and delivered
- Local partnership arrangements and Local Leadership Group membership.

As much as possible, communities will build on what already exists – whether this be their approach to action planning and implementation, their understanding, measurement, evaluation, and learning systems, or an existing cross sector panel.

The participation requirements for local-level implementation by each community include:

1. A commitment to the conditions of the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* model
2. A community strategy and plan of action
3. A focus on improving outcomes for children and their families
4. A commitment to equity
5. Inclusive community engagement
6. A Backbone team
7. Local leadership and governance
8. A commitment to delivering phase appropriate Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning
9. Annual Progress Mapping and Learning Circle
10. Annual planning and reporting.

See table below for full descriptions.



Community minimum requirements for partnership

Core elements of implementation	Description of minimum requirements for local implementation by community partners
1 A commitment to the conditions of the <i>Stronger Places, Stronger People</i> model	For participating communities, this will require assessing strength across each condition and a commitment to establish and strengthen the conditions for sustained change, i.e.: 1. Inclusive community engagement 2. Backbone, local leadership and governance 3. High leverage activities 4. Shared aspirations and strategy 5. Policy, systems and funding reform 6. Strategic learning, data, and evidence
2 A focus on improving outcomes for children and their families	<i>Stronger Places, Stronger People</i> supports a long-term, whole of population approach at the place level and is not prescriptive about the specific goals or strategies driving the collaborative effort to address childhood disadvantage in participating communities. It is a minimum requirement that the collective effort is driven by goals that aim to sustainably improve outcomes for children and their families across the life-course. This will involve embedding strategies in an intergenerational, life-course or 'cradle to career' framework that focusses on key human development phases from pregnancy to adulthood. This includes comprehensive thinking and action to address the interrelated causes of the social issue/s in focus (including systemic barriers/conditions) rather than individual symptoms.
3 A community strategy	A 'community strategy' (also known as a 'shared agenda' or 'roadmap') to galvanise effort around a locally developed and agreed plan of action, drive service alignment with community solutions and context, reduce service duplication and unproductive service delivery models, and innovate solutions. In the early phases of the collective impact journey, this may involve pre-foundational work and movement building towards developing a community strategy. The change process needs to be driven by movement building and local partnerships with community, local leaders, funders, service providers and other key influencers who are working towards joining resources around a shared agenda for long-term social and economic change that benefits all children and their families.
4 Commitment to equity	Communities recognise and commit to promote equity, and explore how power can be used and shared to create better outcomes for children and families. This includes acknowledging the enduring connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with this land and ensuring that traditional owners and cultural leaders are included and engaged in culturally safe ways throughout local planning, implementation, governance and decision-making. This includes treating Elders past, present and emerging with respect and seeking to learn from the strengths and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Core elements of implementation	Description of minimum requirements for local implementation by community partners
5 Inclusive community engagement	All members of community, including residents, local and cultural leaders, service providers, and governments and funders, should be consulted and given opportunities to contribute to the development and implementation of this work. In accordance with the conditions of the model, communities will take a genuine and proactive approach to ensure equity and inclusion in ways that best suit the communities, cohorts and context involved.
6 Backbone team	A Backbone team must be established in all demonstration communities. The function of the Backbone team is to enable, catalyse and support the impact of the broader collective effort. The Backbone team will be sector-neutral, unaligned with a service provider or sector-specific organisation. The Backbone team is accountable to the Local Leadership Table. The Backbone team will partner with local leaders, residents, and organisations to develop and implement a community strategy and action plan; promote service system effectiveness and efficiency through mapping, analysis, and measurement of existing services and investments against need; establish and support local governance arrangements; facilitate practical service delivery improvements for existing programs; and collect and analyse data to set benchmarks, track progress and evaluate outcomes. Key aspects of the Backbone team's role include: • Coordination: The team works with the community to determine priorities and outcomes, including developing and implementing the community strategy and action plan, and facilitating inclusive community engagement. • Mobilisation: The team champions community partnerships and collective action. It drives service system reform to achieve community priorities. • Facilitation of change from the inside out: The team helps develop ways to hear the voices of children and youth, and keep people with lived experience involved in design and implementation of the community strategy. Each Backbone team will have a succession plan to ensure the sustainability of the partnership model and accommodate change.
7 Local leadership and governance	Governance in communities will be led a Local Leadership Group. Membership will be dependent on the community and existing arrangements, but will typically include community members, key local partners, and levels of governments. If state/territory, Commonwealth, and ideally local government are not members of the Group, it is recommended that they be included at the Group at least three times per year, or a Cross-Sector Leadership Group be established to ensure governments are participating in the collective impact process. Local Leadership Groups will be responsible for developing and implementing a community strategy and plan of action in conjunction with the Backbone team. This will include establishing and overseeing Local Action working groups responsible for progressing individual projects to progress the community strategy. [Continued next page...]

Core elements of implementation	Description of minimum requirements for local implementation by community partners
7 Local leadership and governance (continued)	The Local Leadership Group will act as a system ‘un-blocker’ including meeting to coordinate effort and escalate issues that cannot be reasonably dealt with at the local level. It is highly desirable that partnering communities have or establish a separate, dedicated financial governance arrangement to hold and direct funds.
8 Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (U-MEL)	All partners commit to make decisions informed by community voice, data, and evidence. Communities are required to understand, measure, evaluate, and learn from their experiences in developing and implementing their community strategy and action plan. This includes aligning their efforts with the overarching Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (U-MEL) strategy for <i>Stronger Places, Stronger People</i> (separate document). The minimum specifications for the U-MEL at the community-level are phase appropriate, and include: • Community theory of change and U-MEL plan • Collecting data/evidence and learnings against U-MEL, with analysis in annual reports • Investing in building U-MEL capacity locally and participation in peer-to-peer learning, including annual learning circles.
9 Annual Progress Mapping and Learning Circle	Each year, communities will be required to undertake progress mapping and Learning Circle processes using a tailored Progress Mapping Tool and associated data and evidence collection methods. The Backbone team will collect routine data against their U-MEL plan to inform the progress mapping and Learning Circle work to identify focus areas and goals based on ‘what would success look like’ for the following year. The annual Learning Circle will assist communities to review progress in an evidence-based and collaborative manner via a facilitated workshop. The annual report and action plan will be developed out of these processes.
10 Annual planning and reporting	From the annual progress mapping and Learning Circles, partnering communities will develop a 12-month action plan and associated support plan. The action plan will describe priorities for the Backbone team for the coming year. The support plan describes how the capacity building funding will be used to support the identified actions. Each year, the Backbone team will be required to submit an annual report, containing: • A statement of achievements • Results against the community outcomes, indicators, and targets • Three to four case studies describing the work of the Backbone, systems changes and impacts experienced by individuals, families or micro-communities • Reflections on the previous year’s action plan, including barriers and enablers to achieving the actions • The action plan and support plan for the coming year, and • Financial information demonstrating how funds were directed over the previous year.

Role of governments in *Stronger Places, Stronger People*

Governments are collaborative partners in this initiative and have a stewardship role in allowing and supporting communities to lead this work. By partnering, governments commit to enabling systemic and long-term population level changes, including pursuing funding and systems reform.

What does the role of governments look like?

Key responsibilities:

- Championing the need to work collaboratively and better together
- Bringing the natural authority of government to build urgency around the community's desire for change
- Acknowledging government as part of the solution to challenges in the community
- Protecting the work and maintaining long-term momentum and support from government
- Escalating and resolving issues quickly where resolution is not possible at the local level (for example, raising an issue with the policy owner within government)

Authorising – the community change process

- Consistently showing up regardless of the pace of change and challenges during implementation
- Facilitating access to the inputs needed for to develop and progress the community strategy and action plan, e.g.: data, evidence, tools, resources and networks
- Committing early and visibly to the community strategy
- Increasingly aligning leadership, resources and effort behind the shared community agenda
- Sharing power and decision making with the local community and showcasing the benefits and lessons

What does the role of Governments look like (continued)?

Leading – modelling system leadership

- Bringing attention to the patterns in the system that are enabling or hindering progress
- Contributing the Government's agenda in a way that does not diminish the agenda of others
- Engaging effectively with broader Commonwealth, state/territory and local government agencies

Partnering – brokering relationships and listening

- Actively working to build trust
- Investing time in building and extending relationships
- Investing in building the capacity and leadership of others, particularly community leaders and members
- Government to sit at the table at all stages as one voice in the Local Leadership Tables

Resourcing – being flexible with available Government resources

- Providing matched 'backbone' funding and in-kind contributions e.g. providing office space or staff
- Fund the support that the community needs
- Examining how current government expenditure could better align with the community's strategy

Learning – by doing and adapting

- Listen to data, evidence and partners' feedback.
- Actively participate in learning processes and evaluation, including critically examining the role and contributions of governments in enabling successful implementation
- Visibly and openly adapt the contributions of government in response to learning about what works - and doesn't - in achieving the community strategy.

Participation requirements for Commonwealth, state and territory governments

Core elements of implementation	Description of participation requirements for governments
1 Willingness to let communities take the lead and work collaboratively	At the local implementation level, partnering communities will lead the social change process and governments will play an enabling role. Commonwealth and state/territory government partners are required to work collaboratively with communities to enable a shift in power towards community-led decision making and action. ‘Meeting communities where they are at’ is an essential practice principle. It requires giving the community the space and time to design solutions and bringing resources and expertise to enable them to solve local issues. Commonwealth, state/territory, and ideally local governments would participate on the Local Leadership Tables, or a supporting Local Cross-Sector Leadership Group.
2 Commitment to Equity	Communities recognise and commit to promote equity, and explore how power can be used and shared to create better outcomes for children and families. This includes acknowledging the enduring connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with this land and ensuring that traditional owners and cultural leaders are included and engaged in culturally safe ways throughout local planning, implementation, governance and decision-making. This includes treating Elders past, present and emerging with respect and seeking to learn from the strengths and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
3 Funding	Commonwealth and state/territory governments provide matched Backbone funding and in-kind support for five years.
4 Policy, funding and systems reform	Policy, funding and systems reform is fundamental to collective impact methodology. Governments and other funders are committed to exploring ways to coordinate investment and align policies to support communities to implement their community strategies. Coordinating investment and improving systems to support implementation and scaling as the initiative matures will be essential.

Core elements of implementation	Description of participation requirements for Governments
5 Commitment to the Conditions as they relate to role of government	Governments have an important role to play in enabling and contributing to the conditions of collective impact for the initiative. A commitment to all relevant conditions is requisite. Of high relevance is funding and systems reform (see above) and establishing an authorising environment that allows local initiatives to be quickly supported and responded to by senior stakeholders [including funders] and the resolution of barriers where decisions cannot be reasonably taken locally.
6 Harmonised reporting and data sharing	Governments and other funders are committed to 'harmonised' reporting for Backbone funding to reduce the burden on the Backbone structure. Ideally, they will be committed to working towards pooled funding and proactively data sharing.
7 Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (U-MEL)	Governments commit to share data and develop data-sharing protocols to facilitate shared measurement. Governments also commit to measuring their collective progress to determine if this way of working improves lives and opportunities, delivers better returns on investment, and is sustainable. Governments support the implementation and refinement of the U-MEL strategy and plan at the national level, and be involved in relevant understanding, measurement, evaluation and learning activities. This includes participation in and contribution to data collection and learning circle reflection processes and reporting.
8 Commitment to alignment within government	Commonwealth and state/territory governments are ready to engage with communities in an aligned manner. This includes alignment, where possible, with existing government initiatives that provide services in each community.

Section 3: Implementation and support



Core elements of implementation

The core elements of implementation for *Stronger Places, Stronger People* are the:

1. **National *Stronger Places, Stronger People* Implementation Framework***, which includes: Theory of Change and Program Logic; an Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning Strategy; Collective Outcomes and Measurement Framework; Cost-Benefit Framework; Governance Framework (including financial governance); and practical implementation tools.
2. **Local place-based collective impact methodology in 10 communities**, which includes: matched Commonwealth and state/territory government funding for a Backbone team in each community; Commonwealth-funded capacity building; local collaborative governance; and a local Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning plan.
3. **Policy, funding and systems reform:** Governments and other funders will explore ways to coordinate investment and align policies to support communities to implement their community strategies to improve outcomes for children and families. Coordinating investment and improving systems to support implementation and scaling as the initiative matures will be essential.

* The following companion documents are also available:

- *Partnership Exploration Process guidelines and Progress Mapping Tool* for supporting communities exploring the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* opportunity

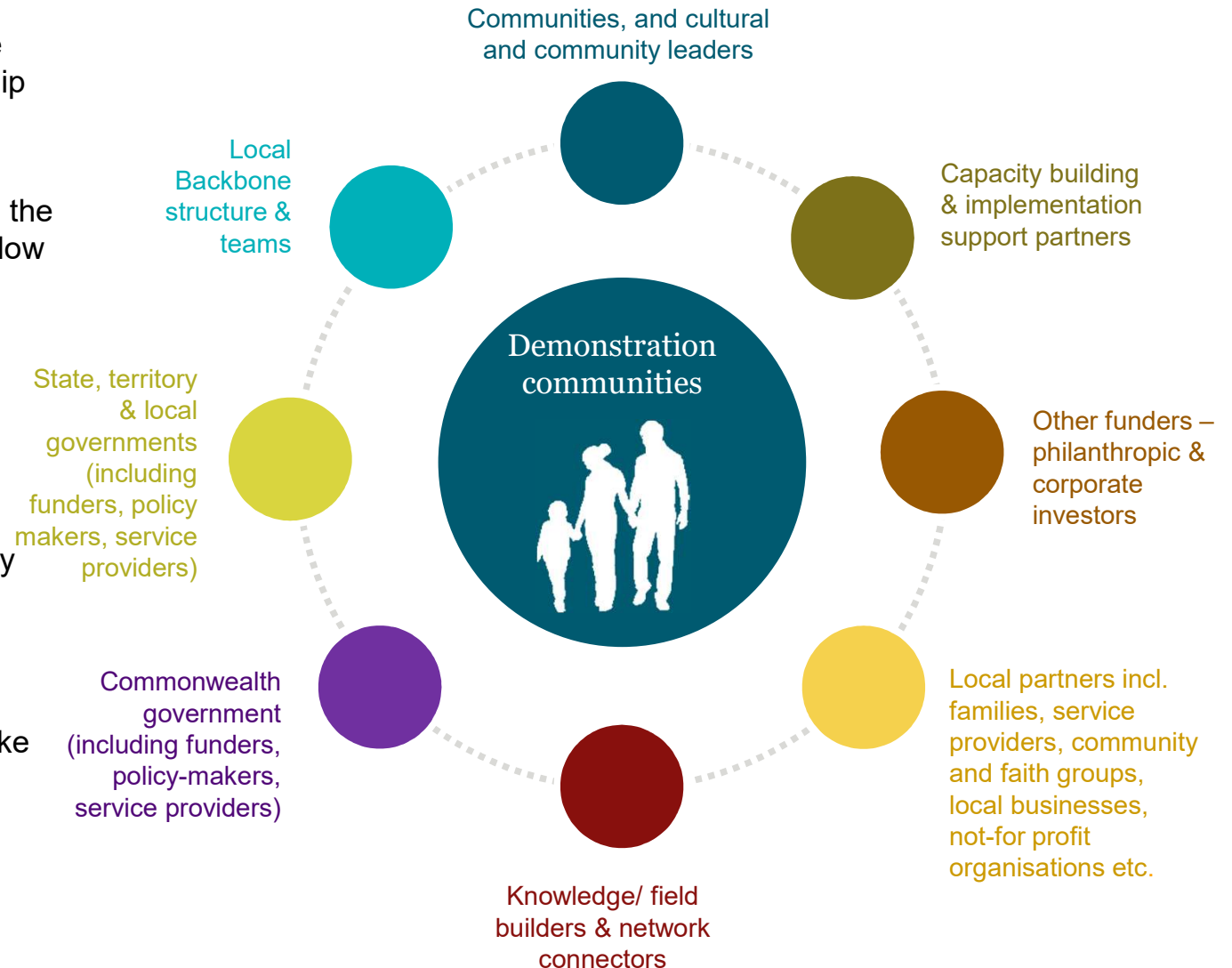


Partnering for implementation

The success of *Stronger Places*, *Stronger People* relies on everyone working collaboratively in partnership to deliver lasting outcomes within demonstration communities.

Each will play different roles across the demonstration communities, but follow this structure:

- the community and local partners will lead the change process
- the Local Leadership Group will have an authorising role
- the local Backbone Team will play an enabling and catalysing role
- implementation and support partners
- knowledge/field builders undertake a connecting, brokering, and facilitating role



Partnership Exploration Process

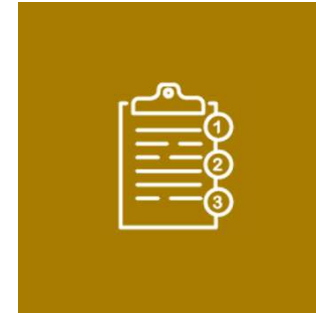
In the initial phase, the Partnership Exploration Process provides the opportunity for select communities to learn more about the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* partnership offer, as well as developing a shared understanding of community progress to date.

The Partnership Exploration Process is based on genuine and inclusive engagement. The process is tailored to each community, and is independently facilitated by PricewaterhouseCooper's Indigenous Consulting and Collaboration for Impact.

Progress Mapping Tool

A purpose-designed Progress Mapping Tool is implemented with communities considering partnering with *Stronger Places, Stronger People*. Communities are supported to complete the tool, giving them an opportunity to document what work is already underway and what is next. This helps provide a shared understanding of “readiness” and alignment with the collective impact minimum partner requirements for participation.

Once completed, the Progress Mapping Tool is collaboratively reviewed as part of a “Learning Circle” involving representatives from cultural and community leadership, governments, and other stakeholders critical to a potential *Stronger Places, Stronger People* partnership.



Partnership Exploration Process

Set up meeting

A meeting between Department of Social Services and Community to start the Partnership Exploration Process.



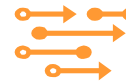
Decision Point

Is the community ready for the Learning Circle?



Action Plan and Support Plan

Actions and support stemming from the Learning Circle are collated into a single document.



Collaboration Agreement

An agreement is signed between community and investors.



Step One

Step Two

Step Three

Step Four

Step Five

Step Six

Step Seven

Step Eight

Step Nine



Decision Point

Is the community ready to start Partnership Exploration?



Progress Mapping

Mapping your progress against the Progress Mapping Tool.



Strategic Learning Circle

A facilitated discussion regarding the findings of the Progress Mapping process and used to inform the Action & Support plan.



Decision Point

Are community and investors willing to proceed to a Collaboration Agreement?



Begin Formal Partnership

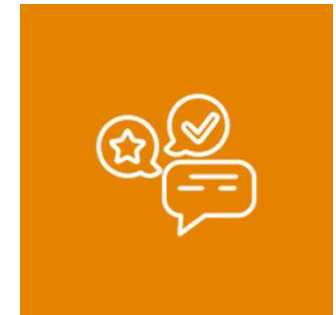
Learning Circle

The Learning Circle provides an opportunity for the community and partners to review the Progress Mapping finding, including discussion of what success looks like, and opportunities and risks moving forward.

An Action Plan and Support Plan are developed through the Learning Circle based on the Progress Mapping findings which will set out the community's priorities for the next twelve months and the support needed to achieve them.

Following the Learning Circle, communities will have a sound understanding of the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative and will be well positioned to make an informed decision about whether to formally partner with the initiative. If they choose to partner, the community, governments and other partners will sign a Collaboration Agreement, before commencing the formal partnership.

Support is provided to communities throughout this process, and at any time prospective communities can opt out of the partnership exploration process.

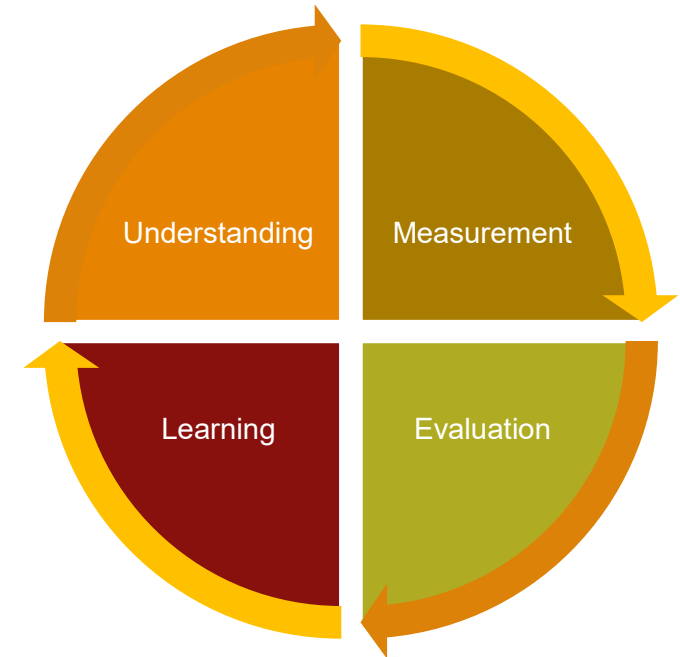


Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (U-MEL)

The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* initiative has a strong emphasis on improvement, accountability, knowledge, and movement building processes.

The accompanying U-MEL Strategy provides a consistent approach to:

1. **Understanding** through insights and analysis
2. **Measurement** of progress
3. **Evaluation** of processes and outcomes, and
4. **Learning** what works and what doesn't, and using this information to continuously improve. The U-MEL strategy is aligned with the minimum evaluation standards set out in the *Place-based Evaluation Framework*.¹



The U-MEL will be implemented at both the overarching initiative and the individual community levels. The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* theory of change, the initiative-level outcomes framework based on The Nest², the community level outcomes, indicators and targets, and key evaluation questions will all be used to measure the population impact in the 10 communities, the effectiveness of the local Backbone teams and the implementation of the initiative.

Processes to implement the U-MEL include: annual Learning Circles, collection of indicator data against outcomes and targets, participation in a community of practice, and mid and end point evaluations.

1. Dart, J. (2018). *Place-based Evaluation Framework: A guide for evaluation of place-based approaches*. Report commissioned by the Queensland Government Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS) and the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). Canberra: The Department of Social Services.

2. Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2012) *The Nest Framework*. Canberra. ARACY



Key components of the U-MEL strategy



Understanding

This element of the U-MEL refers to the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative evidence to understand the current state, the desired future state, and what approaches will enable shift in the community. At the community level, this work is done by the Local Backbone Teams, supported by government and investor partners. Processes include the development and analysis of community profiles and community plans, Leadership Exploration Process, service system mapping, and community consultations.

At the initiative level, Understanding processes include the development and analysis of data packs and community profiles, cross community analysis of trends and issues, and exploration of systemic policy and service system enablers and barriers.



Measurement

Measurement involves the ongoing collection of quantitative and qualitative performance data to understand progress at four levels:

1. Progress is measured by communities against the 6 conditions (see *Progress Mapping Tool*) and associated data collection methods.
2. System level impacts are tracked by communities using a mix of exploratory, qualitative and quantitative techniques.
3. Annual population level changes for families and communities, including a small number of flagship indicators drawn from a nationally consistent data set and selected by communities to match their community strategy. The U-MEL strategy provides an indicator bank for selecting indicators at the population level changes.
4. At the aggregated initiative level using the outcomes framework based on ARACY's The Nest to measure population change across the 10 communities.





Evaluation

Evaluation processes include:

- Continuous evaluation of community and summative initiative impact through the outcomes monitoring.
- A process evaluation to understand the extent of implementation of the model using a largely qualitative approach.
- A mid-term summative co-evaluation in 2020, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements at both the community and aggregated initiative level.
- A 5-year impact evaluation.



Learning

The Learning element of the U-MEL includes:

- An annual Learning Circle for each community and the government partners using data and analysis from the Understanding, Measurement, and Evaluation processes.
- Working through the Most Significant Learning tool (MSL) to share and document learnings about implementation and effectiveness of the model
- Cross-community learning through community of practice networks, cross community participation in Learning Circles and all-partner events.

See the U-MEL Strategy for further details.



Review and refinement

The *Stronger Places, Stronger People* model will continue to be refined and articulated during implementation. This document will be reviewed in 12 months. The review will be coordinated by Department of Social Services.

The Department of Social Services acknowledges the input of the many people involved in co-development process of the *Stronger Places, Stronger People* model and implementation framework and extends appreciation to all involved.

For further information, please email us at: StrongerPlaces.StrongerPeople@dss.gov.au

