Practical place-based initiatives:
a better practice guide

March 2012

Strategy and Delivery Division
Social Inclusion Unit

What is the Better Practice Guide to practical place-based initiatives?

What you can expect from the Guide

Place-based initiatives can be a successful mechanism for responding to entrenched disadvantage and improve community outcomes in particular locations.

This Guide is designed to assist Commonwealth officials to design, implement and evaluate place-based initiatives through:

- Providing a framework to consider the key components of place-based initiatives

- Explaining these components in detail, including how they can be applied in practice

- Detailing a checklist of considerations officials should take into account for place-based initiatives

- Distilling the lessons learnt from a range of Australian and international place-based initiatives

This Guide sets an expectation that doing something in a place-based way involves significantly different thinking and action compared with business as usual.

Background to the Guide

This Better Practice Guide has been developed by PM&C to promote a common understanding of what constitutes an effective place-based initiative and when they should be used.

The Guide adds to the work of the Australian Social Inclusion Board by distilling the views of over 130 experts and the lessons learned over the past decade of place-based practice to form a set of concrete guidelines and practical tips.

It is a 'short cut' to accessing the judgement and expertise of experienced place-based practitioners and also contains useful case study examples from over 15 different initiatives.

For further information on this guide or place-based policy generally, please contact the Strategy and Delivery Division of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The structure of the Better Practice Guide

Structure	
This guide has three sections	
1. What are place-based initiatives? This section defines what a place-based approach is and sets out the five components which comprise successful place-based initiatives. The section also explains that the components may by applied differently in each initiative, depending on the nature of the community, the nature of the issue and government constraints.	4-9
2. The case for place-based initiatives. This section sets out how place-based approaches have been used in the past and in which circumstances the Commonwealth could achieve a better outcome using a place-based approach.	10-15
3. Place-based initiatives in practice. This section examines each of the five components in detail, including an explanation of why they are important, practical advice on how each of them may be applied in practice and a checklist of considerations relevant to each component.	16-38

1. What are place-based initiatives?

Place-based initiatives partner with the community to tailor policy to the characteristics of a particular location

What is a place-based initiative?

A place-based initiative:

- is tailored (in design or delivery or both) and targeted to the specific circumstances of a place to respond to complex and multifacted issues that are unable to be resolved through typical universal (i.e. untailored) policy approaches

- engages the community[1] as active participants in policy development and service delivery

- is outcomes focussed and provides considerable flexibility on how outcomes will be achieved

- includes these components: understand the place, partner with the community, get government working together, empower people on the ground, and make change stick
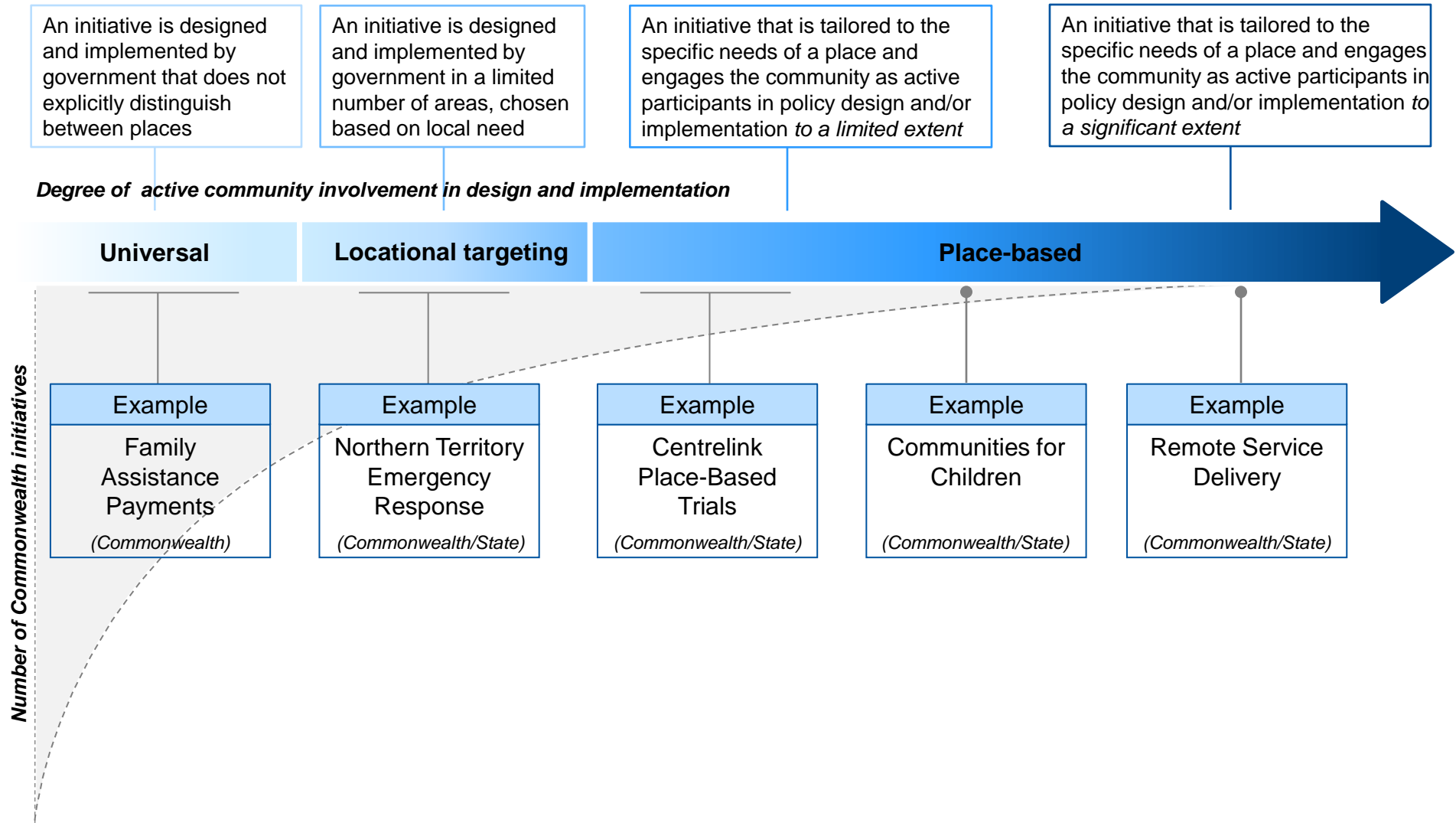
Why should we talk about it?

- Place-based thinking is an increasingly important theme in Australia policy development

- The Commonwealth has a proven track record of place-based initiatives, including significant investment in the Communities for Children program and in other recent initiatives such as the Building Australia's Future Workforce package.

- There is also growing interest in place-based policy around the world – for instance, the US, UK, Canada and Chile have a range of initiatives dedicated to ensuring local solutions to local problems. [2]

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Place-based approaches involve communities in policy design and implementation, but are infrequently attempted by government

An initiative is designed and implemented by government that does not explicitly distinguish between places

An initiative is designed and implemented by government in a limited number of areas, chosen based on local need

An initiative that is tailored to the specific needs of a place and engages the community as active participants in policy design and/or implementation *to a limited extent*

An initiative that is tailored to the specific needs of a place and engages the community as active participants in policy design and/or implementation *to a significant extent*

Degree of active community involvement in design and implementation

Universal

Locational targeting

Place-based

Number of Commonwealth initiatives

Example	Example	Example	Example	Example
Family Assistance Payments *(Commonwealth)*	Northern Territory Emergency Response *(Commonwealth/State)*	Centrelink Place-Based Trials *(Commonwealth/State)*	Communities for Children *(Commonwealth/State)*	Remote Service Delivery *(Commonwealth/State)*

To identify the components of place-based initiatives, PM&C has analysed initiatives across the spectrum of community involvement

Degree of active community involvement in design and implementation

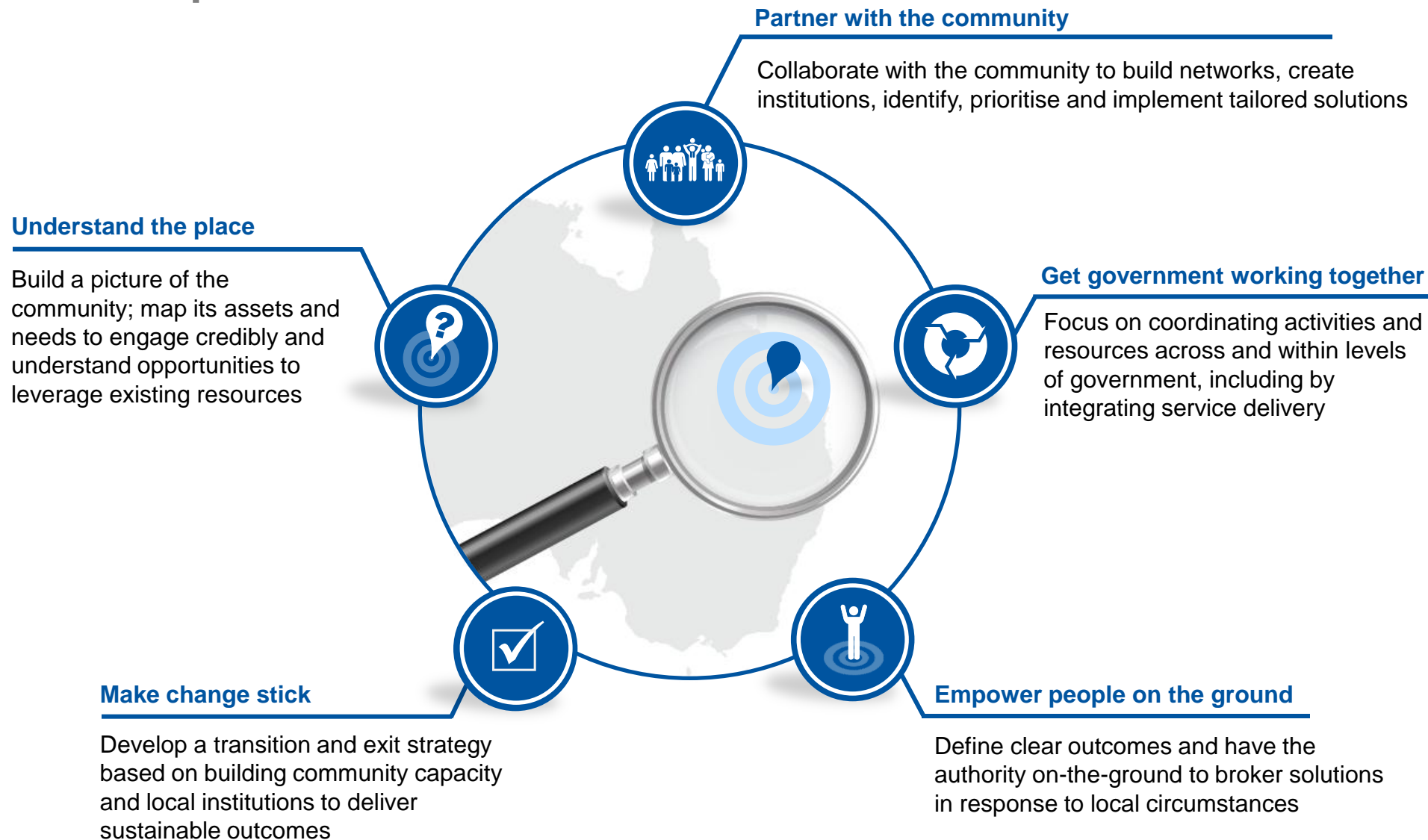| Universal	Locational targeting	Place-based
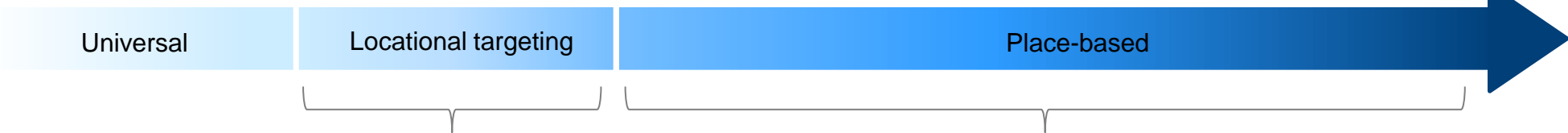
The project interviewed:

- Department of Communities (Qld)
- North West and Northern Tasmania Innovation and Investment Fund

The project interviewed:

- Remote Service Delivery (Mornington Island, Qld)
- Building Better Cities
- Tomorrow, Today Foundation (Benalla)
- Community Renewal
- Family Centred Employment Project (Goodna)
- Alice Springs Transformation Plan
- **Centrelink Place-Based Trials (Logan**, Fairfield, Peachy Belt, and Cooma)

- **Communities for Children (Hume** and Salisbury)
- Redfern Waterloo Authority
- Mildura Community Engagement Framework
- Cape York Welfare Reform Trial
- Beyond Empathy's Bowral Community Arts Program
- Neighbourhood Renewal Vic
- Central Australia Youth Link Up Service
- ChildFIRST (Victoria)

*Major case studies are in **bold**.*

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Our research has identified five components which are essential to effective place-based initiatives

Partner with the community

Collaborate with the community to build networks, create institutions, identify, prioritise and implement tailored solutions

Understand the place

Build a picture of the community; map its assets and needs to engage credibly and understand opportunities to leverage existing resources

Get government working together

Focus on coordinating activities and resources across and within levels of government, including by integrating service delivery

Make change stick

Develop a transition and exit strategy based on building community capacity and local institutions to deliver sustainable outcomes

Empower people on the ground

Define clear outcomes and have the authority on-the-ground to broker solutions in response to local circumstances

The five components will apply differently depending on the nature of the community, the nature of the issue and government constraints

Understand the place	Partner with the community	Get government working together	Empower people on the ground	Make change stick

The list of considerations below help to understand how the components are applied in different ways depending on nature of the place, the nature of the issue and the government constraints

The nature of the community	The nature of the issues being addressed	Government constraints and requirements
Community cohesion: cultural, linguistic or socio-economic diversity, diversity of community perspectives	**Complexity of the challenge:** the extent to which the issue is intractable and the level of complexity involved	**Timing:** expectations of when outcomes and deliverables need to be achieved
Community capacity: existing community assets, strengths and services, including its economic profile	**Extent of fresh thinking required:** any new knowledge required to achieve the outcomes	**Perception of risk:** Government's perspective and appetite for risk
Government presence: existing local/state/federal programs, services or coordination mechanisms	**Existing data and evidence:** existing data on the issue and evidence on effective interventions	**Senior stakeholder buy-in:** senior stakeholder interest, commitment and desire to have a decision making role
		Existing government commitments: scope restrictions on what can/cannot be undertaken

Although all place-based approaches have the same underlying principles, the tailoring process means that they may look different on the ground

2. The case for place-based initiatives

The Commonwealth has a strong legacy of effective place-based initiatives

Highlighted Commonwealth developments in place-based initiatives

1 **Australian Assistance Plan** *(*1972-1975)

- This initiative aimed to improve social outcomes in specific regions in partnership with communities
- Social planners and community development officers assisted to build a strong understanding of communities and engage with disadvantaged and isolated groups
- Regional Councils for Social Development were established and included representatives from local communities and across levels of government, with flexible funding provided to meet needs identified by the community

2 **Building Better Cities** (1991-1996)

- This initiative aimed to improve quality of life in cities, focusing on 26 distinct locations
- Proposals were developed to meet the unique needs of each location
- A collaborative and joined up approach between governments in policy development and delivery was a key feature of the program

3 **Stronger Families and Communities** (2004-2012)

- This initiative aimed to improve outcomes in early childhood development by identifying and responding to the unique needs of a small number of communities
- Non-government organisations are funded as 'Facilitating Partners' in defined community sites around Australia to make decisions on what projects to fund
- Time and resources allocated to consulting and engaging with the community to understand local needs.

Despite positive evaluations of individual initiatives, it is difficult to prove that their success was *because* they were place-based

Evaluations of individual place-based initiatives show that they can be highly effective...

Successful place-based initiatives can be found both domestically and internationally. In Australia, strong evidence of success exists for the Commonwealth's Communities for Children program[1] and the Victorian Government's Neighbourhood Renewal program.[2] As an international example, a 2008 report in the UK identified a number of place-based unemployment programs in that country that had achieved significant positive outcomes.[3]

...and, consequently, international support for place-based approaches is growing...

" *Government policy needs to recognise places' economic context and prospects for growth, and be sufficiently flexible to support places to address area-based challenges and opportunities.*[4] "

OECD review of place-based policies in the Netherlands (2010)

" *Experience...shows that policies for regions are most effective when infrastructure investment, spatial planning and region economic development policies are well co-ordinated with each other.*[5] "

HM Treasury and Department of Communities and Local Government (2010)

...but, it is difficult to analyse whether successful initiatives are successful simply because they have adopted a place-based approach.
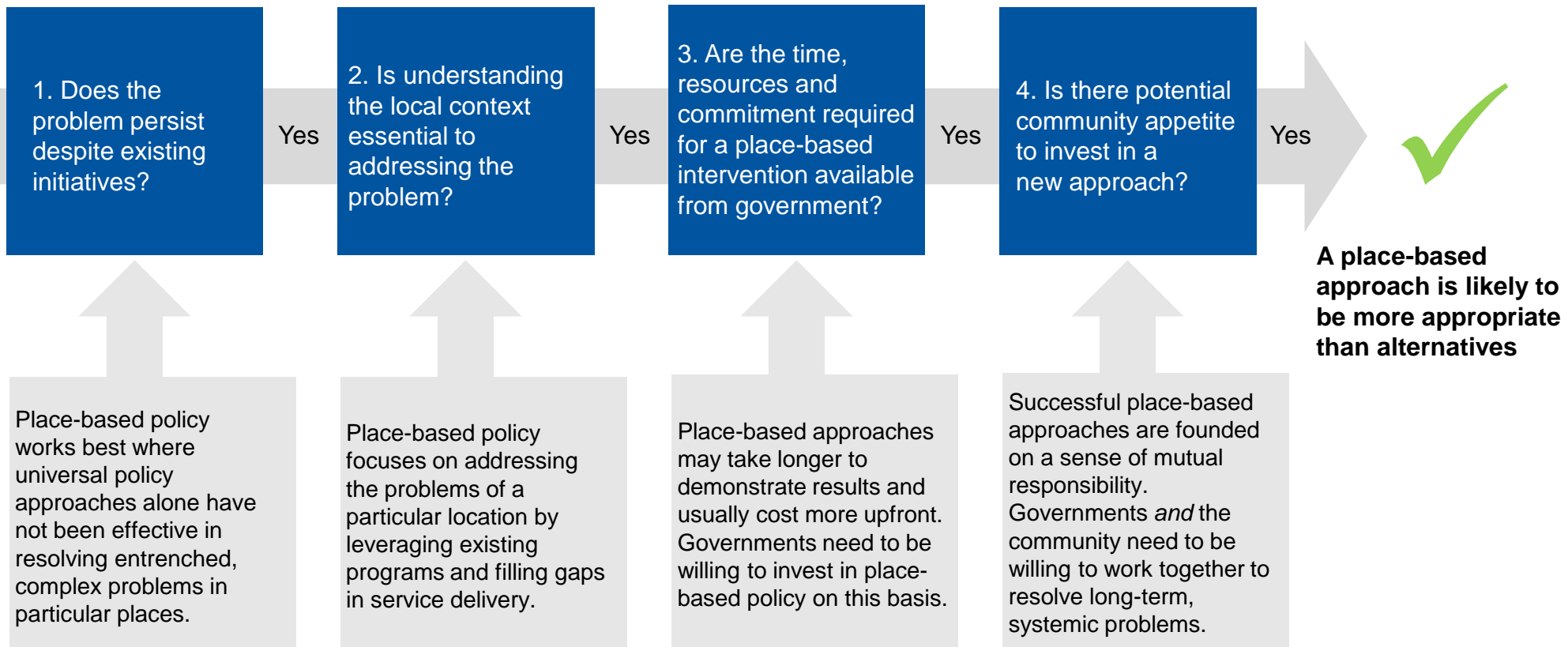
Policy Horizons Canada

In June 2011 Policy Horizons Canada released their comprehensive report on place-based policies and concluded that:

" *The evaluation challenges discussed in this paper have led to the acknowledgment that the evidence base for place-based initiatives is still being built. Notwithstanding the increasing adoption of place based approaches internationally, there is consensus that their impact evaluation has been limited.*[6] "

Sources: 1) (2009) 'Stronger Families in Australia study: the impact of Communities for Children', Occasional Paper 25, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra; 2) (2005, 2009) 'Neighbourhood Renewal Evaluation Report', Department of Human Services, Victoria; 3) Griggs et .al. (2008) "Person or place-based policies to tackle disadvantage? Not knowing what works" Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report; 4) (2010) 'National Place-based Policies in the Netherlands ',OECD; 5) (2010) 'Total place: a whole area approach to public services' , HM Treasury and Department of Communities and Local Government, March; 6) (2011) 'The Evaluation of Place-Based Approaches Questions for Further Research' Policy Horizons, Canada.

This is consistent with research suggesting that place-based initiatives are only effective in some circumstances

In order to determine whether a place-based approach is appropriate, there are four key questions that policy-makers should ask:[1]

1. Does the problem persist despite existing initiatives?	Yes	2. Is understanding the local context essential to addressing the problem?	Yes	3. Are the time, resources and commitment required for a place-based intervention available from government?	Yes	4. Is there potential community appetite to invest in a new approach?	Yes	✓
Place-based policy works best where universal policy approaches alone have not been effective in resolving entrenched, complex problems in particular places.		Place-based policy focuses on addressing the problems of a particular location by leveraging existing programs and filling gaps in service delivery.		Place-based approaches may take longer to demonstrate results and usually cost more upfront. Governments need to be willing to invest in place-based policy on this basis.		Successful place-based approaches are founded on a sense of mutual responsibility. Governments *and* the community need to be willing to work together to resolve long-term, systemic problems.		**A place-based approach is likely to be more appropriate than alternatives**

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When universal policy is not effective, a place-based approach might be the solution, despite the risks

Commonly identified risks for place-based initiatives	Addressing the risk......
The initiative might not work	• Where universal policy is already failing, place-based initiatives are an opportunity to take a fresh approach to better tailoring policies to communities (and consolidating existing programs) to achieve a better result. • Place-based initiatives are flexible and can be modified during implementation based on ongoing feedback from the community - this enables imative to provide innovative solutions to local problems.
Place-based initiatives are expensive	• Place-based measures can help to ensure that government resources are well co-ordinated, non-duplicative and local resources are leveraged . This can therefore result in lowering the cost to government, by providing highly effective services rather than duplicative universal services. • A targeted early intervention can lead to significant savings in the future
It is difficult for government to commit funding beyond the forward estimates	• Short funding cycles can be interpreted by communities as a lack of intention by the government to commit to the community and may undermine opportunities to build relationships with local partners • Place-based initiatives which are designed with clear outcomes are an opportunity to seek long term commitments from government
We do not have enough staff to run a place-based initiative	• The responsibility for resourcing place-based initiatives can be shared across a number of government departments, as well as NGO's and private industry partners. This not only helps to ensure a co-ordinated government response, but also consolidates staff resources at the local level to make resourcing the initiative more manageable
Devolving control to the local level is risky for government	• Addressing entrenched and place based problems requires knowledge, utilising local assets and tailoring to communities. This is best achieved by delegating authority to Commonwealth officials on the ground or to other local actors • Local control can often allow risks to be managed more effectively as risks can be addressed immediately and local knowledge can help to ensure the most efficient and effective approach to risk management
Place-based policies do not have quick results	• Addressing persistent and complex problems always requires time and this should be communicated to the community. It is possible to show results and measure outcomes by using process milestones and outcome trajectories

14

The components of place-based initiatives are applicable at all points of the policy and implementation cycle

	Identify need and develop policy	Design and develop initiative	Deliver initiative	Evaluate and refine initiative
Understand the place	Map the community and local issues using existing data/evidence and assess community capacity	Fully understand the community service system, identifying opportunities to leverage existing work	Continue to monitor the community and data sources to identify changes to the community	Assess change against the baseline as part of outcome and impact assessment
Partner with the community	Engaging the community to identify priorities and potential solutions.	Work with the community to design and develop initiatives that build on community strengths and existing systems	Continue to foster good working relationships with local stakeholders to deliver the initiative, including partnerships or networks in the community	Use the evaluation to build community cohesion around key priorities and to build community capacity in evaluation
Get government working together	Identify the resources required for coordination, ensure all relevant government stakeholders have been identified and engaged in policy design	Include all relevant government stakeholders in the initiative's design and development, aligning back end systems and identify opportunities for integrated delivery	Establish protocols for coordination and communication, consider establishing informal groups to maintain service coordination and integration.	Consider other governments and other agency performance frameworks to align reporting and evaluation,
Empower people on the ground	Ensure policy settings include substantial opportunities for the initiative to be shaped on the ground, including by setting clear outcomes	Consider how the initiative governance will empower local decision makers, allowing flexibility for delivery to better achieve the initiative outcomes	The initiative delivery should adapt and change to ensure it is as responsive as possible to the community needs, consistent with the initiative outcomes	Allow local flexibility in altering evaluation framework to respond to the changing nature of initiatives
Make change stick	Consider the end point during the policy development, including by explicitly considering exit strategies and community capability building	Set clear expectations on the timeframe and exit strategy, and a focus on community capability building in initiative design	Continue to focus on community capacity building, continuing to reassess the end point and assess the initiative's sustainability	The evaluation should assess future sustainability and demonstrate progress against realistic time horizons

3. Place-based initiatives in practice

The following section explains each component in a number of steps

Understand the place	Partner with the community	Get government working together	Empower people on the ground	Make change stick

Part 1

Sets out an explanation of what is involved in each component and why it is important.

Part 2

Translates each component into a set of practical activities that demonstrate how the component may work in practice. The appropriateness of each activity will differ for each place-based initiative depending on the nature of the community, the nature of the issue and the government constraints.

Part 3

Outlines a real life example of how the component has been applied on the ground in a place-based initiative.

Part 4

Provides a checklist for policy officers and implementers, listing a set of considerations relevant to each component

17

Understand the place

Designing policy that is not universal requires time to understand the place and carefully defining the problem to be solved

What does understanding the place involve?	Why is this important?
• understanding a community's needs	• it justifies the additional resources and innovative approaches required beyond universal policy and puts relevant geographic boundaries around the problem
• building a picture of the community's assets	• it begins to identify existing networks, resources, social capital that could be leveraged – but does not prescribe what will be leveraged, or how
• understanding the community, key players and relationship to government	• it sets up effective engagement by understanding who needs to be engaged and raising awareness of community perceptions of government • where strong community organisations are not present, identifying local leaders will be critical to engaging with the community
• building a picture of the existing government and community programs operating in a particular policy space	• it identifies existing programs that could be enhanced, partnered or co-ordinated with to provide better and more efficient outcomes

Understand the place

Understanding the place is a common process, with standard activities that include mapping the community assets and communicating with the community

Key considerations when applying the component in communities	Community capacity	Existing data & evidence	Timing	Government presence

Map the community using existing data/evidence	Assess community capacity	Engage locally
• Consider the **demographics** of the community's population • Use data to **build a preliminary picture** of the community (e.g. socio-economic trends) and the issue (e.g. who it affects and its causes) • **Define "place" and eligibility meaningfully** – don't create arbitrary postcode boundaries • Identify potential barriers in the community that the initiative will need to take account of – such as a lack of transport, literacy and numeracy levels, etc.	• **Map existing services** in the community – identify gaps and overlap between services • Scope **existing funding and resources** that could be leveraged or consolidated or redirected for a place-based approach • Use social network mapping to **identify key groups** and nodes of influence in the community • Be rigorous in **identifying potential partners** to ensure relevance in the community – be prepared to partner with important local groups, not default to national organisations • Develop a **local resource guide/ directory of services and providers** in the community	• **Be clear on the scope** of the initiative • Get on the front foot **as soon as you engage with communities** to explain the objectives of the initiative. Aim to minimise the rumour mill • Develop an understanding prior to engagement on any **local sensitivities or existing local tensions**

In reality, it may difficult to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to assessing community capacity and engaging locally. When this is the case, the process can be accelerated by focusing on using existing data and networks.

Understand the place

Successful initiatives show that a comprehensive understanding of the community needs to inform the initiative from day one

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In a small remote community, investing effort upfront to understand the community paid dividends

The effort we invested upfront means the program is galloping. We were conscious of not going in with a zero baseline approach – there's a long history of issues and government attempts here. **We were really clear to acknowledge previous government effort here**, what was achieved and what wasn't, and how previous government programs may have created a hostile situation for us going in.

There were high levels of tension and really strong feelings among residents because of recent State government policy, but **we needed to be honest on what we were going to tackle**: this was State government policy based in legislative arrangements that were beyond our ability to influence. From the beginning, we were clear that just because the community believes something is a priority does not mean that it is definitely going to happen. We didn't let the community believe that anything is possible, just to make things easy, by suggesting feasibility studies.

We employed two local engagement officers with strong links to the community to map social networks and provide intelligence to inform our engagement process. **The key is to have clear respect for cultural frameworks, but not to let them prohibit broader engagement.** This preparation worked really well: we engaged with almost 300 people, the greater part of the adult population in the community.

Remote Service Delivery - Mornington Island
Commonwealth/State, 2009 to present

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Checklist of considerations for understanding the place

Have you built a picture of the community using existing data and evidence, including:
- ❑ demographics and push and pull factors for people exiting and entering the area?
- ❑ the key economies and employers, socio-economic trends?
- ❑ comparisons and interactions with neighbouring communities?

What are the key issues facing the community?
- ❑ What do the community identify as their most critical needs? What does the available data/evidence identify as the most critical needs?
- ❑ Are there any gaps between the community identified needs and the needs identified by the data/evidence? If so, why and how will you resolve these?

How will you obtain this data?
- ❑ Consider different options for obtaining data: the Australian Bureau of Statistics, previous government reports, surveys, private consultancy reports.
- ❑ How can you involve the community in understanding what assets are available?
- ❑ How will you track how this data changes over time?
- ❑ Are there any existing government representatives that you could use to understand or engage with the community, e.g. local MPs?

What resources and constraints do you face?
- ❑ What level of detailed understanding of the community is appropriate and feasible for your project?
- ❑ Consider your initiative's goals, funding constraints, the skills and experience of your team and the time available to you.

Have you built a picture of the existing service system?
- ❑ Have you mapped out the existing local, state and Commonwealth government and non-government services and considered how they interact with each other?
- ❑ Do you know who the key individuals and organisations are?
- ❑ What are the current gaps in service delivery?
- ❑ Have you identified which stakeholders be supportive or unsupportive of your objectives and approaches?
- ❑ Have you thought of ways you might engage stakeholders to build buy-in and ownership?

Have you considered what other assets already exist in the community that might assist or impede delivery such as:
- ❑ the physical community assets (e.g. community halls, playgrounds, schools, medical facilities, shopping centres, libraries, local council)?
- ❑ existing organisational infrastructure (e.g. existing community groups, NGOs, social networks)?
- ❑ the integration of services including cross-refers of potential clients?
- ❑ the skills and availability of community members?

Have you considered the community's previous and current relationship with government?
- ❑ How does the community perceive government and its role in addressing needs?
- ❑ Are there sensitivities you should be aware of resulting from previous government initiatives?

A good guide for using data to understand communities has been developed by the Victorian Government, see:
http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/default/CommunityandHealthDevelopmentMultimedia/ Getting_to_Know_your_Community_-_A_guide_to_using_local_data.pdf

Source: PM&C interviews and analysis

Partner with the community

Collaborating and co-creating with the community is effective in building community ownership and empowerment and to leveraging existing community assets and knowledge

What does partnering with the community involve?	Why is this important?
• engaging the community to identify priorities and potential solutions	• it helps ensure that government is not prescriptive in policy design and that the solution really is tailored to the needs of the place • to make effective, lasting and sustainable social change, there must be a sense of community ownership where community members are active agents of change • it begins to develop capacity for local problem solving
• focusing on concepts of mutual responsibility	• it helps to ensure community buy-in whilst managing community expectations and ensures that the focus is not on wish-lists but workable solutions developed within the constraints and parameters of potential government investments • Core community obligations are to assist in building an understanding of the community and work collaboratively and in the interest of the whole community. • Core government obligations are to be open and transparent with the community and actively listen to the views put forward by the community
• building trust-based relationships across the community	• it creates collaborative networks to broker and implement solutions
• focusing on community assets and strengths	• it recognises the value of community • avoids duplication and where possible, focuses on integrating with and building on existing assets
• convening partnerships or networks in the community	• it ensures coordinated activities between government and community organisations to achieve outcomes • it creates a culture of collaboration and begins the process of capacity building

22

Partner with the community

Activities to build relationships across the community depend on the level of existing community cohesion and capacity

| Key considerations when applying the component in communities | Community cohesion | Community capacity |

Identify and engage partners	**Choose how to engage**	**Work in partnership**
Place-based approaches maximise the existing resources and community infrastructure. This can be challenging where community cohesion or capacity are low. Some suggested strategies are listed below. Where community cohesion is low consider: • **Proactively engaging a wide range of stakeholders** in the community to avoid being captured by narrow interests • Using a **range of forums** to bring the community together (public meetings, online forums, citizen juries) Where community capacity is low consider: • **Starting small**, focus on options which require **minimal resources** and are easy to implement • **Identifying potential leaders** and encourage them to take on responsibilities	*Adopting open and transparent approaches to engagement is the most effective approach to engaging with the community.* Place-based initiatives maximise transparency and openness when they partner with the community to: • Find ways to **involve the community from day one** (e.g. using residents to build baseline by collecting data and surveys) • **Make community forums accessible** – provide transport, on-site childcare, catering, interpreting services • **Get on the agenda** at internal meetings of providers in the area, invite other providers to your team meetings • **Co-locate different agencies and organisations** fulltime, or for part of each week • Develop online presence to **give everybody an opportunity to have their say**	*Working in partnership with the community requires governments to understand when to lead and when to support others in the community.* Some strategies to do this are: • Use data (social indicators) to **set priorities and build consensus** • **Agree philosophy and approach upfront**, write terms of reference collaboratively • Have a more hands-on role during set up, but **step back to let community lead once established** • **Clear communication is essential** to developing effective partnerships in a devolved governance structure.

Partner with the community
Successful initiatives use a variety of methods to engage with the community

Effective relationships increased the success of a program to increase connectedness of socially excluded people in highly serviced urban area

From the beginning, the team recognised that they couldn't do this on their own, they needed partners. They pounded the pavement to promote the program. Members of the team came to a couple of our staff meetings and got themselves on the community networks with other agencies and NGOs. The ability to get everyone around the table made things so much easier.

The team built up such huge trust between services by always following up and being really responsive. We knew that while we're doing our bit, they're doing their bit. The staff knew exactly what our service provides, and our limitations, so when they were really pushing or advocating for a particular client, we knew it was genuine.

Collaboration meant that jobseekers were able to get more out of the JSA process; and that JSAs were able to stay objective and maintain our focus on employment outcomes. **It removed the need for jobseekers to go to multiple providers and clients became more connected in the community.**

Shared Assessments in Logan
Commonwealth, 2008 to present

In a culturally diverse community, programs to get children "school-ready" used a variety of techniques to engage parents

The program focus was on being grass roots and community driven. **It works because it doesn't feel like a government service**.

In order to get the know the community, we piggy backed on what else was happening: went to school at pick up time to speak directly to parents; set up at shopping centres with balloons to attract attentions. **We went to where the parents were,** taking maternal and child health assessments to pre-schools, rather than expecting parents to come into the health centre.

The focus was on including as many people as possible. A playgroup leader learnt to sing 'incy wincy spider' in nine languages to engage parents. There was story time at the library in many languages, which had low attendance, so we employed four bilingual people on a casual basis who went out to the pre schools, schools, networking with the community. As a result, the Turkish, then Arabic, and Syrian communities asked for the story times to be reinstated**.**

Communities for Children - Broadmeadows
Commonwealth/State, 2004 to present

Checklist of considerations for partnering with the community

Have you chosen how you will engage with the community?

- ❑ Have you considered the suitability of different engagement models? (e.g initiative launch, surveys, town hall forums, public presentations, social media options, focus groups, citizen advisory committees)

- ❑ Choosing the right model will be influenced by factors such as:

  - • the goals of the initiative and the outcomes you wish to achieve from engagement (e.g. consensus, creating a common vision or explaining government intentions/priorities);

  - • the available time, resources and budget;

  - • who you want to attend.

- ❑ Consider other ways of publicising your message: local newspapers and radio, school newsletters, bulletin boards

- ❑ Have you provided a mechanism whereby the community can provide feedback on the initiatives as it develops?

Have you considered how to make your chosen engagement model accessible to the community? Consider issues such as:

- ❑ timing of meetings (i.e. during school hours, after work hours)

- ❑ physical access problems (consider providing transport options, child-care services or co-locating services)

Have you identified the most appropriate partners to take forward your initiative?

- ❑ Consider: community groups, not-for-profits, other levels of governments and departments, training providers, business groups, individuals with influence in the community (such as local MPs), private sector, philanthropists, community networks or committees

Have you agreed with the partner on their role?

- ❑ What expertise do they bring to the table?

- ❑ What will their key functions be and how will they report back to you on progress of the initiative and/or issues as they arise?

- ❑ Will they have day-to-day responsibility for running the initiative or will they have more of a high level guidance role? Who will be the key agent in the partnership?

- ❑ Have you developed with partners a common understanding of the problems to be addressed and the desired outcomes? Have you drafted the terms of reference together?

- ❑ Do you need a written agreement to formalise the partnership arrangements?

- ❑ Have the obligations of each party been specified, including the need for public commitment to the initiative and honest disclosure of issues relating to the project?

Have you completed due diligence on potential partners to minimise risks?

- ❑ Have they undertaken similar projects in the past?

- ❑ What is their reputation in the community?

- ❑ Are its internal governance and financial management structures robust enough to ensure accountability?

- ❑ Are they compliant with legislative requirements?

> *For further information on ways to engage with the community, try these sources:*
> - • *Attorney-General's Department, Effective Engagement: A guide to using community engagement to develop better policies and programs*
> - • *www.involve.org.uk*

25

Get government working together

Achieving local outcomes in a place requires governments to join up and coordinate activities and resources across portfolios and levels of government

What does getting government working together involve?	Why is this important?
• agreeing a shared set of objectives and outcomes	• it ensures all government departments and agencies are working towards the same goals • it ensures there are transparent markers of progress and
• defining clear roles and responsibilities	• a clear understanding of each party's expected contribution is essential to encourage the most efficient use of government resources
• providing sufficient resources to enable coordination	• it ensures that coordination is not an afterthought and acknowledges that resourcing coordination improves front-line service delivery
• integrating and coordinating policy and service delivery across functional areas and agencies/portfolios and levels of government.	• it ensures that all government resources in the place are tackling community priorities efficiently and not creating perverse incentives or outcomes • it minimises waste and duplication

Get government working together

Activities to get government working together on the ground depend on the scale of the existing government presence: the number of programs and agencies across all levels of government

Key considerations when applying the component in communities	Government presence	Policy complexity	Perception of risk	Senior Stakeholder buy-in

Low ← Existing Government Presence → **High**

Partner with other departments and levels of government from the beginning to genuinely 'join' initiatives

Establish informal taskforces/action groups/collaboratives to tackle priority issues that bring all players (government/NGOs) into the same room

Include local government in a substantive role where appropriate (e.g. as a service provider, member of local reference group, future funder)

Designate a single contact point in each organisation

Appoint a place coordinator to oversee integration/coordination of government activity

Establish protocols for coordination and communication
- Agree shared processes (screening, referral, assessment, iteration, review)
- Improvise tools to share information locally (e.g. online case management, shared assessments)
- Develop systems that balance privacy issues with benefits of closer collaboration

Invest in understanding and clearly articulating the available services and their eligibility requirements to the community

Create a single access point (e.g. 'one-stop-shop') for all government services in recognition that distinctions between levels of government are not meaningful for the community.

Large scale initiatives may also require government to consider government machinery and prioritisation changes such as shared outcomes and shared delivery agreements

27

Get government working together

Successful initiatives use formal and informal systems and structures to build a culture of coordination

In an outer metro area, a program to connect people to services, developed local tools to join up Commonwealth and State agencies

To build a culture of coordination, we did simple things like designating a single contact point in each organisation to call. Being able to avoid the 1800 number is a godsend.

Each agency has a lot of information that other departments want, so **we developed tools to share information that take a couple of minutes for staff to complete but save clients from going backwards and forwards between offices.** We have a pro-forma email that Child Safety fills out to confirm that a customer is under child protection and ID forms that use information Centrelink has on file for homeless customers to use with the local housing office.

Shared Assessments in Logan
Commonwealth, 2008 to present

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Checklist of considerations for getting government working together

Have you mapped all of the existing government (including Commonwealth, state/territory and local government) services and how they interact with each other?

- ❑ Is each service aware of the availability of other services?

- ❑ Do the services cross-refer?

- ❑ Do they share information? If not, why not?

- ❑ Are there any blockages to prevent clients accessing particular services (e.g. eligibility requirements)?

- ❑ Where are the gaps in the government service provision?

- ❑ Are there options for consolidating work to avoid duplication?

- ❑ Do government department's work together to develop new initiatives and amend existing initiatives? If not, why not?

For additional information regarding joined up government, see the Management Advisory Committee Report, Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges, *2004,* http://www.apsc.gov.au/mac/connectinggovernment.htm

Have you considered options for increasing the co-operation between government services?

- ❑ Are there ways to increase information-sharing (e.g. online case management tools, pro-forma documents)?

- ❑ Can challenges to information-sharing be overcome by changing processes, addressing privacy concerns, implementing information protocols or advancing issues up the authority chain?

- ❑ Are the government services talking to each other and if appropriate, has a lead agency been nominated?

- ❑ Would it be appropriate to appoint a single contact person that can help to co-ordinate services, ensure cross-referrals and increase understanding of the range of available services?

- ❑ Would it be possible and/or appropriate to co-locate government services so that they're easier to access by clients and to enable more referrals and communication?

- ❑ Do staff have the flexibility required to allow them to follow-up on clients through a range of service providers and broker new pathways to find solutions for complex cases?

- ❑ What is level of commitment for a joined up service approach further up the authority chain, including between different Commonwealth and state agencies? Consider options for increasing senior stakeholder buy-in such as inter-departmental committees, using the COAG process etc.

- ❑ How can mechanisms such as the COAG process be best utilised to ensure federal and state level buy-in?

For larger initiatives, have you considered consider whether more formalised accountability mechanisms are required, such as:

- ❑ formalising arrangements through written agreements?

- ❑ memorandums of understanding; shared delivery agreements; national partnership arrangements?

Empower people on the ground

Empowering people on the ground means authorising people on the ground to make decisions to achieve local outcomes

What does empowering people on the ground involve?	Why is this important?
• defining clear outcomes and objectives	• to make effective, lasting and sustainable social change, community members must be active agents • it strikes a balance between managing the risk of empowering decision-makers on the ground and ensuring they have the flexibility to run their activities • be clear about scope and set appropriate expectations during community consultations

• commitment from senior decision makers to provide authority to people on the ground to make decisions on initiative design and delivery	• place-based initiatives and community co-creation is a significant departure from typical models of government activity and need new accountability frameworks
	  - Government is unlikely to correctly predict in advance exactly the needs of a community (and these may change over time)
	  - Practitioners must be empowered to adapt a initiative to reflect better knowledge of the place and incorporate the lessons from experimentation over time
	• local assets are best leveraged by local staff rather than by policy makers in Departments, including resources, assets and local leadership
	• to give practitioners real authority, they must be empowered to make priority, resourcing and/or funding allocation decisions matched to community needs

• vesting formal decision-making authority in any community partnerships/consortia	• ensures that any partnerships are genuinely collaborative and allow players on the ground to make decisions without approval from Commonwealth agencies nationally (within in the constraints set down by the Financial Management and Accountability Act

Empower people on the ground

In practice, there are different models to enable flexible and devolved authority, but they all require clearly defined outcomes and compliance with the FMA Act

Key considerations when applying the component in communities	Community capacity	Extent of fresh thinking required	Perception of risk	Senior stakeholder buy-in	Existing government commitments

Local APS decision making model:
The Commonwealth places a senior employee on the ground with the authority to allocate limited funding and resources to achieve set government objectives.

Community partnership model:
Government provides funding/resources to a local committee with a Commonwealth representative. The Committee determines its own activities and funding/resource allocation to achieve government priorities.

Independent authority model:
The community establishes and owns an independent body, which determines its priorities and activities. The Government then contracts the body to provide services.

Commonwealth Department

Funding
Set policy priorities

Feedback
Input into policy/initiative design

Place Co-ordinator
Authority to:
- Allocate limited funding/resources;
- Determine service gaps;
- Broker solutions;
- Co-ordinate existing services; and
- Request changes to priorities.

$$/Resources

NGOs and Service Providers → Community advisory group

Feedback

Services

Community

Feedback

Commonwealth Department

Funding
Set policy priorities

Feedback
Input into policy/initiative design

Local Steering Group
Including Commonwealth representative, State Government, NGOs and local representatives
Authority to:
- Allocate funding/resources; and
- Determine activities within government priorities.

$$/Resources

Feedback

NGOs and Service Providers

Services

Community

Community stakeholders

Commonwealth Department

Owns

Contracts

Incorporated body
Established and owned by the community
Authority to:
- Determine priorities and activities;
- Allocate funding/resources
- Direct service delivery; and
- Employ staff and manage assets.

$$/Resources

Feedback

NGOs and Service Providers

Services

Services

Community

31

Empower people on the ground

Successful initiatives give authority to practitioners to make decisions on priorities, design and delivery, within a framework of clear outcomes

> *A successful program to improve social support services and reduce homelessness had a high degree of funding flexibility and decision-making autonomy*
>
> There were guidelines that needed to be followed with infrastructure spending and certain outcomes that needed to be achieved, however **there was relative flexibility in the administration of the other parts of the program and this flexibility was important in allowing decision to be made at the local level**. There was a pool of funding for projects and we could choose how long we would fund for – it could be just one year, or up to three years.
>
> To establish some early wins we implemented a much-needed dog control program. While the dog control program didn't fit within any particular funding programs we could fund it because of the flexibility we were given under the place-based guidelines.
>
> **We had the freedom to address community priorities innovatively** – not just fulfilling a wishlist. There was community concern about public safety and the desire for a patrol initiative, even though there were already seven operating. Instead, we decided that it's not about money, but about doing things smarter, so funded a police officer to coordinate patrols and provide standardised training, which has been really successful
>
> *Alice Springs Transformation Plan*
> *Commonwealth/State 2009 to present*

Checklist of considerations for empowering people on the ground

Have the outcomes and measurement of the initiative been clearly defined and agreed?

- ❑ Is there clarity on what the initiative will achieve and when?

- ❑ How will progress be measured along the way? (e.g interim milestones, interim reports, data collection on service usage)

- ❑ How will funding decisions be affected by the results of the progress measurements?

- ❑ Are there mechanisms in place to ensure the community and clients can provide feedback on the initiative?

- ❑ Do the plan objectives meet the SMART test – i.e. are they Specific? Measurable? Achievable? Realistic? Timely?

To what extent will the community have ownership of the initiative and the outcomes it achieves?

- ❑ Are there ways of increasing community ownership over time by providing more opportunities for the community to shape the direction of the initiative?

- ❑ Are there ways of developing emerging community leaders so that they can assume more active roles in the running of the initiative and driving its future direction?

Has the decision making and governance structure been determined?

- ❑ Have you identified the key factors that determine where accountability and authority should sit within and between organisations, (e.g legislative requirements, procurement guidelines, partnership agreement) ?

- ❑ Where will ultimate responsibility for the initiative lie?

- ❑ What flexibility and limits do staff on the ground have to make decisions regarding priorities, funding and resource allocation and other issues as they arise?

- ❑ How and to what extent do these decisions need to be communicated back to Departments for clearance or information?

- ❑ Will the initiative's direction be informed by some form of steering committee or reference group?

- ❑ Who would sit on such a committee and what would be its role in the decision-making structure?

- ❑ Would it be suitable to set up a new entity, such as an incorporated body to take forward the initiative's work at some point in the future? How would the government use the independent body to achieve better community outcomes? (e.g. contracting the incorporated body to achieve particular outcomes or deliver services)

Are the risk accountability and risk management processes in place?

- ❑ What accountability mechanisms are best suited to ensuring these outcomes can be achieved without the need for excessive top-down control?

- ❑ Are accountability mechanisms consistent with departmental policies and the Financial Management and Accountability Act?

- ❑ Have the risks been thought through and a plan developed of how these can be addressed on the ground?

- ❑ Have the obligations of the partner organisations been made clear so that the organisation is aware of government's expectations of them?

Make change stick

Government needs to plan a transition plan or exit strategy and set up the community to deliver sustainable long term outcomes

What does making change stick involve?	Why is this important?
• undertaking effective evaluation to assess the strengths and success of initiatives	• it supports effective planning and service design, as well as building credibility with the community and with funders
• committing to clear and certain timeframes and defining meaningful, but realistic, milestones	• it provides space for practitioners to invest time in building relationships and networks for the long term, but simultaneously ensures accountability
• defining a transition plan (and potentially an exit plan) as part of the design process and ensuring community expectations align with that strategy	• it ensures outcomes are sustainable by planning for government withdrawal and preparing the handover to the community within a reasonable time frame
• building community capacity to ensure outcomes are sustained as the community takes greater ownership	• the overall objective of place-based initiatives should be to reduce the role of government in coordinating and managing place-based interventions, and increase community ownership and involvement • this will only be possible if institutional capacity is created within communities – including community organisations and networks which are able to solve problems locally

Make change stick

Make change stick should be considered as soon as possible in the policy cycle

Key considerations when applying the component in communities	Community capacity	Government presence	Timing	Senior stakeholder buy-in	Existing government commitments

Think about the end point at the beginning	Plan for the right time horizon and get the timing right	Establish sustainable governance/ownership structures
• Begin to **develop a transition plan (and an exit strategy where appropriate) early** in the process • Facilitate conversations about **what will happen 'the day after the government exits'** to networks and partners • **Understand the community's trajectory** (where it is going, how it is likely to change) **and incorporate that into capacity building**	• Complex problems often require **long timeframes to achieve real and lasting progress** • The **timeframe should relate to the complexity of the problem**. This may mean moving away from short term initiatives (i.e. with funding for <3 years). • The time horizon should also take account of the level of community capacity building and relationship building – **have the courage to commit to longer timeframes** • Where government wants to show progress early, **identify ways to bring forward benefits** and show results early.	• If appropriate, **set up incorporated bodies that can own the initiatives** in the long term • Ensure the initiative/project structure **allows transition to a community organisation or local government** • The initiative evaluation processes should **incorporate capacity building** (i.e. 'community readiness'). Find ways to measure community ownership and engagement, not just aggregate outcomes

Make change stick

Successful initiatives invest time and energy into building relationships across the community

> *A regional city council has partnered with small communities in its area to build their capacity for sustained improvements in educational attainment, child treatment and employment*
>
> **Many government programs are short-lived and don't build sustainability or local ownership**. Sometimes well intended short term interventions/programs are seen by community members, particularly highly disadvantaged communities, as seagulls (who simply swoop in and out). This level of relationship limits the long term effectiveness of the intended potential solution.
>
> In our experience to sustain change, you need to build local leadership and ownership. **Our approach is to involve the local community as closely as possible in building an action plan, and then use this process to identify potential leaders.** Basically, we just draw upon those community champions who were the most involved in the planning process and translate this into program implementation.
>
> But it's not enough to rely on individuals. The best example of this is in Ouyen where the community group is now an incorporated body. With the community leaders at their core. Once it's set up, we'll provide administrative support and funnel funds through these bodies. The community planning process aims to achieve community ownership and the capacity to be self determining. At first, the community usually doesn't get it. But, **by the time we transition out of a community, we aim to have used this process to build a community system that can provide lasting leadership and sustain the process of community change and well being.**
>
> *Mildura Regional City Council*
> *Local government, 2003 to present*

Checklist of considerations for making it stick

What are the timeframes for the initiative?

- ❑ Has consideration been given to how long it will take for the initiative to have impact, build sustainability and for the government to reduce its level of involvement so the community can take ownership?

- ❑ If this is likely to be 3 years or longer, has consideration been given to how to manage budget and electoral cycles?

- ❑ Where initiatives are initially established as pilots, consider ways of taking the pilot forward on the basis that it successfully achieves its outcomes.

What are the measures of success?

- ❑ Have progress milestones been put in place to help ensure the longer timeframes are acceptable to decision makers in government?

- ❑ Are milestones appropriate to measure progress in the initiative? If not, consider if there might be other ways of measuring the progress of the initiative to ensure accountability (e.g. how well the initiative has engaged with the community, the level of community ownership, how well government has joined together)

Has the lifecycle of the project been mapped out, including developing a plan to ensure the initiative can eventually be self-sustaining?

- ❑ Has a process been put in place to ensure that the initiative can be transitioned to the community or community organisations?

- ❑ What does the community need to ensure that the initiative can be self-sustaining? Consider the need for additional infrastructure and training etc. Also consider alternate funding mechanisms to avoid reliance on government grants.

- ❑ Have local people with leadership potential been identified and support provided to these individuals to develop their leadership qualities to take over the initiative?

Does the initiative incorporate evaluation methods?

- ❑ Is the evaluation process aligned with the specified outcomes of the initiative?

- ❑ Has consideration been given to how data will be collected to inform the evaluation process?

- ❑ If the initiative is already in place but with no methods of evaluation, have you considered how evaluation options could be incorporated into the initiative's existing structure?

- ❑ How often will evaluations occur and who will consider the evaluation reports?

- ❑ How with the results of the evaluation be incorporated into the initiative to provide better outcomes?

- ❑ How can these evaluations be shared internally and with other agencies to ensure that everyone can benefit from the lessons learnt from other initiatives.

For further assistance in evaluating initiatives, see M Chinman et. al., Getting to Outcomes, Rand Technical Report: Promoting Accountability through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. *http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR101.html*

Contact details for further information on place-based initiatives

If you would like further information on how to design and implement a place-based initiative, please contact the **Strategy and Delivery Division** in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.

Phone: (02) 6271 5111