

go goldfields

Alliance Evaluation Report / 2012-2014



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Go Goldfields is evolving from an alliance of organisations that came together to address complex social problems, into a Collective Impact initiative that engages with the Central Goldfields community in the design, delivery and measurement of the work. This change has developed from strong engagement with key community agents such as service clubs, decision makers and people whose lives are affected by the things we do. We are working together to deliver on a set of shared outcomes to address issues facing children, youth and families within the shire.

This report is the final evaluation report of the first stage of the Go Goldfields Alliance (the Alliance) work in Central Goldfields Shire (CGS). Place-based approaches like Go Goldfields cannot necessarily be evaluated in traditional ways. The large scale social change being measured and the interrelation of many aspects of the work, including work being done outside of Go Goldfields funded programs, makes it difficult to attribute outcomes to any one strategy or program. This is not an evaluation of individual programs, but rather a broad scale evaluation of the collective impact of the Go Goldfields strategies on the issues facing the Central Goldfields community.

The outcomes that the Go Goldfields Alliance hopes to achieve are:

- A reduction in the incidence of notifications to DHS Child Protection Services (meaning a reduction in re-notifications and out of home care) involving families from the Central Goldfields Shire.
- Improved communication and literacy skills, opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families.
- Improved community connectedness for children, youth and families.
- Improving youth connection to appropriate training and education to achieve employment outcomes.
- Increasing breastfeeding rates.

The evaluation of the work undertaken to assess progress towards these outcomes has fallen into four domains that represent areas of work based on the funded outcomes: Communication, Literacy and Numeracy; Strong Communities; Strong and Safe Families; and Youth Employment. There is also a domain, Go Goldfields Approach, evaluating the partnership and processes involved in working towards these outcomes. A range of evaluation activities were undertaken and qualitative and quantitative data were collected based on the framework of indicators developed (see Appendix 2).

This evaluation has shown that there have been many successes of the work so far, but as could be expected of a place-based project such as this, there have equally been many challenges to progressing this work.

Key successes have been:

1. Parents and early years service providers are more aware of the importance of early communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Many have incorporated these skills into their interactions with children.
2. Community speech pathology has built the capacity of parents and early years service providers to detect issues early and to collaboratively manage these issues with professionals. This success has led to MDHS redeveloping its speech pathology services in line with an early years focussed approach. Less children are requiring speech pathology on entering school.
3. Prep reading levels and measures of childhood development have somewhat improved, however data over subsequent years is needed in order to identify ongoing impacts of the work.
4. Families have had increased opportunities to be involved in both social and capacity building activities. This has improved their social connections, confidence and skills in parenting.
5. Recent work done to develop a sustainable community arts approach for the future will build on all platforms to continue to provide opportunities for children, youth and families to be connected through the arts. However work needs to continue to engage local artists to ensure the sustainability of this approach.
6. Family and early years service providers are demonstrating an increased commitment to working together to achieve Go Goldfields outcomes, including formalising common approaches and developing plans to collaboratively service the community.
7. Engaging with community groups or community champions to drive the work has been a significant step in achieving enduring community cultural change.
8. Dedicated, flexible funding is needed to achieve meaningful community change. Without the \$2.5 million from the Victorian Government, the Go Goldfields work would not have progressed substantially. Flexible funding has added the capacity to be responsive to emerging needs as they unfold.
9. Although in some cases the work has been at a developmental stage and may seem to be slow to progress, the progress made to build relationships and work towards common understandings has been considerable and created a strong and necessary foundation for future success.

Challenges faced by the Go Goldfields Alliance and team members in order to progress the work include:

1. Family literacy continues to be a barrier to develop children's literacy further.
2. Attendance at events has been disappointing at times and indicates work is required on community engagement and communication processes.
3. Lack of employment and training opportunities for the shire's youth has been identified as an important ongoing issue for the shire that requires attention. Work in this area has started to increase awareness about employment opportunities and will continue to focus on work readiness.
4. Go Goldfields team and service providers have identified the importance of a whole of shire approach to addressing these complex problems. Continued work needs to be done to ensure that there is alignment within all key organisations, across the governance and reporting structures and how funding requirements and policy supports the work.
5. The buy-in from Go Goldfields Alliance members has been an enabler; however in some cases engagement at an operational level has been more challenging.
6. Go Goldfields place-based approach has not always interfaced well with existing organisational frameworks, especially where this has been a barrier to effective collaboration.
7. Some of the time taken to progress this work has resulted in the realisation by Go Goldfields that team members are required to take on facilitation roles rather than technical expert roles, and managing staffing for this change has been a challenge.
8. There has been significant commitment from key government decision makers, such as departmental regional directors, but it has been challenging to translate into practice with funding and service agreements for particular projects and services impacting on their ability to deliver place-based responses to community need.

We have learnt through the process that achieving community engagement, although essential to success, requires considerable work. This will be further progressed in the next phase of Go Goldfields by reorienting governance structures and processes and developing a Collaborative Table. People with lived experience, community and business leaders, service leaders and decision makers will come together to co-design, co-deliver and co-measure the work into the future.

The learnings from these successes and challenges will be integrated into future work.

As a consequence of this work the Go Goldfields Alliance has also committed to developing a shared measurement approach across the initiative. It is envisaged that this will align our work more deeply in organisations and in the culture of our community.

Go Goldfields is committed to delivering improved community outcomes. As a consequence of the learnings from the last three years, as reflected in this report, there is an ongoing commitment to progressing our work against desired community outcomes. The overall direction of these outcomes has shown children, youth and families and whole of community aspiration and achievement to be the key areas. It is believed, however, that the outcome statements need to be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate for the next phase of the work.

Go Goldfields has strong relationships with funders, decision makers and government. Future work is needed to ensure that this informs systems and reporting and funding structures within the shire. Currently the work is relationship dependent and at risk of departmental staff changes and central office priorities. Of note, this is challenging in any place-based work. Go Goldfields is committed to participating in broader policy and funding conversations to inform this practice into the future.

Our work is more readily identified as 'Go Goldfields' beyond the shire rather than within. Although children, youth and families are frequently touched by this work they may not necessarily know that it is related to Go Goldfields. At one level, does this matter if the social changes are being made? We believe this does. For our future work we need to explore how we market and package our community engagement so that the community understands and comes together behind our shared community outcomes.

Penetration of the work into agencies remains a constant challenge, as do the impacts of staff changeover and changes in policy and funding by government departments and organisations. The next phase of Go Goldfields needs to translate our learnings beyond behaviours and interactions to documented systems, policies and structures so that the work is robust against staffing and other changes.

Overall the first three years of Go Goldfields implementation has been a success, with significant progress towards our desired community outcomes, particularly with children. Our work has, and continues, to require a review of best available evidence and a constant openness to exploring new and emergent ways of doing things. Where we have had our greatest successes is where we have been brave enough to try different things; when we give up power and ground and create a space for new thinking and directions that we can only achieve by working together.



OUR APPROACH

This report is the final evaluation report of the Go Goldfields Alliance work in Central Goldfields Shire. Go Goldfields began as an alliance of organisations, that came together to address some of the major, complex social problems that are impacting on the Central Goldfields community. The role of the Alliance has been to oversee the strategies required to deliver against our desired community outcomes.

This Go Goldfields work has also been supported by the Go Goldfields Steering Committee, with representatives from government decision makers. This committee has had three roles:

- Ensure our work achieves the endorsed outcomes for the *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes Implementation Plan*;
- Commit to minimising system barriers and obstacles that may inadvertently hinder the 'place-based' nature of this work;
- Contribute to the sustainability of successful outcomes for *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes*.

The contribution of this group has been invaluable and has raised complexities and issues that exist within the system and that act against place based work. These are explored as a part of the evaluation of our approach to date.

The *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes* work has also included significant thought contributions and support from business and community leaders who have contributed through consultation, and in governance through participation in implementation-based action groups and the Community Arts Leaders Group. Of particular note is the significant and dynamic role that the Maryborough Rotary Club and the Zonta Club have played in the development of our thinking and community awareness and response to family violence. The Go Goldfields Alliance has identified that the knowledge, networks and business acumen of this part of the community is vital for our work and we look forward to developing this relationship further in the future.

Children, youth and families have actively participated in the design and development of our work through a range of consultations on issues and possible solutions over the last three years. The input from these people with 'lived experience' in the issues we are seeking to address has also been invaluable. As with the business community we are looking to extend this role from consultation to collaboration as we move into the next phase of our work.

Go Goldfields has worked to embed collaborative place-based approaches as these have emerged "as a means of addressing 'wickedly' complex issues: those that have many interacting causes and are seen to require multiple actors to develop a coordinated response," (Shugart and Townsend, 2010 in (Bellefontaine and Wisener, 2011)). The Murdoch Children's Research Institute (2011) acknowledges that 'a place-based approach targets an entire community and aims to address issues that exist at a neighbourhood level, such as poor housing, social isolation, poor and fragmented service provision that leads to gaps or duplication of effort, and limited economic opportunities.' Collaboration, we have found, is a developing skill in the service system and in our community. There is a strong commitment to collaborate, however we are all learning when and how to do it. This has been a significant journey in our work over the past three years.

Previously Central Goldfields Shire has rated 79th out of the 79 local government areas in Victoria on many health and social indicators. This is an indication of the scale of the health and social issues facing the community. The Go Goldfields Alliance has developed a series of shire-wide, community-driven approaches to improve social, education and health outcomes for children, youth and families.

Leading up to the current funding of \$2.5M over three years, the Alliance recognised the needs of the community and that, despite resources being provided, the social parameters across the community were not changing. In addition to this, the Alliance recognised that there was a readiness within the shire to address these issues. Community leaders, such as Councillors, members of service clubs and human service CEOs recognised the need to do things differently. There was a commitment to working to find local solutions to local issues.



The Central Goldfields Shire Council (Council) undertook a significant piece of work called *Gold Prospects* (2008). This was a holistic look at the issues and strengths within the community. This work identified the needs across the community. The Go Goldfields Alliance agreed on key community outcomes that underpin the social issues confronting the community. Following extensive consultation there was a decision to target children, youth and families. In targeting children, youth and families we hope to lay the foundations for the future and provide opportunities and positive prospects across the community.

The vision of Go Goldfields is '*Our community aspiring, achieving and living a full life*'. It is believed that the culture of the community has developed as one of survival in adversity, a need to 'bunker down' and ride through the hard times. It is believed that a key component for tackling the social issues confronting the community is the development of a sense of a future, of aspiration and achievement. Consequently, a key part of the work has focused on how we help develop such a 'future story' for children, youth and families.

The Alliance believed that the work needed to focus on achieving desired community outcomes rather than on services. This meant considering how they work together, and what governance structures are in place. This led to the development of the following desirable outcomes:

- A reduction in the incidence of notifications to DHS Child Protection Services (meaning a reduction in re-notifications and out of home care) involving families from the Central Goldfields Shire;
- Improved communication and literacy skills, opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families;
- Improved community connectedness for children, youth and families;
- Improving youth connection to appropriate training and education to achieve employment outcomes;
- Increased breastfeeding rates.

(Note: the increased breastfeeding rates is not a funded outcome for *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes*. It is an additional outcome reflecting the integration of the Best Start - a targeted, funded platform for improving educational outcomes for 0 to 8 year olds across the shire - with the Go Goldfields work within the shire.)

A series of shire-wide strategies were developed using a project/program logic approach. Each worked towards a desired community outcome. There was a detailed exploration of published evidence of what works in rural, vulnerable communities, including the collective wisdom of service leaders and service providers about 'what works around here' and what was at the heart of the issue that needed to be addressed. For example, the original scoping of the work to improve communication skills was focused on providing additional speech pathology on the pre-existing model.

All strategies have a focus on prevention and early intervention, however we have also needed to reflect on practices and processes at the intervention end of the continuum.

To align the strategies across the Go Goldfields work we aimed to embed a number of platforms that we believe strengthen our ability to partner effectively and achieve our desired outcomes. Throughout this process we are working towards developing shared language and frameworks across services and between service sectors.

The key platform areas across 2012-2013 were:

- **Understanding poverty:** Developing a shared language to discuss and work with vulnerability and generational poverty/unemployment. This is supported by capacity building opportunities for all service providers;
- **Community engagement:** Applying the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) to underpin community consultation;
- **Social connection:** Ensuring positive social connection is recognised and incorporated into the work;
- **Arts:** Alignment of the arts with all children, youth and family strategies to embed arts throughout our work. This was undertaken to:
 1. Provide increased positive life experiences for children, youth and families;
 2. Utilise the arts as a tool to build community aspiration;
 3. Introduce arts as a significant community platform across the shire.
- **Ottawa Charter:** Ensuring all of our shire-wide approaches cover each area of the World Health Organisation's Ottawa Charter, to help embed work into 'how we do things around here' rather than running activities that will cease in December 2014.

In compiling the *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes Mid-Term Evaluation, 2013* we found the complexity created by multiple platforms was confusing and difficult to hold and implement simultaneously. The overriding feedback was that we had too many platforms. As a consequence of this the Alliance decided to continue to commit to:

- Community engagement;
- Social connection;
- Embedding arts across our work.

Throughout 2014 the Alliance has also been exploring Collective Impact as an approach that would support our work. In August 2014 the Alliance endorsed Collective Impact as the framework to inform our work. Our work has been moving more formally into this approach since this time.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVALUATION

The aim of the evaluation was to measure the *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes 2012-2014* progress against our desired community outcomes and to identify what works and what does not work when undertaking effective social change in rural communities.

Evaluating place-based approaches like Go Goldfields is challenging. The large scale social change being measured, and the interrelation of many aspects of work, including work being done outside of Go Goldfields funded programs, makes it difficult to attribute outcomes to any one strategy or program. They are not linear nor defined by cause and direct effect. This is not an evaluation of individual programs, rather a broad scale evaluation of the collective impact of the Go Goldfields strategies on the issues facing the Central Goldfields community.

The journey in measuring change within the *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes* has been, and continues to be a steep learning curve. We have a commitment to evaluating the work that we do in a meaningful way, and to ensure this we have consulted with and sought ideas from many sources.

A significant challenge with this evaluation has been the fact that broad scale social change takes time. The Alliance was keen to capture its impacts from an early stage in order to tell the story, and to build on this to further engage people in the process. To do this, it developed, with input from stakeholders, a number of early indicators of change. These indicators may not show that outcomes have been achieved, but certainly that things are trending in the right direction. A framework of key indicators was developed to evaluate these trends. See Appendix 2 for current indicator measurement.

The RMIT Cultural Development Network has been employed to carry out part of the evaluation for the Art Central projects. Some of their data has been incorporated into this report, however their full report can be found at Appendix 3.

A key aspect of the evaluation is not only to explore the progress made to date but the barriers experienced by the community that prevent meaningful social connection. We believe that this will help inform the work into the future.

METHODOLOGY

We have explored ways to undertake a place-based approach. To do this we have utilised measures for key indicators of change against community outcomes. We have not endeavoured to measure individual activities or reach. Please see Appendix 1 for more detailed reporting of the development of this evaluation.

A range of activities were undertaken and qualitative and quantitative data were collected based on the framework of indicators developed using the above techniques. Reflection on the processes and results of the mid-term evaluation led us to change some of our methods for this final report. Examples of this include phrasing of certain questions and broadening our data sources, in particular seeking more diverse interviewees.

Methods of data collection include (see Appendix 2 for evaluation framework and full details of methods):

- Community surveys that investigate both the broader culture and perceived changes across the community.
- Targeted semi-structured interviews with community leaders to determine their perceptions of community issues and the impacts and outcomes from our work.
- Semi-structured interviews with a cross section of the community.
- Population based outcome measures against our four funded outcomes.
- Collection of data indicating the reach of various initiatives.
- Semi-structured interviews with parents and service providers.
- Survey of Alliance members, steering committee members and Go Goldfields team members to determine their perceptions of the challenges and successes of the work.
- Other local data accessed as required.

The interviews we conducted were detailed and were generally 10 people (specific numbers against each indicator are outlined in Appendix 2). We were not aiming to have a statistically significant representation across the community, but to access a representative cross section of the community opinion in the areas that we are targeting. This does not affect our use of this data as we are analysing emerging themes and not looking for causal associations.

There is much new information emerging about shared measurement of social change from within the Collective Impact field. It is envisaged that the next phase of our work will incorporate this learning.

THIS REPORT

This report is divided into four domains that represent areas of work based on the funded outcomes presented earlier:

1. Communication, Literacy and Numeracy,
2. Strong Communities,
3. Strong and Safe Families, and
4. Youth Employment.

The outcome for each domain is presented at the start of each section. There is also a domain, Go Goldfields Approach, evaluating the partnership and processes involved in working towards these outcomes.

A growing body of evidence shows that early learning experiences are linked with later school achievement, emotional and social wellbeing, lower school retentions, and reduced incidence of juvenile delinquency. These outcomes are all factors associated with lifelong social and academic success.

THE NEED

Central Goldfields students were ranked 77 out of 78 in terms of the percentage of Year 2 students with reading assessment greater than Level 20 in 2005. In 2009, a concerning proportion of Prep students remained vulnerable (compared with the Victorian average) in the areas of communication, language and cognitive skills, emotional maturity and social competence.

A 2009 report by Maryborough District Health Service (MDHS, 2009) highlighted the importance of developing a comprehensive approach to healthy language development involving community-based early interventions. This report has informed Go Goldfields strategies in this domain.

In 2011, Central Goldfields primary school principals reported that about 60% of children in the shire were not attaining Level 5 reading by the end of prep year. This was due to the significant language issues that children had on entering school, with 60% requiring speech or language intervention against a state average of 20% (O'Brien, 2012). Without adequate language skills children cannot develop literacy.

It is believed that the average 6 year old understands between 20,000 and 24,000 words and says up to 2,600. In 2006, the AEDI data showed that in CGS, 18.8% of children were developmentally vulnerable in communication skills (measured as "the child can tell a story and communicate with adults and children"). School principals reported that children had limited language both in words understood and words spoken.

DESIRED OUTCOME

Improved communication and literacy skills, opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families.

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

Both the shire wide communication and literacy strategies focus on working within and between services, working with the community as a whole and working directly with families and children.

Implementation in this area has included for example:

- Trialling, documenting and implementing a community speech pathology model that is family-friendly and child-centred.
- Building the capacity of early years' service providers to identify issues and to respond to them within their setting as well as providing a shared framework through activities such as the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation training, the early years' forum and the creation of a wrap around service model to talk about and work with literacy.
- Embedding language, literacy and pre-literacy development enhancement into early years' service programming for playgroups, childcare services and primary schools. Of note there has been limited work undertaken in the kindergartens to date. It is hoped this will be addressed in 2015.
- Increasing access to age appropriate reading materials and opportunities throughout the shire. There are a number of book boxes throughout the shire where people can take a book, read it and return it to that or any other book box. Another example is a sustainable book gifting program with ongoing support sources from local service clubs and businesses.
- Increasing parental understanding of age appropriate norms for communication and when and how to read to babies and children.
- Incorporating messaging and training about language and literacy development in the antenatal setting.
- Embedding language and literacy into existing community activities.
- Embedding language and literacy development into the public library and Maternal and Child Health Services.



INDICATORS OF CHANGE

The following indicators were developed to capture the impact of the work being undertaken against this desired outcome:

Indicator 1: Parents report a positive change in talking, rhyming, reading and playing with children.

In 2014, Go Goldfields helped to facilitate the implementation of **Let's Read** as a way of supporting parents to talk, rhyme, read and play with their children. Let's Read is an early literacy program being implemented in communities across Australia with the support of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and The Smith Family. The Let's Read project for Central Goldfields Shire is delivered by the staff at Maryborough Maternal and Child Health. From June 2014, families with babies and toddlers receive free Let's Read packs at four key Maternal and Child Health visits over two years. These packs include a library card especially designed for babies, an age appropriate book, and some tools to help parents enjoy sharing books with their babies and children (see Table 1 for details).

BOOK PACK AGE	NUMBER OF BOOK PACKS ORDERED	NUMBER OF BOOK PACKS DELIVERED	ANTICIPATED COMPLETION IF STILL HAVE PACKS
From 4 months	100	56	32
From 12 months	140	65	34
From 18 months	100	80	17
From 3 ½ years	178	178	0

Table 1: Number of children that received Let's Read resources in Central Goldfields Shire in 2014

In addition, newborn packs are gifted to all newborn babies in the Central Goldfields Shire. The newborn packs consist of a book, a bib, a Go Goldfields information pamphlet entitled "Talk, rhyme, read and play with your baby every day," and a library card. At the end of 2014, 80 newborn packs had been gifted.

When asked if the Let's Read book gifting initiative had encouraged an increase in the time spent reading to their children, one parent said that it had, because:

"There is something magical about getting a new book." (Parent)

Several parents commented on how it had been helpful to receive the list of recommended books aimed at their child's specific age/stage of development.

"The main thing I got out of it personally was having more confidence to pick out age appropriate books." (Parent)

Another parent commented how prior to being given her baby's first gift pack she:

"...didn't realise that babies could be read to so young... [and it] ... meant that from when he was 3 weeks of age, I began reading to him."

She spoke about how he is now 8 months old and can already say 4 words and she thinks that:

"...reading has helped that." (Parent)

During the 2013 evaluation, parents were reluctant to admit a change in their own behaviour, however they reported a shift in how 'other' parents talk, rhyme, read and play with their children. Therefore, in 2014 parents were asked about the behaviour of other parents that they knew or had observed. Eight of the 10 parents interviewed felt that more parents were talking, rhyming, reading and playing with their children. However 75% of those report that not enough is being done. Representative comments from parents include:

"A lot try but there is not enough time." (Parent)

"We know you need to read to your kid every day and parents say they don't have time but they need to make time." (Parent)

"We need to show that doing these things is fun – the lessons for parents need to be simple, engaging and fun." (Parent)

This change in response from last year with many parents going on to comment that not enough is being done tells a story in itself. It indicates not only an understanding of the importance of talking, rhyming, reading and playing with children, but a knowledge of how to do these things and more importantly a growing expectation of what should be done.

The proportion of Early Years Service Providers (EYSPs) who report an increase in the number of parents reading to children dropped from 100% in 2013 to 60% (3 Of 5) in 2014, the remaining two EYSP's report not seeing any further changes this year. This may reflect that there was a large change last year with no further increases this year. Comments reflecting the information gathered include:

"Yes parents will sit in the rooms and read with their children when dropping off and picking up children, this has increased dramatically." (EYSP)

“[This is]...definitely happening with most vulnerable - come from not being able to prepare food or read a story, now they can use the picture to tell a story.” (EYSP)

Indicator 2: Effective speech pathology approach developed and implemented.

The issues that the Central Goldfields community faced in terms of communication and language required significant change to improve children’s readiness for literacy at school. Our analysis revealed that issues affecting the development of communication skills in children within the shire included issues such as:

- A culture where parents / significant adults did not talk to their children in public with some reports that this was ‘embarrassing’ or ‘silly’.
- High amounts of texting/talking on the phone while out with children, not talking to the children.
- A ‘slippage’ in an understanding of what was expected against aged norms for both service providers and the community.
- A lack of embedding of language and pre-literacy activities in some early years services.
- Services not having a shared language/practice frameworks to develop communication skills.
- The need for the speech pathology model to be more child-centred and family-focused rather than driven by ‘professionalism’.
- An overuse of directive language with children such as ‘do this’, ‘don’t do that’ instead of a rich language environment.

We also identified strengths within the area that we could enhance. In the above example this included aspects such as:

- A commitment of service providers to address the language delay children were experiencing across the shire.
- Due to previous work of Best Start, an increased awareness of the importance of language development for children starting school.
- A willingness for early years service providers to work on this together.
- A ‘sense’ that things could improve.

This example highlights the complexity behind the issues being tackled. It became obvious in this process that if we were to address these issues and achieve our desired outcome our strategies needed to encompass:

- The service system
- The community
- Families
- Youth
- Children

One of the changes to service delivery that has had a big impact in this area is the speech pathology service redesign.

In the past Maryborough District Health Service (MDHS) purchased speech pathology services through the Ballarat Health Service (BHS). This service at 0.6EFT followed a more traditional service delivery model in that they delivered services physically from MDHS, with no outreach provided. The fact that travel time from Ballarat was included in the 0.6 EFT for each day and staff were rotated on a three monthly basis meant there was little continuity for families and as a consequence the service was quite limited.

In 2013, the Community Speech Pathology Model was developed and implemented, which has enabled speech pathology intervention to take place within early years settings, creating easier access for vulnerable families and centring on a philosophy of being child-focused and family-friendly.

Having someone based in the community was a great benefit for families, especially the most vulnerable.

“I could catch up with them ... [families]... somewhere they already were, which made a big difference in getting them in. Once they had come in the first time, they were better engaged and continued to attend.” (Community Speech Pathologist)

Basing this work in early years settings also meant that early years service providers were more aware of speech problems and would refer children early or even just ask questions more readily. This all had the added benefit of bringing more speech and language back into the rooms.

“The increase in referrals showed that professionals were better able to identify when treatment was needed. They were all kids that needed to be seen.” (Community Speech Pathologist)

As part of the community speech pathology model, a communication facilitator was employed to support the implementation of communication plans within kindergarten settings. This worker could see children up to three times a week, which made a significant difference to their progress.

“Some of those kids made far greater gains than I expected they would be able to, especially kids that didn’t have great family support of literacy for various reasons.” (Community Speech Pathologist)

There was ... “huge development thanks to the communication facilitator. All children benefited hugely and parents loved it. Speech was clearer in children and they thought about different words. They all interacted with books and loved her games.” (Kindergarten Teacher)

In 2014, MDHS successfully gained extra funding through the Linking Learning project. This enabled them to cease the service from BHS and directly employ two speech pathologists. The Linking Learning funding takes an early years focused approach and philosophy and stretches it into the school setting. The new speech pathology service is 2 EFT, 5 days a week. It is a visiting service and responds when and where services are needed, so there is the opportunity to get some consistency into service delivery for speech pathology.

“Now we’ve got a service that is available to the community Monday to Friday, using innovative service delivery methods to work with the community to achieve outcomes”. This new service “sits nicely with the philosophy of Go Goldfields - that no child should be disadvantaged because of their geography.” (Director Community Services, MDHS)

The concerns voiced last year about waiting lists for treatment were echoed this year:

“The speech pathology waiting list is too long, so may have an impact on school readiness.” (EYSP)

This is in the context of considerably lower waiting times. In 2011 waiting times were up to 2 years, which were lowered to 6 weeks by the end of 2014. This is a further example of a change in the expectations of the community including service providers. They now understand that early treatment is important and expect the best from the service system.

The proportion of children requiring speech pathology intervention upon entering primary school is significantly lower in 2014 compared with 2013 (see Figure 1 below). This clearly shows the benefits of the program to children, many of whom are now far better prepared for the challenges of school.

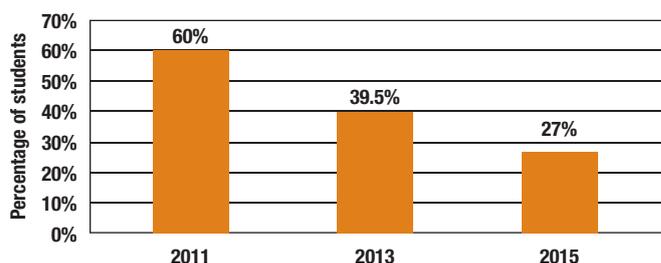


Figure 1: Proportion of children requiring speech pathology intervention upon entering primary school in Central Goldfields Shire.

One of the challenges in this work has been the ability to capture meaningful, timely data. For example we are unable to report the number of children seen over the duration of the work or the detail of the reduction in waiting times because of a change in staffing.

Indicator 3: Reading and language stimulation activities are embedded in practice.

Much work has been done through Go Goldfields, and prior to this Best Start, to embed reading and language stimulation activities in early years settings. This has been done in settings including Maternal and Child Health, childcare, supported playgroups, kindergartens, toy library and playgroups.

All EYSPs (8) interviewed reported a positive change over the last two years about how often they incorporate reading and language stimulation activities in their setting.

“Rich reading and language opportunities are available all day long.” (EYSP)

“We are aware of the huge impact this has to a child’s overall development.” (EYSP)

Much of this across the shire has been due to the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation training offered to all early years service providers. Supported playgroup, childcare centres, kindergartens and primary schools have worked to embed oral language. Interestingly, Maryborough Education Centre now does an oral language activity every day for every class from Prep to Year 12. Early years services have also committed to focus on language and literacy development in the newly created Central Goldfields Shire Early Years forums. These forums involve Maternal and Child Health, kindergartens and other early childhood educators, primary schools and other supports for children to build relationships and share knowledge. They were established following two workshops focusing on transition to school in July and August 2014. This was initiated through the Strong and Safe Families work.

Indicator 4: Early years service providers are implementing the training from the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF) as a measure of increased uniformity across the service system.

Early consultations with early years service providers identified the need for a shire-wide uniform approach to literacy. The ALNF training was supported and implemented by Go Goldfields as it provided follow up mentoring and support. It was accompanied by affordable resources and it was developing specific resources for preschool aged children.

Overall, 27 primary teachers, education support staff, kindergarten teachers from the child care centre, early years professionals and kindergarten support staff underwent the Early Language and Literacy Program training provided by the ALNF. The training consisted of a five day course and ongoing assistance to ensure the inclusion of phonemic awareness activities and early language skill builders into the curriculums of pre and primary schools.

12 of 17 ALNF trainees surveyed have completed 100 hours of practice with the remaining five intending to complete this soon. Feedback from trainees was overwhelmingly positive about the impacts of this training. EYSP's report that the training has helped to change their practice by providing more strategies and tools; giving them more confidence; enabling them to engage their students in a more hands on approach; and providing them with a clearer understanding of how children learn.

“My students love it because they are learning.” (EYSP/ALNF trainee)

“I have learnt many wonderful skills and strategies that I can use as an educator to develop children’s literacy skills.” (EYSP/ALNF trainee)

“Parents have been talking about letters and sounds.” (EYSP/ALNF trainee)

“With our increased resourcing (ALNF resources), we are able to provide extension activities and follow the children’s interests in more depth.” (EYSP)

Primary school leading teachers are seeing the benefits of the training both in their staff and students. As well as the direct benefits of the material they were learning, there were other unexpected benefits including working in a community partnership and getting teacher assistants working alongside teachers and their peers across the shire to build confidence.

“The opportunity for community partnership makes this much more meaningful. I think sometimes in schools you can actually be a bit isolated – there is actually a bigger picture out there.” (School leading teacher)

“The quality was fantastic and when staff came back they said it was some of the best experience they have ever had.” (School leading teacher)

Maryborough Education Centre (MEC) has used the opportunity of a universal approach to implement their own assessment schedule for at risk students using the material from ALNF. This has allowed them to use individual data to monitor the progress of students and to compare this across year levels. The specific benefit of using the ALNF framework to do this is the ability to match strategies based on assessment results, so it is able to cater for all the different ways that children learn.

[It is providing] ... “very powerful outcomes and teachers are excited about it. If we are not collecting data, what are we basing our decisions on with the children?” (School leading teacher)

“It’s been great to see kids finally get what a syllable is because they have been using those [ALNF] resources. Specifically kids are saying I’ve heard it before but now I can see it and feel it.” (School leading teacher)

All ALNF trainees were keen to ensure the continued expansion and sustainability of this approach. They indicated that this would require time to share and reflect with others in the workplace and across the sector. There was broad agreement that a whole school approach was required for sustainable change, however just as important was a whole shire approach.

“When some schools are only doing bits and pieces, it doesn’t have the same impact.”

“We should use the same approach, playgroup through to school.”

“Kids who have used the technique in kindergarten and are familiar with it, find it easier in Prep.” (EYSP’s/ALNF trainees)

It was initially difficult to engage those kindergartens in the shire managed under the YMCA cluster. This has limited the full implementation of a uniform approach to literacy. The cluster itself endorsed the training, however the kindergartens were reluctant to participate, stating that the training was too expensive or that it did not fit with their play-based approach. This is a constant tension in many communities, however evidence suggests that play and literacy development activities can and should coexist.¹

¹ B Raban, M Brown, E Care, F Rickards and O’Connell, T 2011, *Young Learners — Learning and Literacy in the Early Years*. AARE International Education Research Conference, 29 Nov – 3 Dec 2009, www.aare.edu.au/09pap/rab091255.pdf

A factor that may have been a barrier to the kindergartens' full participation was that the training was imposed on them and that they had not been consulted in designing the literacy strategy for the shire. Fortunately, the kindergartens are starting to see the benefits of a uniform approach and the ALNF program through contact with other early years service providers. In 2015, the kindergartens will be taking part in a two to three hour introduction session with the ALNF trainer, and will be co-designing a strategy in collaboration with ALNF and Go Goldfields, to move further towards a uniform approach to literacy across the shire.

Indicator 5: Literacy activities embedded in library and early years settings.

In 2013, Go Goldfields helped to embed changes into the library and early years settings by introducing Baby Rhyme Time sessions aimed at babies, toddlers and their carers (see Figure 2 below).

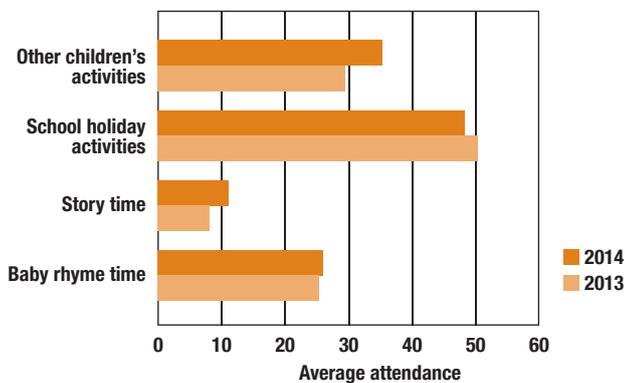


Figure 2: Average attendance at Maryborough Library's children's activities 2013-2014

The Maternal and Child Health Centre holds a fortnightly Baby Rhyme Time session where at least 20 people attend.

Previously the community belief was that Story Time and Baby Rhyme Time did not work. Changing this mindset has been the key to the success of these programs now. This has been done by utilising existing strong relationships that parents have in the community, such as with the Maternal and Child Health Nurses, and transferring the trust between services. An example of this is having a pram walk from Maternal and Child Health to the library for Baby Rhyme Time.

These sessions have introduced language and literacy activities to families, and have provided the opportunity for social connections to be made.

"...all parents stay to share afternoon tea, and some then move on to a local café." (Go Goldfields team member, 2013)

The Maryborough Regional Library management and staff have implemented many changes into the library since 2011. These focus on changing community attitudes so that children and families are encouraged in the library.

"In the past, children were not welcome in the library." (Library staff member)

Prior to 2011, there was no library plan or local input into planning of any sort. The library was seen as an offshoot, separate from Council, instead of a vital Council service.

The "library is the good face of Council and Council should be pumping that up." (Library staff member)

Since 2013 the library has developed a yearly plan and has forged more links with other Council departments such that Council is now more aware of the library's presence and is both encouraging use and utilising the library in other strategies. The library has been a key platform in the Go Goldfields work to achieve strong focus on literacy development in the early years.

The library's planning to date has focused on four specific areas: programming, children's services, public profile, and the mobile library van. There have been some successful strategies implemented as a result of the planning. One of these is a collaboration between Best Start, the Central Goldfields Art Gallery and the library, which involves all children from kindergarten through to Grade 1 in the shire visiting both the art gallery and the library. Each year a book is chosen (*'I'm a dirty dinosaur'* in 2014), the art gallery sources proofs, the library presents a story time session and Best Start organises the groups. Through this initiative, young children are exposed to both venues, and of approximately 100 children who were registered with a new library membership at this visit, library staff report seeing about 30 of these on an ongoing basis (see Figures 3 and 4 for library visits and junior circulation).

Having the pop up library van has also been a great success for the library. This provides the opportunity to have the library van at many community events to engage families. Having the van has had a particular impact on the kindergartens and supported playgroups. Kindergarten teachers can now ring up and order the types of books they require. Once a term the library presents a Story Time at the supported playgroups, giving those parents an opportunity to experience and hear about the libraries services in an environment that they feel comfortable.

"A lot of those parents [at supported playgroup] won't go to Story Time and Baby Rhyme Time – they think that they won't know anyone there. We've been able to bring the library outside of the walls so that you have a library on other people's terms." (Library staff member)

School holiday programs at the library have become very popular also, with 111 people attending a recent magician show. In mid-2014, as part of Book Week, staff arranged for a toy sleepover to occur with children attending a Story Time in the evening and leaving toys at the library. They came back to pick up their toys the next day and to receive a photo of their toy up to mischief in the library overnight. 27 children attended this with many others keen to attend again. This was seen as a fantastic way to create wonder and joy in children both about reading and the library as a space.

Underlying all of this work is the long term aim of changing community attitudes towards the library and changing people's concept of what a library is.

“It’s ok to do these things in the library – it’s a community space, not an academic library. There is noise.”

(Library staff member)

Gradually they have seen a change in the community expectations:

“People will ring up at the start of the holidays to see what we are doing. In the past it had been a surprise to people that activities are on.” (Library staff member)

A lot of this change has occurred due to relentless promotion, with staff going out to many different parts of the community and attending many events and activities.

The change in community attitudes is reflected in the library data collected over the last few years. Overall library visits increased by 7.2% from 2010 – 2014 (see Figure 3 below).

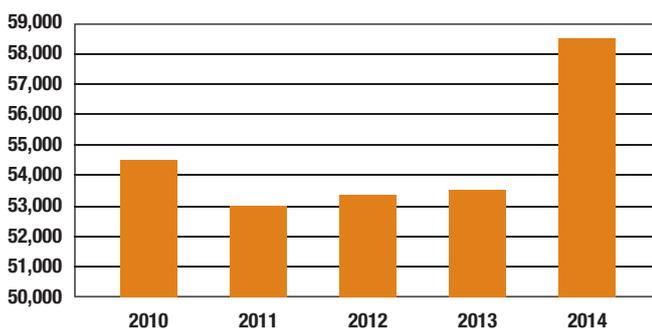


Figure 3: Number of library visits 2010-2014

One of the most significant indicators of changing community attitudes to early literacy is the increase in the number of junior items borrowed from the Maryborough Regional Library. From 2010 to 2014 the number of junior items borrowed increased by a staggering 58% (see Figure 4), which is testament to the work the library and all early years' services have done to become more accessible to families and children and to promote the benefits of reading with young children.

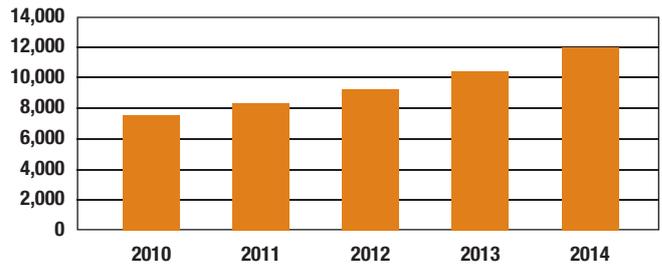


Figure 4: Junior circulation 2010-2014

Indicator 6: Prep teachers and Education Support Assistants (ESAs) report improved language readiness for literacy.

All ALNF trainees reported an improvement in language readiness for literacy over the past year in the children they teach.

“Kids are becoming more confident to come up in front of the class to talk about books or stories from home.” (ALNF trainee)

“Tommy Turtle has made a huge difference. The children are more engaged in the words they say.” (ALNF trainee)

Classroom teachers report fewer speech issues with Prep children and have noticed that oral language is a lot stronger than previously.

“The students have started speaking in sentences right from the beginning.” (Classroom teacher)

Some teachers found that sound knowledge was not as good as last year, with less children testing below the benchmark levels but on average lower skills in this area. Teachers felt that there was a gap in the messages around language and literacy getting through to parents.

“There are still kids presenting with literacy and language issues. We are reinforcing things at school but we need to make sure things are being reinforced at home.” (Classroom teacher)

SOCIAL COMPETENCE		
2009	Victoria 92%	Central Goldfields Shire 85%
2012	Victoria 92%	Central Goldfields Shire 91%
9% of children in their first year at school were developmentally vulnerable in the area of social competence. This indicates a statistically significant decrease in vulnerability of 6% since 2009.		
LANGUAGE AND COGNITIVE SKILLS		
2009	Victoria 94%	Central Goldfields Shire 90%
2012	Victoria 94%	Central Goldfields Shire 93%
7% of children in their first year at school were developmentally vulnerable in the area of language and cognitive skills. This indicates a slight decrease in vulnerability of 3% since 2009. This result is not significant.		
COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE		
2009	Victoria 92%	Central Goldfields Shire 87%
2012	Victoria 94%	Central Goldfields Shire 90%
10% of children in their first year at school were developmentally vulnerable in the area of communication skills and general knowledge. This indicates a slight decrease in vulnerability of 3% since 2009. This result is not significant.		

Table 2: AEDI data 2009-2012

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)² is a population measure of children's development as they enter their first year of formal school. It measures five domains of early childhood development, which are closely linked to the predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes.

Language readiness for literacy encompasses the AEDI domains of social competence, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. The above results in Table 2 are an aggregate score from all primary schools in the shire in these domains.

Overall from 2009 to 2012, the AEDI results from Central Goldfields are improving, sometimes not with statistical significance, but they are trending in the right direction.

“We know that a number of our kids start school with a deficit in their oral language skills, including vocabulary knowledge, and that this is a hugely limiting factor with regards to readiness for reading. There have been some changes but this is something that is a long term goal and as a school we need to have an ongoing focus on this. From Prep to year 12, it is a whole school issue.”
(MEC principal)

Indicator 7: Overall increase in reading levels amongst Prep children in the shire.

In 2011, teachers reported that only 60% of children Prep children were reading at the expected level by the end of the year. Unfortunately data was not kept year to year by schools so this cannot be confirmed. Go Goldfields aimed to increase this to 80% by 2014. The current result exceeds this, with 87.5% of the shire's Prep children reading at the expected level by the end of 2014.

Although there has been a decrease in this figure since 2013 (91.5%), it is difficult to analyse these numbers year to year as there will always be some variation. It is best to look at overall trends. An observation of interest is that the schools that did not perform as well in 2014 compared with 2013 were schools located outside Maryborough. It may be that more needs to be done to further engage families and children in outlying towns in the literacy approach.

STORY SO FAR...

Go Goldfields has continued to implement strategies that support the role that parents and care-givers (including early years service providers) have in ensuring children are exposed to rich language and literacy and numeracy experiences.

The major strategies implemented are the community speech pathology model, community book boxes and book gifting, developing new Baby Rhyme Time sessions, capacity building with early years service providers and parents, and promoting reading in non-traditional ways (e.g. dialogic reading) with parents and early years service providers. In dialogic reading, the adult helps the child become the teller of the story. The adult becomes the listener, the questioner and the audience for the child. This type of reading is inclusive of parents with low literacy skills and encourages all families to enjoy books together.

It is important to note that some of the success in this area of work is because there was a greater readiness for change amongst those responsible for communication, literacy and numeracy in the shire. Much of this readiness was due to the work done by Best Start prior to Go Goldfields securing funding.

² In 2014, the AEDI was renamed The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to clearly recognise the fact that the instrument is used as a population-based measure to child development.

The existence and effective delivery of clear 'on target' messages about language and literacy has contributed to success in this area. Although the work is challenging, it is relatively easy for early years service providers and the community to believe that children should be able to talk and read.

It is clear that the promotion of messages around talking, rhyming, reading and playing with children has been successful with 80% (8) of parents interviewed having heard the messages.

"I attended the Best Start Parent Dinner and really appreciated the talk by the speech pathologist about how important it is to be mindful how you communicate with your children and the importance of reading to them." (Parent)

"I've seen these [messages] in the newspaper and up at the library, they're great. It's good to see stories coming out about this work." (Parent)

What is interesting to note is that these parents received these messages through a number of different sources. This highlights the importance of utilising various media when promoting any messages, and also the value of the collaborative approach in enabling broader reach and consistency.

The majority of parents and EYSP's report that more parents are in fact talking, rhyming, reading and playing with their children, however many parents report that there is not enough time to do this well. This and comments made by library and early years services staff highlight an increased community awareness of what children should be experiencing in terms of rich language and literacy and numeracy experiences. This in turn has raised the community's expectations that these experiences are indeed being provided for the shire's children.

Overwhelmingly EYSP's reported that the reason some parents do not talk, rhyme, read or play with their children is due to poor parental literacy skills. This is seen as a real barrier to further improvement across the shire.

"Students who have no support at home are slipping backwards." (ALNF trainee)

"About half of my parents would have good literacy understanding. The others would have low literacy skills themselves." (ALNF Trainee)

This highlights that there is a need to develop family literacy further, including making sure that the messages and strategies about language and literacy that are being provided at school are reaching vulnerable parents at home.

One of the major successes of work in this sector this year has been the implementation of the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation training. It has enabled staff across most settings to implement a common approach to language, literacy and numeracy development.

Not only has this training built the capacity of the EYSP's involved but has fostered a sense of collaboration across the early years sector as the work is seen as a shire-wide responsibility not just confined to individual settings or teachers.

It is agreed that more work needs to be done to engage all of the shire's early years' service providers to fully implement and embrace the ALNF approach. This is seen as very important to ensure the success and sustainability as a whole of sector approach. Currently 71% (12 of 17) of EYSP's are fully engaged with the other five only partially engaged. This will be addressed in 2015, as the kindergartens, Go Goldfields and ALNF work together to co-design strategies to achieve a uniform shire-wide approach.

The significant reduction in the number of children requiring speech pathology treatment on entering school is testament to the value of early intervention with preschool children, and sets them up for a more successful and smoother transition to school.





Go Goldfields recognised the role that participatory arts has in engaging communities and has focused on using the arts as a major platform to increase social connection and provide positive life experiences. Communities that embrace creative expression and cultural activity are richer, stronger and better able to deal with social challenges. Participation in the arts delivers many benefits including skills development, increased self esteem and confidence, and the ability to work in teams. Young people who take part in the arts do better in school and are more likely to be involved in other community activities.

THE NEED

The 2006 AEDI data showed that in the social competence domain (child plays, gets along with others and shares if confident) 22.2% of children were developmentally vulnerable; and in the domain of emotional maturity (child is able to concentrate, help others, is patient, not aggressive or angry) 15.4% were developmentally vulnerable.

An audit of Child FIRST³ interventions in 2008-2009 demonstrated that relationship issues, parenting skills and confidence and family violence were all significant issues.

Consequently, the Alliance, based on evidence⁴, decided that enhancing social connection and positive life experience were important basic life ingredients in the development of children and families within the shire.

DESIRED OUTCOME

Improved community connectedness for children, youth and families.

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

The main platform for increased social connection and positive life experience has been through Art Central, the Go Goldfields arts platform. This has included:

- Securing a vacant shopfront in the High Street, rent free as the Art Central space.
- Establishment and development of a Community Arts Leadership group.
- School residencies in all primary schools and the P-12 school in the shire.

- Running workshops on demand in the Art Central space for interested community groups.
- Targeted workshops focused on the Go Goldfields desired community outcomes.
- Running a whole of community *Vases and Verses* participatory arts event where 50 large (2m) vases were painted and displayed around the shire.
- Incorporating arts activities into existing community events and Go Goldfields activities.
- *Museum of Truth and Lies* operating from the Maryborough Railway Station and *Light Night Out* events in outlying towns.

Additional work undertaken against this outcome has included:

- Conducting a Young and Emerging Leader's forum where 35 young and emerging leaders met to develop their leadership skills and the awareness of themselves as a community leader.
- Embedding meaningful social connection into Go Goldfields activities.
- Supporting the development of mothers groups within the shire that encompass vulnerable families.

The following is a summary of progress against the indicators selected to assess progress against our desired social outcome.

INDICATORS OF CHANGE

Indicator 1: Community members develop positive perceptions of their community.

Community leaders found it difficult to provide clear examples of this, but all report an improving sense of positivity or confidence in the community. Five of the seven interviewees explicitly stated that there is generally a more positive feel in the community in 2014.

“Better set now than what we were a few years ago.”
(Community leader)

“Community resilience at the moment is improving.” (Community leader)

“Greater level of optimism, confidence and support.”
(Community leader)

³ Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/family-and-parenting-support/family-services/child-first-child-and-family-information,-referral-and-support-teams>

⁴ Opportunities for social connection: A determinant of mental health and wellbeing Summary of learnings and implications, 2010. VicHealth retrieved from: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications>

This is being experienced despite the fact that people report Go Goldfields has raised awareness of some of the problems that the community faces.

“The social needs of the vulnerable people are not hidden away any more; but being addressed.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

“Overall there is a greater awareness of the problems we are faced with.” (Community leader)

Indicator 2: Community/public infrastructure is developed and promoted.

Although this work has not been undertaken with *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes* funding it demonstrates the importance of physical infrastructure supporting the social aims for a community. Funding for this infrastructure was provided by Council and the Victorian Government.

In 2013, community leaders overwhelmingly agreed that Central Goldfields Shire had developed the environments or spaces that will contribute to increasing social connection, for example: the railway precinct, walking tracks, Maryborough Knitting Mills shopping complex, Maryborough Education Centre (MEC). There were many comments that some of these spaces were not used to their full potential and that more events were needed to attract different people to use the spaces.

In 2014, it is apparent that people report these spaces are being utilised more.

“Now this infrastructure is being utilised more and drawing people in.” (Community leader)

“The Spring Fling Playgroup Fun Day was great – it was great having it outdoors at the Station Domain as it is more welcoming (being outside) and it is good to see that great space which cost so much money being used more.” (Community leader)

Council and community leaders appreciate that there is more to infrastructure development than just a physical space. Infrastructure work can provide opportunities for social connection, improve the physical health of residents, provide a sense of progress and opportunity, and build community pride.

“The playground was an enormous leap forwards in terms of our levels of service to young families. I think that it engenders a whole lot of things that we aspire to, such as healthy living and exercise; families spending time together; and good eating, as people bring food along and eat better than they otherwise would.”
(Council Manager)

Indicator 3: Evidence of an increased number of opportunities for formal and informal social connection to develop.

Overall, the increased number of opportunities across the shire for families of young children to get to know each other in a structured environment such as Baby Rhyme Time, mothers groups and events such as the Playgroup Extravaganza, has seen families benefit in many ways.

“They create social connectedness. We know lots of people and it’s great to get out and meet new people – you have kids of a similar age so have something in common. My husband grew up here but I didn’t, so it’s been good for me to meet new people.” (Parent)

“It’s important for parents to role model to their kids that it is good to get involved in community activities, to help out etc. It stimulates the kids and educates them on what is available. Keeps the kids active and fit.”
(Parent)

In 2014, parents were satisfied with the amount of opportunities available for families.

“We don’t really need to travel outside of Maryborough for any activities.” (Parent)

“They are affordable and easy to access.” (Parent)

“Everything you can access in Melbourne is also available here. It’s pretty good.”
(Parent)

“There are good cultural activities but there could be more. For example, having the African drummers here was great – we need more of that and it needs to be free for all kids/families.” (Parent)

There was a mixed response around attendance at these events/activities. Overall it seems that most people felt there had been an improvement in attendance numbers but that there is still a way to go.

“Community activities are attended by many more families with children so this is a positive step.” (EYSP)

“There are more things on offer, but it is still hard to get people to turn up.” (Parent)

“Even when you think you make things accessible and easy – people aren’t always willing to make the effort.”
(Community leader)

One example of efforts made to make activities accessible is where the toy library, a community run group, provided a free membership as an incentive for families to attend supported playgroup. This was a successful effort to engage vulnerable families in both activities to provide social connections, parenting support and communication and literacy activity support.

There were generally two issues raised when people spoke about attendance at community events and activities. One being attendance numbers in general, the other being the attendance levels of harder to reach or more vulnerable families. Explanations of low attendance included the importance of timing of events:

“Playgroup Extravaganza was reasonably well attended. It was on at a good time and overlapped with existing groups who came along as a group.” (Community leader)

Similarly the impact of social media was also raised as a concern, with parents potentially replacing face to face connections with those online, which does not benefit their children. There were also some thoughts that community apathy may be to blame, with many locals feeling cynical and mistrusting of authority, leading to less engagement with activities promoted and run by these organisations.

As discussed earlier, in areas where attendance has been improving such as library and literacy events, there has been a strong focus on promotion. However throughout this process, the Go Goldfields team has discovered that success in promotion has largely been due to building relationships at all levels within the community. This has allowed for the transfer of trust from one entity to another to build engagement.

It was proposed that there needs to be greater engagement of community members or champions to assist with activities, and to engage more deeply in promoting activities to others.

“We need to get more people pushing the promotion of it. Many are coming and helping out but not promoting.”
(Community leader)

“Maybe people are not explicit about asking others along and asking them to tell their friends about it. We need to be a bit more explicit about asking.”
(Go Goldfields team member)

Other solutions suggested were using templates, having a community notice board, better use of mailing lists and being a bit savvy about the use of social media.

“We need a one stop shop for what is on.”
(Go Goldfields team member)

Hard to reach families have been engaged through Maternal and Child Health, childcare centres, St Luke’s and supported playgroups, however it is still important to reach the people that don’t regularly attend these services, as they stand to benefit the most from increased social connection opportunities.

Indicator 4: Art Central as a means of promoting community interaction.

Art Central is a project that aims to encourage people to participate in the arts. It uses the arts as a tool to further develop the notions of aspiration and achievement within the community culture and to further develop the arts as an aspect of our community life.

One essential driver of encouraging social connection is the presence of the Art Central shop located on High Street in Maryborough. The shop is a working community arts space with a visual arts studio, office and exhibition space and has been a high profile home for Art Central.

The **Museum of Truth and Lies** was an exhibition produced by the people of Central Goldfields Shire and facilitated through Art Central. Based at one end of the impressive Maryborough Railway Station, this museum was created by the people of Central Goldfields Shire, with the assistance of Art Central artists and several guest artists. With nearly 600 people contributing to it and 657 visitors (44% from Central Goldfields Shire), the **Museum of Truth and Lies** was seen as a success in engaging the Central Goldfields community in something new and innovative.

“This felt like a culmination and celebration of the Go Goldfields work.” (Go Goldfields Team)

“There was participation from ... people on the ‘fringe’ of society.” (Go Goldfields Team)

Coinciding with this event was the **Light Night Out** events held in Carisbrook, Dunolly, Talbot and Maryborough. Artwork from residents, including many school children, was projected onto significant buildings.

Both the **Museum of Truth and Lies** and the **Light Night Out** were well received by the community:

“Great effort from all concerned. So glad everyone was able to express their creativity in this unusual way.”
(Museum visitor)

“Fantastic, a great job from all. The effort each and every one has put into this show is quite amazing.” (Museum visitor)

However, attendance at these events was still seen as being low:

“Despite all kids creating artwork to be projected on the building, there was still not a good turnout. It was difficult for families because it had to be dark.” (Community leader)

The involvement and engagement of the Community Leadership Group (CLG) in Art Central activities and processes is an essential component of the strategy and implies a level of community participation and engagement. Current membership of this group includes individuals from across the education, health, sports, business and arts sectors as well as politics, which has helped to build a sustainability model for community arts based on a business approach.

Engagement of local artists was limited and this led to limitations in the possibilities of the project.

There had been some concerns about the level of readiness in the shire for engaging with community art. The artists report that generally there is a very low knowledge about what community arts is and what it can offer. However, once people experience community art they are generally very enthusiastic, the key is exposure.

“There isn’t a huge curiosity to find out about things, so trying to spark people’s curiosity to find out about something that is new is probably a key thing in this community. They feel like it is outside their realm so essentially doesn’t exist.” (Art Central artist)

However, the impact of the work is starting to change community attitudes.

“I think they were as ready as anywhere else. There are lots of artists in the shire and there is a growing momentum now.”
(Arts Coordinator)

“The biggest impact was from the vases project and the Museum of Truth and Lies, which engaged more of the local artists in making things and started to change the conversation in the community about the potential of art and creative activities.” (Arts Coordinator)

It should be noted that significant health issues affected the Art Central team during 2014, which effectively took out arts management and some of art delivery for eight months of the year. This meant that there was not the same level of implementation of the plan and community arts in 2014 compared to 2013. This is not to detract from the firm commitment of the artists or the community that participated, however it goes to show the risk when the work is dependent on few people.

Indicator 5: Children exhibit improvements in their social competence and emotional maturity on entry to school.

There is no new AEDI data since the mid-term evaluation was produced in 2013. These measures will have to be monitored over the long term.

The AEDI is a population measure of children’s development as they enter their first year of formal school. It measures five domains of early childhood development that are closely linked to the predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes.

The following results (see Table 3) are an aggregate score from all primary schools in the shire in the domains of social competence and emotional maturity. These indicate a significant decrease in vulnerability of CGS children in both of these measures since 2009.

SOCIAL COMPETENCE			9% of children in their first year at school were developmentally vulnerable in the area of social competence. This indicates a statistically significant decrease in vulnerability of 6% since 2009.
2009	Victoria 92%	Central Goldfields Shire 85%	
2012	Victoria 92%	Central Goldfields Shire 91%	
EMOTIONAL MATURITY			15% of children in their first year at school were developmentally vulnerable in the area of emotional maturity. This indicates a significant decrease in vulnerability of 6% since 2009.
2009	Victoria 92%	Central Goldfields Shire 79%	
2012	Victoria 91%	Central Goldfields Shire 85%	

Table 3: AEDI data 2009-2012

Indicator 7: Barriers to social connection are identified for future action.

A key aspect of this part of the evaluation was to explore the progress made to date, and the barriers being experienced by the community that prevent meaningful social connection. We believe that this will help inform the work into the future.

Community leaders identified the following key themes:

- Communication – both sharing the good stories and general awareness of opportunities.
- Generational social and economic disadvantage.
- Lack of work readiness/employability.
- Employment/education opportunities for youth.

These are all explored in depth elsewhere in this report.

STORY SO FAR...

From its inception, Go Goldfields was keen to provide and encourage meaningful and positive community connections for its residents, in particular for children, youth and families. The main platform that was used to implement this across all of Go Goldfields activities was Art Central. In 2013 there were a lot of positive feelings around the impact that Art Central had on the community. It stimulated conversations about the experiences available to the community, and reached parts of the community that may not have identified with arts before.

In this current report, the impact of Art Central was celebrated less than in the previous mid-term report. In fact there was some criticism about the way some events were run, and the participation of the broader community in Art Central activities was seen as particularly disappointing.

“Many key people were not there, not a great crowd. It was uncomfortable so people were leaving, the crowd was not prepared. Communities with more experience and knowledge would have got that right.” (Community leader)

This appears to be linked to a level of expectation in the community this year. There is an awareness that things don't have to stay the same and a drive for something better. This is reflected throughout this report and discussed in more detail in the Go Goldfields Approach section of this report.

This perception may also be due the fact that some of the Art Central funding for 2014 was used to develop a sustainable community arts approach for the future rather than any visible work in the community. This is to be built on two key platforms in the short term through social enterprise and in the long term setting up a community arts foundation. This approach has been designed against a business model rather than an arts model. The next phase for this project is to employ a community arts facilitator to implement the approach, while building on all platforms to continue to provide opportunities for families to be connected through the arts.

As discussed earlier, parents in particular are happy with the opportunities available in the shire, and report that social connection opportunities are available to anyone who is interested. Communicating these opportunities to facilitate better participation is an improvement called for by many.

In this current report, we found that the experience of social inclusion was linked more closely to some of the relationships that have developed through other areas of Go Goldfields work. Even if these relationships have been at a service provider level, this change filters down to impact on the community. This emphasises the interconnectedness of the Alliance's work, and its nonlinear path from addressing cause to changing and effect.

“Many of these successes are due to the connections the workers have made, rather than the projects themselves.” (Community Leader)

All of these factors including infrastructure, Art Central work, and the relationships that have been built both at an operational and community level, may be the main drivers of the more positive vibe that community leaders are reporting.

“Something is visible. It is different for the community- shows we are a progressive town.” (Community leader)

Despite the more positive feel reported above, people still felt that there was a poor perception of Maryborough in particular.

“There is still a talking down of the place. Hard to pinpoint where (it's) coming from (but it) seems entrenched in the place.” (Community leader)

However, one parent provided an insight into the future generations' perceptions, which can hopefully be preserved and built upon.

“The kids think Maryborough is a good place to live. They don't have any perception of the stigma attached to Maryborough and I'm pleased with that. They just see it as a place with lots to do and they have a sense of belonging.” (Parent)



NAME: T-REX
TIPS OF HUNTER: FAST MOVING
PRONOUNCATION: T J RAN O SAW RUS
DICTATION TIPS: MEAT EATER
A TO IS MIGHTY
HONORS

Evidence shows that the foundations of adult health are laid in early childhood and before birth. Improving children's physical health and emotional support improves their chances of growing into a healthy adult.

THE NEED

Prior to the implementation of *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes*, Central Goldfields Shire had a very high proportion of notifications to DHS Child Protection compared to other rural centres, and had the highest proportion of those that were re-notifications (reports on families that have previously been reported). Parenting issues were seen as a major contributor to Child Protection presentations.

There were 1349 recorded crimes against the person per 100,000 population in Central Goldfields Shire in 2008-09 compared with 929/100,000 in the Loddon Mallee Region and a Victorian State average of 773/100,00. The majority of these crimes were family violence, primarily crimes against women and children.

DESIRED OUTCOME

A reduction in the incidence of notifications to DHS Child Protection Services (meaning a reduction in notifications, re-notifications and out of home care) involving families from the Central Goldfields Shire.

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

The Stronger Families Strategy 2012-2014 has an emphasis on:

- Service providers being skilled to support and connect with families using common understandings/approaches.
- The development and delivery of a one family, one plan approach, multiservice ownership and collaboration with families within a 'virtual team'.
- Stronger families through the reinforcement of social norms within the community.
- Development of parental skills and confidence by enhancing networks and opportunities for families across the shire.
- Development of a shire-wide, practicable family violence strategy.

Resources allocated to this aspect of the strategy to date includes:

- Family Group Worker, 0.8EFT (ceased Sept 2013).
- Family Facilitator, 0.9 EFT commenced June 2014 (for 12 months).

- Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Nurse: 0.6EFT (ceased Sept 2013).

Actions taken: up until December 2014

- Consultation with local service providers in October 2013 on what would be needed to improve the outcomes for families, to inform the one family, one plan approach.
- Consultation with 43 families during 2013 to seek advice for service providers about on what 'good support looks like in Central Goldfields Shire'. This consultation was focused on the 'how' of service delivery rather than the 'what' ('what' was needed for the service system to assist them in achieving improved outcomes).
- Development of a shire wide family violence strategy and implementation of this within available resources.
- Establishment of groups during 2013-14 to strengthen the skills and the voice of families including:
 - Parents and Children Together (PACT) for parents with children in out of home care.
 - Young parents with additional needs.
 - Grandparent Support Group.
 - Hosting Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (HOPE) for women to discuss safety and wellbeing.
- Hosted Bernie Geary, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, to present current evidence and best practice to service providers.
- Establishment and launch of the Victorian branch of the Family Inclusion Network in Maryborough.
- Following a forum of service leaders in September 2014, the establishment of the Go Goldfields Child and Family Services Community of Practice:
 - To further develop and embed a Central Goldfields place based and shared practice approach for children and their families, including vulnerable children and families, at a practice level.
 - To strengthen relationships across all services by ensuring a working understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities in regards to vulnerable children and their families, including the role of Regional Child Protection, Child FIRST and Family Support.
 - To formally consider the key messages from the Family Consultation Project with the view of developing a sector response.
- Following two workshops focusing on transition to school in July and August 2014, the establishment of the **Early Years Forum** (involving Maternal and Child Health, kindergartens and other early childhood educators, primary schools and other supports for children).

INDICATORS OF CHANGE

Following is a summary of indicators that demonstrate progress towards achieving our funded outcome related to parenting and families.

Indicator 1: Reported increase in number of protective factors for vulnerable families within the shire.

Through the Go Goldfields work there has been an increase in the number of opportunities available for vulnerable families particularly, in the last two years. These opportunities build protective factors such as social inclusion, capacity building and better accessibility and coordination of services.⁵

Additional opportunities for families have included:

- Baby Rhyme Time sessions at the library and Maternal and Child Health Centre.
- Playgroup Extravaganza.
- Sessions with parents, for example the communication evening.
- The Family Group Worker has developed four group programs for young/teen parents and for parents with children in care.
- Art Central workshops.
- Mothers groups and Maternal and Child Health activities, such as a pram walk.
- Engagement of service clubs, for example, Maryborough Rotary which has provided two \$5,000 (2012 and 2013) scholarships to support building stronger families.

Community members have also taken the initiative to establish opportunities for all parents including those from vulnerable families. An example of this is a fortnightly Mums of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS) group which provides time out and education to mums. The Maryborough Mighty Mothers Facebook group has also been set up. It is a completely community run and inclusive group for mothers, which provides support, information and opportunities for social connection to its members.

In 2014, we spoke to parents about the types of activities and services they engaged with. Out of 10 families, the average number of activities/services that parents reported engaging with was 6.6. Those engaging in fewer activities tend to be parents with younger children under school age who were involved in supported playgroup where some of the interviews were conducted. The range of activities that these 10 parents listed was broad - 21 different activities (31 if you include sporting clubs). The most popular activities/services reported (excluding supported playgroup) were school, childcare and the library.

Some of the new activities that were experienced in 2014 were Art Central, the breastfeeding group that came to Maryborough, a first aid course through the Maternal and Child Health Centre, Spring Fling activities, the Sports Expo at Hockey Fields 'Get Up and Go', and the supported playgroup at Maryborough Education Centre that started up during the year.

"It's great you can bring kids of different ages to this playgroup. I prefer supported playgroup/facilitated playgroup to regular playgroup." (Parent)

Parents did voice some difficulties they had experienced accessing services.

"The services need to be better connected to each other, and make it easier to get into other services."

(Parent)

"We need to reduce the stigma attached with using services and need to work out ways of engaging vulnerable parents better. I know some young vulnerable mothers but they would not accept that they need support." (Parent)

"There is fantastic support for parents with pre-school age children but less when your children start school. You don't want the teachers to know you are struggling and it is hard to find help with parenting as your children reach the older (e.g. 5-10 years) age group."

(Parent)

The work to address these concerns has begun and is discussed later in this section.

Indicator 2: Reduction in children going into out of home care.

The work that has been done to reduce the number of children going into out of home care has largely been developmental to date. Much work has been done to build relationships within the service sector and to facilitate this sector to find a common approach.

"Really slow process to get things happening, but we have needed to allow for this if it's a true collective journey." (Go Goldfields team member)

The development of a shared practice approach, including the development of a wraparound approach, commenced in late 2014. This work will achieve the aim of increasing our collective protection of children and young people. It will be developed through a culture of co-design. 'Co-design involves a shift in the locus of responsibility and control so that clients or users of services become active partners in designing, shaping and resourcing services, rather than being passive recipients of predetermined services.'⁶

5 Opportunities for social connection: A determinant of mental health and wellbeing Summary of learnings and implications, 2010. VicHealth retrieved from: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications>

6 Burkett, I. (n.d.) An Introduction to co-design. Centre for Social Impact. NSW. Accessed 19/2/2015 at <http://design4socialinnovation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/An-Introduction-to-Co-Design-by-Ingrid-Burkett.pdf>

“If it is going to be meaningful we need to have a culture where we can benefit from partnering with people with lived experience.”⁷ (Go Goldfields team member)

The work required before this process can take place is to build relationships and the culture of collective responsibility. This has been addressed through the establishment of three forums:

1. Child and Family Services Community of Practice: a collective responsibility for vulnerable children
2. Youth Service Providers Group and
3. Early Years Forums - continues to support stronger relationships between practitioners and workers across sectors which will lead to earlier and more innovative engagement with vulnerable families.

Some of these forums came out of a discussion with child protection and Child First services in response to needing a better working relationship across the shire. This will be discussed further in Indicator 5. As a result of forming these groups, there has been a significant attitudinal change by service providers about how they can work together to best assist parents and families.

“[Service providers] ... are thinking about how program barriers and criteria can get in the way of what's best for clients. We are now working in a space where there is some authority to break down those barriers.”
(Family services service provider)

“People are coming together to make a difference and not getting stuck in roles. They are focusing on what families need and how can we collectively do that.”
(Family services service provider)

Better relationships have allowed for planning, which commenced in late 2014, to collaboratively tighten and formalise the way services work together to protect children, and to maximise opportunities to engage with vulnerable families earlier and respectfully.

Indicator 3: Families accessing paid respite are referred for ongoing support for parenting and other services.

This indicator arose from our detailed analysis of issues affecting families who are at risk of becoming a part of the child protection system. We learned that families who accessed paid respite generally did so repeatedly and that there is no service system intervention to prevent this from recurring.

Consequently, the two childcare facilities in Central Goldfields Shire that provide paid respite care for families do not refer families for ongoing parenting support and other services. Families accessing respite care are referred by Maternal and Child Health services and DHS's Child First, who are also responsible for any other referrals.

The Early Years Forums and other forums discussed in the previous indicator, plus targeted professional development, will skill up early childhood educators in engaging with parents to more effectively link them into supports. This will be measured by looking for a reduction in the amount of people repeatedly accessing these respite services.

Indicator 4: Improved confidence and personal skills in parenting.

A significant focus of Go Goldfields work has been on developing parental skills and confidence, especially in areas relating to early parenthood, communication development and pre literacy. The Go Goldfields Maternal and Child Health Nurse and the Go Goldfields Literacy Facilitator have worked to support the development of mothers groups, playgroups and early parenting education through antenatal education. There has also been significant work to connect parents to the new opportunities open to them at the library and through the community arts work.

The work with the early childhood educators, through the early years forums, will also lead to improved confidence and personal skills with parenting. Go Goldfields has started experimenting with ways to introduce the Regional Parent Education Service to the shire. In late 2014 Dunolly Preschool hosted a parent education session (delivered by Regional Parent Education Service) which was well attended. This group (with support from the Dunolly Preschool) will continue to liaise directly with the Regional Parenting Education Service to hold further parent workshops around topics prioritised by the local parents.

Maryborough hosted the same workshop, which was very poorly attended, and has prompted debate around the question, 'Will parents attend parent education sessions here?' A comment from one Maryborough mother who attended was:

“You need to keep running the workshops. Parents will eventually join in. It might take three years, but they will join in.”

This reflects the time it takes to shift a culture – to bust the myth. The aim is to continue to explore ways of better engaging with parents so they feel safe and interested to attend these informal and interactive workshop in future.

⁷ People with lived experience are those who are living with “the problems and challenges the efforts of the initiative are seeking to address” (Priestly, C & Tengue, A. Lessons in Grassroots Collective Impact. Collective Impact Blog retrieved : <http://www.fsg.org/KnowledgeExchange/Blogs/CollectiveImpact/PostID/569.aspx>)

The workshops will be just one method of providing parent education.

In 2013, of the 10 parents who were interviewed, 60% reported an increase in the confidence and skills of other parents. This year most parents (70%) were unsure if they had seen any change. This is difficult to quantify and any comparison year to year is not necessarily an indicator of change, but it does provide another example of the impact of heightened community and individual expectations.

As in 2013 (100%), seven of the eight early years service providers interviewed reported increased confidence and skills in the parents they see.

“Parents seem to be more confident in their own parenting skills, and are asking more questions regarding parenting than before.” (EYSP)

“Families have become more relaxed about being at kinder and interacting more meaningfully.” (EYSP)

“Parents are looking more relaxed and confident within themselves. They are interacting with educators comfortably and less worried about being criticised or scrutinised.” (EYSP)

It would be interesting to see how much these observations can be attributed to directly working with parents and how much is a by-product of EYSP's gaining confidence themselves and feeling more supported and valued as a sector.

Indicator 5: Improved interface between Regional Child Protection and local service providers.

The Regional Child Protection Service is specifically targeted to those children and young people at risk of harm or where families are unable or unwilling to protect them.

The main functions of child protection are to:

- Investigate matters where it is alleged that a child is at risk of harm.
- Refer children and families to services that assist in providing the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children.
- Take matters before the Children's Court if the child's safety cannot be ensured within the family.
- Supervise children on legal orders granted by the Children's Court.
- Provide and fund accommodation services, specialist support services, and adoption and permanent care to children and adolescents in need.

As such, good relationships and interface between Regional Child Protection and local service providers is key to appropriate and timely management of and assistance to vulnerable families.

In 2013, work against this indicator was driven primarily by the Alliance member leadership within organisations rather than targeted resourcing. What we learnt is that this is challenging and requires dedicated resourcing to assist organisations and Regional Child Protection to trial new ways of working.

As such in 2013, early years service providers (EYSPs) reported mixed results about whether their interface with Regional Child Protection had improved. Nearly half (43%) of respondents reported some improvement but there were still concerns about communication and access to information from Regional Child Protection and the burden that this puts on families.

In 2014, community-based Child Protection Services have been represented at the monthly Child and Family Services Community of Practice. During one of these meetings a detailed outline of child protection processes was provided in an informal and interactive manner. This has seen relationships and professional respect being built.

“There is a good level of commitment at the community level, not so much of a strong connection more broadly. It would be good to have senior child protection involved at the governance level e.g. Best Start forum.”
(Family services service provider)

Senior child protection staff attended the Go Goldfields Services Forum held in September 2014, pledging their commitment to actively work towards providing opportunities for improved interface, which may provide this connection.

However, in 2014 seven of the eight EYSP's continued to be concerned about their interface with the Regional Child Protection unit:

“Very hard to interact. If there is an issue staff don't feel confident as CPU [Child Protection Units] are not approachable. More so when trying to get info compared with referring.” (EYSP)

To date these early years service providers who are involved in education have not had the opportunity to attend the communities of practice. This means they have not been part of the work done to build relationships between Regional Child Protection and the service system. This will need to be addressed in 2015.

Indicator 6: Development and community engagement with a shire-wide family violence strategy.

The shift in community awareness of family violence and understanding of what constitutes family violence is quite recent for all communities, not just Central Goldfields. Maryborough Police report that the Family Violence Act implemented in 2008 has made a big difference to the way that police view and respond to acts of family violence.

“Prior to that family violence was swept under the carpet. A lot of things were just accepted behaviours.”
(Maryborough Police)

“We’ve all come to accept that family violence is a real thing and is the major driver of crime.” (Maryborough Police)

In June 2013 Council endorsed the Central Goldfields Shire Family Violence Strategy. This strategy, as is the case with all Go Goldfields strategies, has a focus on prevention and early intervention and looks at the work that needs to be done across the service system, in the community, and directly with children, youth and families.

Current implementation of the strategy has included:

- Maryborough Rotary Club funding a \$5,000 scholarship for a service provider to review world’s best practice. Successful applicant will review services working in an integrated way to tackle family violence.
- Maryborough Rotary Club funding a Victoria Police Officer to complete training to conduct men’s behavioural change programs within the shire. Currently men have to travel to Bendigo.
- Go Goldfields Alliance funding a Maternal and Child Health Nurse to investigate prevention and early detection of family violence in rural communities.
- Training of service providers in the recognition and management of family violence.
- Using a White Ribbon event to raise community awareness of family violence.
- Incorporation of a prevention of family violence theme in community arts activity relating to White Ribbon.
- Victoria Police undertaking next day follow up after an initial family violence event.

The engagement of the Maryborough Rotary Club with the Central Goldfields Shire Family Violence Strategy is displayed by their involvement in the activities listed above, including providing a scholarship for a service provider to review world’s best practice and providing funding for a Victoria Police Officer to conduct men’s anger management programs within the shire.

Zonta started in CGS in 2011, commencing under the auspice of Mount Alexander Shire’s Zonta. Zonta International is currently undertaking a campaign to raise awareness of violence against women and girls around the world. Central Goldfields Zonta Club has utilised Art Central to make a White Ribbon tree that they displayed at the White Ribbon ceremony in November 2013.

In 2014 Maryborough Rotary and Zonta came together to develop a Family Violence Community Action Plan. This outlines the strategies that they will undertake in order to achieve their goals. Their overarching aim is to use Rotary and Zonta’s ability to influence opinion and facilitate connections to raise community and political awareness of family violence in the Central Goldfields Shire/Maryborough.

“The Rotary campaign has created a lot of interest from all over the world, but more particularly, locally the conversations from many peoples has started to occur.” (Rotary member)

One of the main actions of the Family Violence Community Action Plan is a community awareness campaign. This will initially involve providing bystander training with a number of businesses in the community. Eventually this training may be able to reach 300-400 people. Community leaders are already seeing a positive response to this work.

There is a “positive response from community groups and business, wanting to be part of the solution and getting trained up.” (Community leader)

Feedback from police officers is also positive. They can see the benefits of a broader community response to this issue, and have found the process of working through Go Goldfields as being integral to future success.

“We have the community, local business and government support and we are all speaking the same language in relation to family violence. All the different agencies, services and the community are looking at family violence the same way and saying it’s not acceptable.”
(Maryborough Police Officer)

It's a "very integrated response being coordinated through Go Goldfields now. All partners have common goals, which is a good grounding point for further work. If you speak to me in 12 months' time there will be some great outcomes, because I think it's a well developed plan and because we have whole of community on board."

(Maryborough Police Officer)

These successes around community awareness and community partnerships have not produced improved statistics for family violence in CGS. In 2012-13 there were 205 incidents of family violence. In 2013/14 this increased to 249, but this increase was believed to be predominantly first reports. This was a desirable outcome as the police are encouraging reporting and are enforcing a zero tolerance approach to family violence.

In late 2014, data has shown that reports of family violence are staying fairly stable, but recidivism is slightly increasing. This is not what was predicted to occur, and police are not exactly sure why this is happening. One suggestion is that victims of family violence have experienced effective support from the shires agencies, so that when an incident occurs again they aren't afraid to report it. What police would like to see change is that instead of waiting until an incident and calling the police, victims start to feel comfortable calling the support agencies prior to a crisis.

"It's a shame that [they get to the point of] having to call the police instead of calling the support agencies directly." (Maryborough Police)

Saying this, in small communities, even small population movements in and out of the shire can affect data. Looking at trends over the long term will provide a more balanced representation of the impact of these strategies.

STORY SO FAR...

The work in the Strong and Safe Families domain has been developmental in nature to date. As with all developmental work it takes time, however there has been a significant change in the way that the service system works together and a strong plan for future activity and change. Initially Go Goldfields employed two technical positions, but has realised that to do the more systemic work, a facilitation role was required.

Again, the real success of this work to date has been the relationships that have been built amongst service providers, who are now working with common values and goals, and more importantly, fostering a collective responsibility for vulnerable families and children in the shire. These attitudes and beliefs, if sustained and supported with improved processes, will provide a strong foundation for achieving these outcomes.

The work done to support parents to build their skills and increase confidence is work that has been built upon across the breadth of the Go Goldfields activities. This has been an example of the collective impact of contributions from all sections of the shire to provide opportunities for social connection, skill sharing and support.

It is very apparent that parents believe the number of activities available to families has increased and they are beginning to engage with new and different activities. As in 2013, parents have identified that these opportunities have helped to build the confidence and skills of parents as well as building social connections.

"Playgroup is good because you talk with other parents and then learn that way." (Parent)

"These groups are good for socialising, and I get to find out what else is on."

(Parent)

The family violence strategy has been perceived as being a particularly successful part of the Strong and Safe Families work. The key to this success was seen to be the community ownership of the work, predominantly through the leadership of the Maryborough Rotary Club and Zonta. This is a highly significant step in achieving enduring community cultural change.

"Because community messaging held by Rotary and Zonta - higher profile."

"Rotary family violence work is very topical and is the most significant positive thing."

"People can see they have more control over their lives and can have an influence on policy makers – community starting to drive the decision making (particularly within Rotary)." (Community leader)

This indicates that the awareness raising carried out, predominantly in conjunction with Maryborough Rotary and Zonta, has been successful to date at the community level. Despite this there has not so far been the same commitment from services. Go Goldfields has produced a Family Violence Position Statement to acknowledge that family violence is a community issue and there is collective responsibility to take action against it. Apart from Council, there have been no other signatories. This indicated that more work is required to fully engage the Go Goldfields Alliance in the family violence work.

In general, having a job is better for health than having no job. Job security increases health, wellbeing and job satisfaction. Higher rates of unemployment cause more illness and premature death – like education and social safety, employment is a social determinant of health and wellbeing.

Engaging youth in training and education is one of the best ways to ensure they gain and retain employment. Central Goldfields Shire has a higher proportion of youth disengaged from education and employment than the state and the Loddon Mallee Region (LMR).⁸ The consultation phase of the Go Goldfields project also brought up much discussion on the relatively low regard some parents had for education and learning.

THE NEED

The key concerning demographic features of young people and their community in the Central Goldfields region included that:

- As of June 2009, 10.7% of the Central Goldfields population were adolescents and this percentage is predicted to decrease by 20.2% by 2026.
- The Central Goldfields area experiences high unemployment, including high youth unemployment.
- The Central Goldfields had nearly double the percentage of child protection substantiations than the State.
- In 2009, 50% of adolescents in Loddon Mallee region reported being recently bullied compared with 44.6% across Victoria.
- In 2009, 16.1% of adolescents in Loddon Mallee region reported very high levels of psychological distress, compared with 13% across Victoria.
- In 2010, there were lower Year 10 to 12 apparent retention rates than the State average.
- In 2009, there were lower Year 12 or equivalent attainment than the State average.
- Double the percentage of adolescent victims of crime than the State average.
- Significantly higher percentage of adolescent offenders of crime than the State average.
- Significantly higher percentage of teenage pregnancies than the State average (although it should be noted that the actual number is relatively low).

- In 2009, adolescents in the Loddon Mallee Region reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction with their quality of life.
- In 2011, there were 63 13 to 17 year olds in the shire not enrolled in education or training.

DESIRED OUTCOME

Improving youth connection to appropriate training and education to achieve employment outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

Key components of the work targeting youth connection to education and training to achieve employment outcomes have been:

- Development of a place based strategy based on working towards achieving the desired community outcome.
- Consultation with 76 youth to investigate issues impacting on youth connection to education and training. This explored what youth believe works and what does not work and what they believe the work needs to be.
- Working in partnership with families/parents is a priority at MEC. Current work includes the development of a parenting 'space'/engagement process.
- Developing social marketing messages and approach aimed at increasing parental and community recognition of the importance of education and how to support children's homework and development of study habits.
- Trialling a 'Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin' By World'⁹ pre work readiness program with Year 7 students.
- Engaging all principals in the shire in the social marketing program.
- Preliminary work with youth service providers about the development of a more cohesive approach to working with youth within the shire.
- Incorporate a School Focused Youth Approach into the Go Goldfields work for 2014.

Following is a summary of indicators that demonstrate progress towards achieving our funded outcome related to youth employment.

8 32.3% (CGS), 21.5% (LMR), 15.4% (Vic) in 2011 Census data.

9 Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World is a book and a 45-hour workshop that helps individuals in poverty build their resources for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families, and their communities. <http://www.ahaprocess.com/solutions/community/getting-ahead/>

Indicator 1: A decrease in unexplained absences for Year 5 and 6 students across CGS.

Data is not able to be aggregated across the shire at this stage and therefore shire wide trends cannot be analysed. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain any trends in the school by the data presented in the Figures 5 and 6 below.

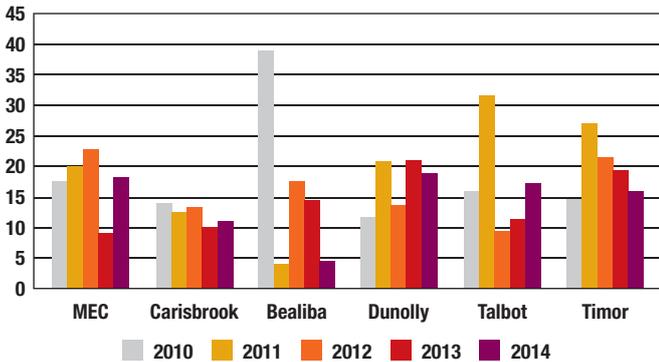


Figure 5: Absence days per FTE Grade 5 2010-2014

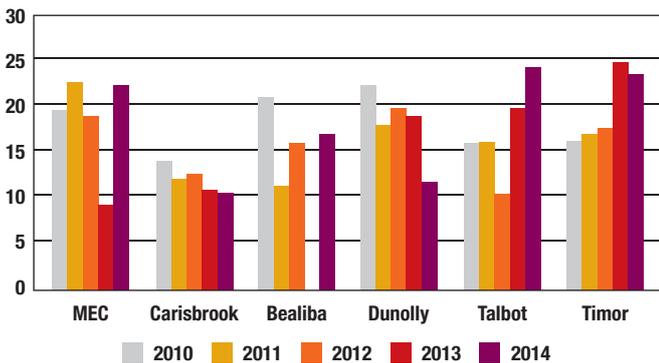


Figure 6: Absence days per FTE Grade 6 2010-2014

One significant trend worth noting is the MEC results for 2013. During this year MEC was very engaged in some targeted work around absence and its impacts on students, and in both Grades 5 and 6 the school had far fewer absences than in surrounding years. In 2014 this work dropped off and absenteeism returned to its normal levels. This indicates that sustained effort is required to continue to impact on attendance.

Apart from MEC, the other schools were not involved in any targeted work around absenteeism, but each school is doing much good work in the area. The variable data for the other schools highlights the complexities surrounding absenteeism.

Go Goldfields work recognises that school absenteeism is a complex issue, and can be linked to levels of language and literacy, behaviour, parental engagement with education and home stability. Go Goldfields work aims to impact on all of these underlying issues. Unfortunately it is too early in the process to expect significant changes to these underlying problems.

Indicator 2: Increased engagement with parents in education and/or the school.

In 2013, parental engagement in education and/or schools had noticeably improved. An important example of this was that teachers at MEC reported increased numbers of parents attending a range of school events including parent-teacher interviews, school assemblies and special events.

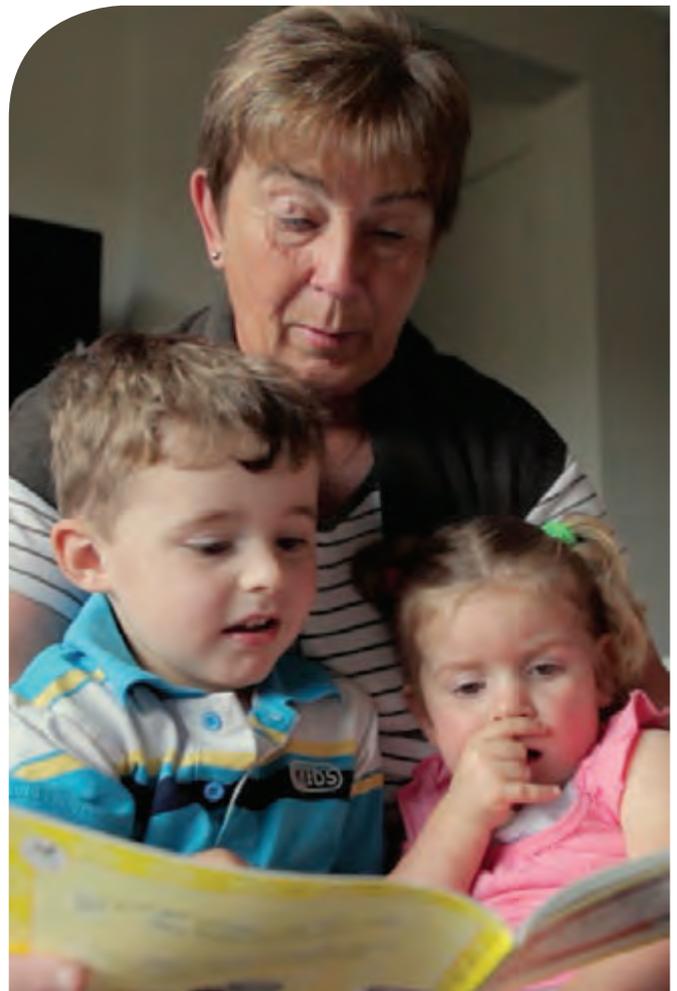
This year all government primary schools were approached to report on this indicator. Two thirds (2 of 3) of those that responded reported no increased engagement of parents. The remaining school, MEC, was confident that there was a trend of increasing engagement.

“Some evidence of increased numbers of parents at school events in comparison to previous years. This has been especially so in the second half of this year.”

(School principal)

The difference in reporting between the schools may be explained by size difference. The smaller schools in surrounding smaller townships already believe they have better levels of parental engagement because of their size, as a response driven by living in a more contained and isolated community.

Essentially the work in this area has not been undertaken to date, due to difficulties with staffing, where the Youth Employment Facilitator position was vacant for most of 2014.



Indicator 3: School staff and families report an increase in the number of positive interactions over contentious issues.

In 2013, senior teachers and the Principal at MEC reported making far fewer calls to parents about contentious issues. This trend has continued in 2014:

“Positive phone calls home from staff are becoming more systematic.”

(School principal)

MEC has done some meaningful work around engaging parents on their terms and initiating positive contact with parents. They have produced postcards stating the schools values and teachers have got into the habit of posting a card to parents with positive comments about their children. Parents are also invited to come into the school to celebrate events instead of being asked to help out.

Two schools reported no changes with this indicator, again due to their smaller size and consequent pre-existing positive relationships with parents.

Indicator 4: Increased community conversations around the importance of school attendance and the value of education.

Go Goldfields recognises that changing conversations in this area is a very long process. Community perceptions about the importance of school attendance and the value of education would often be tied to the reputation of the local education facilities. MEC in particular, as stated previously, has started some meaningful work to engage parents and the community in a positive way to change the narrative of the school. This can take generations to change.

In 2013, it was too early to detect any change in community conversations around the importance of school attendance and the value of education. Increased school/community partnerships were seen as an early indicator that progress was being made.

This year the school/community partnerships continue to be valued, however there was also some acknowledgment that the community may be starting to become more aware of school attendance and also aspiration, as an important building block to a healthy and successful life.

“Still have 80 kids at school on optional day – kids are turning up so good connection to school.”

(Community leader)

“It’s improving. Go Goldfields has stimulated people to start thinking more positively about education but it’s a long process. You can’t flick a switch. Talking to [MEC staff about] the change that they have seen in the students and teaching population and then created a more positive atmosphere for the whole school.”

(Community leader)

“This year kids were quiet, attentive and absorbing speakers so good example of aspirations working.” (Community leader)

MEC in particular has found that there has been a significant improvement in its Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) program, which has shifted community attitudes about the value of the school and about youth themselves.

“Strong sense that the school is respected for what they do. School is becoming central to the community. More established people and organisations wanting to work with school and young people, therefore more respect of young people.” (Community leader)

In particular, many people spoke about the partnerships involving youth (high school age) and the community, and the fact that many programs born from these partnerships have led to students being more respectful of others and more work ready. This is occurring with Rotary and Country Fire Authority (CFA) programs at schools, and Youth Space and Art Central’s connections with local schools. An example being engaging VCAL students to provide face painting at the playdate. These activities had the effect of both building the confidence of youth and their respect for others and in turn the community started to appreciate the strengths and value of its young people.

“CFA in school program – this year the reception was a lot better. Kids at school want to do it now. Previously they were forced to do it. So there has been an attitudinal change.” (Community leader)

“They (youth) make new friends and are given the chance to take on leadership roles by helping organise and run activities.” (Parent)

Four of seven community leaders felt that there was no change in the community’s understanding of the importance of school attendance and value of education.

“Hard to generalise but we have a significant issue with this.” (Community leader)

“No it’s not valued, particularly in this region.” (Community leader)

“No, there is a certain level that couldn’t care less. The recent message does not change the attitudes of the target group.” (Community leader)

These comments, although disparate, are a good indication that conversations and awareness of these issues are starting to infiltrate parts of the community, particularly at a leadership level. This was not demonstrated by broader community attitude changes towards school attendance and the value of education.

STORY SO FAR...

The current desired community outcome for youth as endorsed by the Go Goldfields Alliance is 'Youth connected to education and training to achieve employment outcomes.' This work has not progressed as well as the early years work. A number of factors contribute to this, such as:

- The outcome was imposed as a condition of funding. It did not arise from the same processes as the other Go Goldfields outcomes.
- Youth services are predominantly owned and driven by services outside the shire, not the same number of local levers that we have for early years.
- The emphasis is on prevention, so even though the work was called 'youth' with 'employment' in the title. The focus moved to become primary school children and connection to education (as part of prevention and early intervention). This sent confusing messages.
- We have employed people with technical skills in youth. We have learned that skills needed are systems thinking skills and facilitation. So there was a mismatch between program needs and staff capacity.
- Mostly importantly, we believe that we are lacking a shared agenda across the shire for youth. Everyone working in youth understands the outcomes differently and commitment is not shared across stakeholders.

The youth employment domain has been an area of Go Goldfields work that has struggled to find a focus. However, it has benefited greatly from the inherent flexibility in the Go Goldfields approach and as with many solutions to complex problems, has required a developmental phase in order to build the direction and support for the work that is required.

Work in this area initially started through Neighbourhood Renewal, which had received funding for a workforce development strategy for Central Goldfields Shire. This work was brought under the Go Goldfields umbrella, as many relevant partners were already at the Go Goldfields table, and the strong link between employment, education and health and wellbeing made this a natural inclusion.

With Go Goldfields focused on taking a prevention approach, the initial focus of this work was to keep kids engaged with education, which in turn increased their prospects of gaining employment. Factors that lead to youth engagement at school including attendance, parental engagement and the value placed on education were central to the cultural changes required.

This role initially focused on engaging with MEC as the largest P-12 school, however at the beginning of 2014 when discussing the implementation plan, the Youth Engagement Action Group (YEAG) decided that the work should be broadened and involve all primary schools. This became a challenge as once the primary schools were involved, they started to question why they were involved in youth employment and how it was relevant for them. This created uncertainty and the primary schools were not successfully engaged, and unfortunately due to a staffing gap, this has not been resolved.

As this work progressed and the uncertainty amongst the key contributors became more obvious, many people wanted to shift the focus back to youth connectivity with employment and work readiness.

In 2014, it was apparent that the youth employment domain needed to be divided into separate pieces of work: one to continue to work on the engagement with education (position has been vacant so work done in this area is minimal), and the other to look at work readiness.

Youth engagement in school

Despite the staffing vacancy in this area, there have been some improvements in this domain, which probably reflect the active engagement of MEC staff and key community leaders in the broad Go Goldfields agenda. There has been an improvement in positive parental engagement with schools. This is difficult to determine in smaller schools as their size often makes it easier to maintain more positive interactions.

Work readiness

Work in this area has concentrated on information gathering and awareness raising. Go Goldfields staff have collected data on sole parents and parents returning to work, in order to examine whether there is something that Council or business can offer in the way of flexibility of working conditions. Awareness raising has focused on other issues, including promoting workplace successes and promoting job opportunities in the shire.

“Employers are saying, ‘We’ve got jobs with no one to fill them’ and job seekers saying, ‘There are no jobs in Maryborough’.” (Go Goldfields team member)

The most successful campaign was the 34 jobs in 65 days campaign. This target was easily exceeded with 47 jobs being filled in the first 49 days.

This was “easy to organise but really effective in promoting that there are opportunities in Maryborough. The next phase is if there are 300 jobs over a year, what do you need to do to be more work ready?”

(Go Goldfields team member)

A topic of particular concern was the lack of opportunities available in Central Goldfields Shire for further training or education of young people once they leave school. This forces many young people to leave town and most do not return to contribute their skills to the community. On the other hand having to leave the shire means that many young people do not pursue further training options and the opportunity for building the capacity of local youth is lost.

“Lack of local opportunities for post school education – you really need to go [out of town] to do it and this is really hard for many of them with financial strain, loneliness.” (Community leader)

“Kids who do finish need to leave town to do anything further. Few short courses but otherwise requires a bigger move which is not really on kids’ radar and if it is they leave and don’t come back, which is not good for the town either.” (Community leader)

This was perceived as one of the major barriers to fulfilling Go Goldfields’ vision of aspiring and achieving, however there is good momentum for change with business increasing their involvement with the schools. Some suggestions to instigate change were mentoring and improved transport links.

“Mentoring opportunities are really not thought of locally. A lot of businesses out there are waiting to be asked.”

(Community leader)

“Provide some facilities and opportunities to enable staying in Maryborough, but improve transport to other regional towns and link courses external to Central Goldfields Shire with local businesses.”

(Community leader)

Youth services work

The outcomes above have been enhanced by work done through the school-focused youth service activity, within Go Goldfields. The focus of this work is on the development of a model of wrap around services for at risk children and young people in the Central Goldfields Shire. Over the past months, the key priorities have been building the partnership commitment and service system capacity in readiness for a place-based wrap around service model. A series of reflective practice sessions with frontline workers for the youth services and education sectors have been conducted.

[This] ... “kept the conversation going around developing a common or shared agenda – there is still lots of work to do but they were really very practical and deep discussions around the real work and how we can work together to develop a shared responsibility for youth in the shire.”

(Go Goldfields team member)

This work has also seen a kind of virtual team being enacted, as previously many staff in the youth sector were working in isolation. Since coming together as a sector there have been examples of workers calling other group members for support.

“This is an example of how shared responsibility can be put into practice – but what is important is the relationships. We need to continue to build relationships.”

(Go Goldfields team member)

An interesting observation linked to the difficulties implementing and focusing the work in the whole youth employment domain has been the lack of youth input in decision making to date. Some work has been done to engage with young and emerging leaders with the initial aim being for these influential young people to become a conduit for messages out to the community from each domain area and help to create cultural change. However the idea soon changed to being able to build and develop the next generation of leaders.

“Everyone acknowledges that it is so important to have these young leaders supported.”

(Go Goldfields team member)

The methods of supporting these young leaders will be informal mentoring, networking and skills development. Planning for the future of this group needs to occur, but it would be great to see this group engaged in the new governance model as a practical way of further developing leadership skills and networks.



The vision of Go Goldfields *'Our community: aspiring; achieving and living a full life'* drives the Go Goldfields work. The Alliance strives to lay the foundations for the future so that this vision can be realised by the community.

This evaluation has captured successes and community changes that reflect the pursuit of this vision above any other single domain. Some examples of work undertaken to date in this area, in addition to the above includes:

- Development of a shared approach across the *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes* work being led by the Alliance.
- Development of shire wide strategies using a Program Logic approach against the desired community outcomes.
- Identification and capacity building for young and emerging leaders.
- Engagement of service clubs and community clubs in the vision and work of Go Goldfields.
- Design and ongoing review and development of governance structures to lead and implement the work being undertaken.
- Development and endorsement of shared platforms for the work, including:
 - Place-based approach,
 - Understanding poverty,
 - Social connection,
 - Embedding arts,
 - Ottawa Charter.
- Work with RMIT, through their engagement with Art Central to explore the culture of the community and identify aspects for development.

Go Goldfields has engaged with, and provided training opportunities for, young and emerging leaders within the Central Goldfields community. One young attendee took the initiative to provide leadership sessions to Grade 5 classes at MEC as he perceived that this would be more relevant and inspiring to the students than having outside educators. The session that he ran was a great success.

Following are indicators examining the partnership and processes that enable the Go Goldfields work to proceed. Analysis of these will identify actions that may help to make the collaborative process work better.

Indicator 1: The partnership and governance processes and structures facilitated achievement of desired community outcomes.

The New York Partnership self-assessment tool has been used to assess how well the collaborative process is working and to identify specific areas that need to be focused on in order to make the collaborative process work better.

The tool measures the partnership's level of synergy as an indicator of the overall success of the collaborative process. The Go Goldfields Alliance scored a synergy level of 3.4, slightly less than in 2013 (3.5). Although this difference is unlikely to be statistically significant it suggests that more work is needed to fully exploit the partnership's collaborative potential.

The report identifies key partnership strengths and weaknesses that are related to synergy (please see full report in Appendix 4). Compared with 2013, there have been significant improvements in the areas of leadership effectiveness, efficiency and administration and management.

Identified strengths include: the ability of the partnership to respond to the needs and problems of the community; organising activities; applying for and managing funds; evaluating the progress and impact of the partnership; and connections to political decision makers. Identified weaknesses include: communication outside the partnership about the value of the work, including clear communication to the community about how the partnership's actions will address the problems that are important to them.

In the 2013 mid-term evaluation report communication was also highlighted as an area for improvement. This issue will be explored in further detail.

Of the current partners, 71.4% (5/7) of those that responded found that the benefits of participating in the partnership exceeded the drawbacks.

The main benefits of participation in the Alliance were:

- Enhanced ability to address important issues.
- Acquisition of useful knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community.
- Development of valuable relationships.
- Ability to have a greater impact than I could have on my own.
- Ability to make a contribution to the community.

Diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations was seen as the main disadvantage to participation. These benefits and drawbacks are much the same as 2013.

The New York Partnership tool is one way of evaluating the strength and synergy of partnerships, however in this case it does not seem to be sensitive enough to represent what the Go Goldfields Alliance considers to be important, and fundamental changes to the thinking and alignment of its members.

In 2011, when the Alliance was first forming, there were some very significant concerns on the part of the Alliance members. These concerns centred on the themes of partnership development, delivering on projects, resource management, communication and consultation and project specific concerns. At the end of 2014 a two day planning session was held to discuss the future of Go Goldfields. In contrast, at this session when people came together they were able to completely set aside their other agendas and focus on the outcomes. There was no discussion of the technical elements that were of great concern at the initial session. Instead discussion revolved around bringing the work into a more collaborative space and bringing the voices of those with lived experience and local business to the table. The knowledge and understanding of the work had built to the point that attendees could start to visualise what the community could look like if the work was done well.

“Initially Alliance members were working on themselves, now we are working on the work.” (Go Goldfields Manager)

This planning session was attended by stakeholders on the steering committee, the Go Goldfields Alliance members, and the Go Goldfields team. It was decided to revisit the governance model and attendees agreed to move to a non-hierarchical, flexible model based on the **Collaborative Table** approach.¹⁰ This model will bring decision makers, service leaders, community and those with lived experience to the table to help design the community engagement strategy, potentially deliver some of the activities, and contribute to creating a level of consensus and/or urgency for change in the community.

This strategic group will be overseen by an executive group, and underpinned by three Action Groups representing key focus areas of Children and Families, Youth and Work Readiness, and Family Violence. These Action Groups will themselves be set up under a **Collaborative Table** model.

“I think we are in a good place. The restructuring of Go Goldfields is exactly what we need to be doing. It will be really very powerful. I think the initial structure that we had is what we had to have early on. Go Goldfields got a lot of credit because of the way we were working – so to say that’s ok but probably not good enough and to restructure now is very timely and gives us the capacity to lift to another level.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

In order to achieve the best out of the governance groups, it was seen as being important that more decision makers were at the table. Part of the issue has been that there is not necessarily an alignment between what people can contribute and where they sit, leading to lack of transparency about resources and mutual benefit. This could be improved by all parties having the opportunity to discuss what they can and do, bring to the table, and how all members can mutually benefit.

“Need a greater understanding of what each other is doing, what our ‘reach’ is and what we can bring to the table.” (Action Group member)

This will allow for groups to be structured so that the ‘right people are at the right table’. There has also been some disconnect between governance groups, and Go Goldfields has learnt that for these relationships to be more productive, the interrelationship of the work needs to be mirrored in the processes and accountability of each group.

Indicator 2: Community arts embedded in Go Goldfields work with children, youth and families.

Art Central has been the platform that Go Goldfields has used to embed community arts across its work. Examples of projects that Art Central have been involved in the book box project, the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party, banner making with vulnerable parent groups, Vases and Verses, Youth Engage Space, sessions with schools, and the Museum of Truth and Lies.

In some ways community arts through Art Central is seen as one of the great successes of Go Goldfields, especially with its community partnerships with schools, and high visibility in a central location.

“Art Central has been giving people things to do - a growth in community activities centred on young people.” (Community Leader)

“Some of the work is fantastic and is engaging across a wide segment of the community that haven’t been touched by this before.” (Community Leader)

[Art Central has done]... “great work with outlying community groups, which has been great for them.” (Community Leader)

Although initial plans were for arts involvement throughout all of Go Goldfields work; this was hard to implement, partly due to staffing profiles not matching the facilitation role required. There was also concern that the arts strategy didn’t have a consistent message, leading to difficulty engaging the community and services.

A sign of this is that, across the board from community leaders, parents, Go Goldfields team members, artists and EYSP’s consistent feedback was received that attendance at these activities could have been improved.

Community engagement is explored further at Indicator 4.

The recent work done to develop a sustainable community arts approach for the future will build on all platforms to continue to provide opportunities for children, youth and families to be connected through the arts.

¹⁰ See Liz Weaver and the Roundtable of 40
<http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2013/09/learning-experience>

Indicator 3: Shire-wide strategies developed and substantially implemented for children and families.

There is substantial evidence of the implementation of the shire-wide strategies, as well as ongoing review and refinement of approaches. With the implementation of strategies, we have needed to adjust work and priorities to reflect the reality of the situation for services, the community and for children, youth and families. The place-based approach has been a strength in this process, allowing flexibility in practice and a response to the 'real world'. The constant quest to ensure the work stays true to the desired outcomes has helped maintain this direction, but has also been challenging:

“...very challenging to get this work off the ground. The amount of background work required was underestimated.” (Go Goldfields team member)

“It’s a challenge to hold the vision and to know when to change or be flexible.”
(Action Group member)

Achieving community outcomes requires cultural change, including challenging cultural and community norms, development of strong relationships and alignment across services and the community. Although implicit in this work, these components are not 'tasks' identified in strategic plans, nor in position descriptions. They were initially challenging and time consuming for staff and not always easy to grasp for those outside (and indeed on) the Alliance.

Although in some cases the work has been at a developmental stage and may seem to be slow to progress, the progress made to build relationships and work towards common understandings has been considerable and created a strong and necessary foundation for future success.

The Go Goldfields Alliance members report that significant steps have been taken in all areas. This has been done by being focused, strategic and evidence-based.

Indicator 4: Increased community engagement in desired outcomes.

Community leaders have demonstrated an increased engagement in contributing to Go Goldfields outcomes, however within the broader community engagement has been variably successful. This could be attributed to readiness for change, better alignment between operational plans, clearer messaging and the community's confidence in those implementing or driving change.

Community ownership of the outcomes, although hard to measure, has not occurred across all of the domains. This will be somewhat overcome in the next stage of Go Goldfields with the new governance model and common agenda statements being developed using the **Collaborative Table** method. Building the skill base of Go Goldfields staff towards facilitation, rather than as technical experts, will also lead to improved community engagement practices.

There has been a thread throughout this report indicating that the community has started to move its thinking from plain awareness of the issues, to an appreciation of what needs to be done and to developing higher expectations of the community and its services. The change in awareness has driven increases in understanding, but the next step is to achieve commitment to effective action. This has been embraced at the Go Goldfields Alliance member level and amongst some community leaders, but it needs to occur across the community.

‘The first step in motivating change is to replace the natural human inclination to accept the *status quo* with an understanding that things don’t have to be the way they are, and that it is possible to act to improve the situation.’¹¹

There is now a “belief in the community that they can make a difference if they do stand up.” (Community leader)

Participation rates as a measure of engagement have been on the rise but are still well below what they could be. (This has been discussed more extensively in Indicator 1 of the Strong Communities section of this report). Genuine community engagement continues to be a challenge that needs to be continually addressed. Of course the Collaborative Table model is one of the next steps in addressing this.

“Still a fair way to go for the project to be more engaging with community – still don’t genuinely engage with the community as a whole to change community behaviours or expectations. Need the community to eventually drive this. Need to properly engage community in the decision making.” (Community leader)

One of the criticisms of the early work of Go Goldfields was that work was being produced while consultation was still ongoing.

“There have been missed opportunities by Go Goldfields not consulting thoroughly enough with various communities before developing and implementing specific responses. It would have been better to identify the current positive work already occurring and then building on this rather than developing ideas in isolation.”
(Action Group member)

This was done because initial conversations with Alliance members indicated a low level of understanding of what the work would or could be. It was felt that demonstrating some of the work would increase this understanding. This reflects some of the discussion in Indicator 1 in acknowledging the significant journey that Alliance members have been on. The success of the family violence strategy driven by Rotary and Zonta highlights the importance of engaging community groups to drive the projects.

¹¹ Hayes, A. (2014) Changing gambling environments: From awareness to collective responsibility and coordinated action. Launch of Responsible Gambling Awareness Week, Federation Square, Melbourne. Accessed 22/02/2015 from <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/papers/2014/hayes20140526/transcriptslides.html>

“We need to support community groups to take on the challenges rather than relying on funded projects. There is a lot of goodwill in the community and we need to harness this better.” (Action Group member)

The idea of individual champions at all levels of the community promoting the work and supporting the community to engage more fully was suggested and supported by many. Another key to better engagement will be developing communication methods and means to connect both with the broader community and more vulnerable parts of the population.

“Need ... to continually pump out key messages. Backed with local photos of people. It needs to be ground down a lot finer than it is.” (Community leader)

It was recognised that community partnerships are essential to supporting diversity and inclusion. Community leaders identified that there are more community partnerships and they are becoming more diverse.

“Community connections have increased with service clubs and through Go Goldfields.” (Community leader)

Indicator 5: That community leadership is engaged in the desired community outcomes.

It was recognised that many leaders within the community have contributed to the success of Go Goldfields so far. These leaders came from schools, service clubs, local business, Shire councillors and Go Goldfields management and staff.

“I feel proud that these people are in this community.” (Community leader)

There are many examples of formal leadership engaging with the Go Goldfields outcomes, through actively engaging within the Alliance, and embedding Go Goldfields strategies within strategic plans. Three of four respondents reported embedding changes within strategic plans.

“Go Goldfields has helped influence our agency’s focus on place-based work, and learnings from Go Goldfields have been applied to other community settings where the agency works.” (Go Goldfields Alliance member)

“All the key issues faced by Go Goldfields are issues faced by this organisation. These are reflected in our current Strategic Plan.” (Go Goldfields Alliance member)

“There is a high level of alignment with the work of Go Goldfields and this organisation. The work we do and the work that falls within the scope of Go Goldfields is somewhat seamless.” (Go Goldfields Alliance member)

As mentioned previously, the leadership shown by Rotary and Zonta in championing the family violence work has been particularly successful, and could be a model for future work.

Another great example of organisations incorporating the Go Goldfields outcomes in strategic plans is the Goldfields Children’s Centre who have recently been granted significant funds to build an extension on the existing site. The extension will provide the additional space required to run recently funded kindergarten services; physically join the Maternal and Child Health building to the Children’s Centre building; and provide access to a community group room and individual service rooms. This has provided Council with an opportunity to consider a more holistic approach to services delivered to children and families within the centre. Council has formally endorsed an early years approach for the new Central Goldfields Early Years Learning Centre that has strong alignment with Go Goldfields desired outcomes. This is evidence that Go Goldfields desired outcomes are engaging community leaders and being accepted as realistic expectations for the shire to aspire to.



Indicator 6: The Go Goldfields' flexible, place-based funding model delivered on desired community outcomes.

The majority of respondents agreed that having a flexible funding model has added the capacity to be responsive to the emerging needs of projects as they unfold according to local needs and desired outcomes.

In 2013, there was some concern that this led to decisions being made about programs and funding without sufficient input from the Alliance. This was reflected in the responses to the partnership analysis tool, where 50% of respondents felt that they had been left out of the decision making process 'some of the time'. This number reduced to 28.6% in 2014, with less concerns about the negative impact of the flexibility. The one concern was transparency with the community, which reflects the desire for greater community engagement.

“Flexible funding is crucial to achieving the outcomes. It allows Go Goldfields to design strategies to achieve the goals rather than having to fit into a tight funding model.” (Go Goldfields Alliance member)

Indicator 7: That there was strong alignment of Go Goldfields' desired community outcomes and positions funded.

The Go Goldfields review in December 2014 determined that the initial positions we had focused on technical expertise in the outcome areas such as language development, literacy, parenting, early years and youth. These were aligned with the desired community outcomes. But with experience we determined that technical expertise in the area was frequently not the skill set needed to progress the work.

The reorientation of the parenting and youth positions to facilitator roles with limited technical expertise, in the second half of 2014, proved much more successful. For the next stage of Go Goldfields we believe that the roles will not necessarily need to align with the desired community outcomes, but rather have skills needed to underpin the work across a range of outcomes such as data management and communication

STORY SO FAR...

Addressing the Go Goldfields objectives in this innovative way was always going to create challenges at all levels. As with the mid-term report, it was interesting to note that many of the challenges faced have also been linked to key successes:

Key success factors:

- Executive buy-in from partners – A collaboration based on shared values and purpose.
- Consistency of messages across all partners and the community.
- Collective impact of strategies.
- Flexible funding model has added the capacity to be responsive to the emerging needs of projects as they unfold according to local needs and desired outcomes.
- Community groups engaged and driving the work.

“Lots of people lined up walking in the same direction – everyone talking the same language, same messages.”

Challenges:

- Interaction between Go Goldfields frameworks and existing organisational frameworks.
- Genuine community engagement.
- Communication.
- Staffing skill set requirements and alignment.
- Work owned at executive level, but not communicated to, and therefore owned by middle management or staff.



PROGRESS ON THE OUTCOMES

- Parents and early years service providers are more aware of the importance of early communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Many have incorporated these skills into their interactions with children.
- Community speech pathology has built the capacity of parents and early years service providers to detect issues early and to collaboratively manage these issues with professionals. This success has led to MDHS redeveloping its speech pathology services in line with an early years focussed approach. Less children are requiring speech pathology on entering school.
- Prep reading levels and measures of childhood development have somewhat improved, however data over ensuing years is needed in order to identify ongoing impacts of the work.
- Family literacy continues to be a barrier to develop children's literacy further.
- Families have had increased opportunities to be involved in both social and capacity building activities. This has improved their social connections and confidence and skills in parenting.
- The common agenda around youth aspiration, importance of education and business connection to youth have been identified as the areas for change.
- A perceived lack of employment and training opportunities for the shire's youth has been identified as an important ongoing issue for the shire that requires attention. Work in this area has started increased awareness about employment opportunities and will continue to focus on work readiness.
- Attendance at events has been reported as disappointing at times but this is not reflected in the numbers attending Go Goldfields events. This will need to be further explored.
- Recent work done to develop a sustainable community arts approach for the future will build on all platforms to continue to provide opportunities for children, youth and families to be connected through the arts. However work needs to continue to engage local artists to ensure the sustainability of this approach.

Families and early years service providers are demonstrating an increased commitment to working together to achieve our desired community outcomes, including formalising common approaches and developing plans to more collaboratively service the community. This needs to be maximised and developed in the next phase of the work.

Overall where there is known best practice and accessible strategies for improvement, such as with oral language and literacy development, the common agenda or desired community outcomes have been readily defined and implementation commenced. In areas where there is more diversity of opinion and no known best practice to change community outcomes, such as youth and addressing family violence, the opinions have been more divergent and the work slower.

ENGAGEMENT

This work can further progress in the next phase of Go Goldfields by:

- Engaging with community groups or community champions to drive the work as members of decision making tables has been a significant step in achieving enduring community cultural change.
- Broader community engagement beyond people with lived experience or with investment in the change being undertaken.

A recurring theme is that broad awareness of the problems faced by the Central Goldfields community and those that service them has increased, both within the wider community and the Go Goldfields Alliance.

“The need for social change is now firmly on the agenda. We are no longer ignoring the social issues. Concerns, such as family violence, are now openly talked about. The culture of [organisations] has changed.”

(Action Group member)

“The social needs of the vulnerable people are not hidden away any more but being addressed.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

This increased awareness seemed to have led in some cases to increased expectations from the broader community. This was demonstrated with parents having increased expectations around the support of children's literacy and parenting skills. Service providers including the library reported changes in expectation, including dissatisfaction with speech pathologists' waiting lists despite times reducing significantly this year. Community leadership and Go Goldfields staff and Alliance members also displayed greater expectations around the work they were producing, in particular focusing more on the need for genuine community engagement compared to 2013. This is evidence that cultural change is beginning to happen.

“There is a much greater awareness within the community of the desire of the community to aspire to become the best we can be.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

Communication is a challenge that has been referred to by all respondents, parents, EYSP's, community leaders, and Go Goldfields Alliance and team members. Successful communication increases transparency and demands accountability. This in turn impacts on levels of trust and engagement, so is an important element of collaborative work. There are many examples where effective communication has been vital to success, particularly for Go Goldfields within the areas of literacy and family violence.

In analysing how communication may have been more successful in these areas compared to others, a few key features have been identified. Consistent simple messages, almost like mantras, have helped to get messages across in both the literacy and family violence domains. As has the fact that those delivering the messages are either individuals or organisations that are trusted by the broader community. The new governance model to be implemented in 2015 may help to address these challenges in other areas.

The engagement of community groups, in particular the Maryborough Rotary, to drive the work is a great model for future work.

“There needs to be more done to engage with local champions, or with ‘champion groups’.” (Action Group member)

Another concern around communication is the fact that many people in the community still don't understand what Go Goldfields is or does.

“We are not good at explaining to people what Go Goldfields is. We need a key phrase to give a simple response to question ‘What is Go Goldfields?’.”

(Action Group/Alliance member)

Community ownership of the outcomes, although hard to measure, has not occurred across all of the domains. This will be somewhat overcome in the next stage of Go Goldfields with the new governance model and common agenda statements being developed using the **Collaborative Table** method. Building the skill base of Go Goldfields staff towards facilitation rather than them being technical experts will also lead to improved community engagement practices.

People in the community including service, community and business leaders, and parents, seem to have started to move from awareness of the issues to acting. Seeing that this action is the beginning there is much more to do. Within a change cycle (Kelley and Connor 1979, see Appendix 5) this would suggest that the initial positive optimism associated with a positive change in community members may have, in 2012-13, been representative of uninformed optimism and that this is now being replaced by both informed pessimism and hopeful realisation. Overall this would suggest a deepening of the understanding and commitment to achieving the desired community outcomes.

ALIGNMENT

- Go Goldfields team and service providers have identified the importance of a whole of shire approach to addressing these complex problems. Continued work needs to be done to ensure that there is alignment within all key organisations, across the governance and reporting structures and how funding requirements and policy supports the work.
- The buy-in from Go Goldfields Alliance members has been an enabler. However in some cases engagement at an operational level has been more challenging.
- Go Goldfields place based approach has not always interfaced well with existing organisational frameworks. At times this has been a barrier to effective collaboration.

Research found that many partnerships move through a distinct developmental path:

1. Connection: All partnerships start by connecting people or organisations (nodes) with each other.
2. Alignment: Build on connections to create a shared value proposition and activity.
3. Production: Build on connections and alignment to organise the production of a particular result.¹²

Go Goldfields has obviously made progress in all of these three areas. It is not a linear path but one that needs to be revisited constantly to ensure progress towards outcomes is effectively achieved.

Alignment is a concept that can be described as, 'the capacity for joint value creation, the common agenda.' For successful community change it is proposed that alignment is needed in multiple aspects of the work including:

- Resources funding and governance
- Culture commitments and expectations
- Measurement and accountabilities
- Efforts lead to outcomes
- Relationships with the community
- Relationships with funders, decision makers, Government
- Penetration depth into agencies.

(Lucas unpublished, 2015)

¹² Taylor, M & Plastrik, P. (2007). An emerging framework for assessing non-profit networks. *The Evaluation Exchange*, 13(1&2), 28. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archival/advocacy-and-policy-change/an-emerging-framework-for-assessing-nonprofit-networks>

Resources and governance, culture and relationships have been discussed elsewhere, and it is clear that these have all had an impact on the success in gaining alignment across Go Goldfields. Of interest here is the inclusion of penetration depth into agencies, as this is an area within Go Goldfields, which has been highlighted as requiring work.

In 2013, the Go Goldfields team had challenges engaging the staff at an operational level within partner agencies to collaborate on various strategies. This was despite the fact that there is generally good buy-in at executive level. This may have been due to insufficient communication from both within and outside their organisations about the Alliance's commitment to the Go Goldfields work. In 2014 the Action Group members reported finding this a continued challenge.

“There needs to be better translation of directions from Action Groups to services, embedding work. Need support at all levels. Important to have Go Goldfields Alliance members working with their agencies to help understanding and change.”

(Action Group members)

This was also articulated by the Go Goldfields team who are working to engage at the operational level.

“It's really easy at executive level to get ahead of the game– it became clear that practitioners had not been part of the conversation around Go Goldfields and there have been assumptions that they are more advanced than they are.” (Go Goldfields team member)

One of the major challenges identified in the 2013 mid-term evaluation continues – the complexity of working with existing services that have their own strategic plans and funding models that may not align with those of Go Goldfields – although 2014 feedback did not identify this as a significant barrier to work progressing as it was perceived in 2013. This is perhaps because Go Goldfields has relaxed its reliance on frameworks to guide its work.

“What Go Goldfields has done now is to focus on the values and beliefs we all hold and that is the basis of it – if we have the basics or fundamentals right the other things will follow.” (Go Goldfields Alliance member)

This thinking has now shifted to how to encourage emergent practice when organisations are working within and reporting to traditional strategic approaches. This will become more important as the governance structure changes to ensure the voice of vulnerable people leads to effective outcomes for them and is not just tokenistic.

Measurement and accountability is also a factor contributing to alignment. Attribution of outcomes to any one member or strategy within Go Goldfields is not possible when working to create collective impact. Long term community outcomes will only be a result of sustained collaborative work. This does create a dilemma when there

is a call for celebration and communication of Go Goldfields work to drive for greater engagement, when on the other hand there is a perception by some that Go Goldfields should not be recognised for work done by the community and organisations under its banner. More work needs to be done to market Go Goldfields as being all contributors, not just the operationally funded staff or Council.

“Don't try to have Go Goldfields own everything – rather it should be seen as supporting the strengths and successes that have been developed within the community.” (Action Group member)

This might be the key to increasing community engagement, which is highlighted as a need throughout this report. The new governance model should address these issues. It will:

“Get people more involved in the process of governance. It's actually going back to the shared agenda – it is broadening that out further. The outcomes now are essentially outcomes of a group of agencies so it's going to get a lot wider than that.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout the Go Goldfields work there has been a realisation that success with much of the work has relied on strong relationships. Especially at this developmental stage where much work has been done to build relationships within the service sector and to facilitate this sector to find a common approach. Key examples of this include the family services work including community child protection and the EYSP's forum. This has helped to create a strong and necessary foundation for future success.

Success in promotion and communication has largely been due to building relationships at all levels within the community. This has allowed for the transfer of trust from one entity to another to build engagement. This is highlighted by the work with Maryborough Rotary.

In this current report, we found that the experience of social inclusion was linked closely to some of the relationships that have developed through all areas of Go Goldfields' work. Even if these relationships have been at a service provider level, this change filters down to impact the community. This emphasises the interconnectedness of the Alliance's work and its non-linear path from addressing cause to changing and effect.

Go Goldfields Alliance members reported that one of the main benefits of participation is the development of valuable relationships. How the system and community benefits in the long term from these relationships, and the innovative work that may arise, is yet to be fully realised.

RESOURCES

- Dedicated, flexible funding is needed to achieve meaningful community change. Without the \$2.5 million from the Victorian Government the Go Goldfields work would not have progressed substantially. Flexible funding has added the capacity to be responsive to emerging needs as they unfold.
- Some of the time taken to progress this work, as in other domains, has partly been the realisation by Go Goldfields that team members are required to take on facilitation roles rather than technical expert roles, and managing staffing for this change has been a challenge.

Initial staffing within Go Goldfields focused on technical expertise. This was useful in areas where there is known best practice that needs to be applied, such as oral language development. In other areas, however, such as youth and employment, there is now a recognition that a greater facilitation role is needed. Rather than expertise in youth, for example, we need expertise in communication, education, leading group conversations and listening for and identifying themes and leading group problem solving.

“My message is always to say I am not a practitioner. We have the experts here and those with lived experience and my job is a resource to help them harness their ideas and help them progress.”

(Go Goldfields team – facilitator)

Another consideration in the success of Go Goldfields has been the ability to take the time to reflect on and review both the functioning of the partnership and the progress towards outcomes. This allows for flexibility around changing needs, capacity and environments. The fact that the Alliance has understood and supported this reflection and flexibility to occur reflects the Alliance’s alignment in understanding the work required.

“We’ve got a relentless drive to get to the underlying issues that are facing us and because of that we have a tolerance of the messiness of the work and we need to keep that. If we become impatient that we have to be doing stuff it will become a problem.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

SYSTEMS

The Go Goldfields Steering Committee, as a group and with individual Regional Directors, has been supportive in addressing barriers and obstacles that prevent the place-based approach from working. For example, the then DHS (Loddon Area) over 2014 undertook the task to align the work within the department to the work in Go Goldfields. Although early days, there is a clearer understanding of the work being done within and resourced by the department and how this work can support the Go Goldfields journey.

Despite this commitment, the varied policy, funding and service accountabilities, and program and project reporting requirements, remain a constant challenge for place-based work. For example, we have not been able to access data on children in out of home care or child protection to date. We are, however, making progress in this area with the support of the Loddon Area DHHS. Such work takes time and more than one community working in a pace based way to put together a combined case.

The systems work to date has therefore been focused on building relationships and unpacking barriers to collaboration locally. Trying to change the system by looking at documentation and policies across organisations has not worked historically. Instead the focus in Go Goldfields has been on tackling the system in a different way.

“Tools are not the things that make the difference. It’s how we as workers interact and whether we have shared values and beliefs about how we work with families. If we have these basics, the fundamentals right, then the other things will follow.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

TIME

Although in some cases the work has been at a developmental stage and may seem to be slow to progress, the progress made to build relationships and work towards common understandings has been considerable and created a strong and necessary foundation for future success.

It is universally acknowledged that this type of work, to have collective impact, takes time. Time spent building relationships and connections; time spent aligning common agendas at every level; and even more time to produce results at a population level. The work done during the developmental stage of any social change initiative is crucial to future success.

“It takes time to organise networks effectively and show results. This means funders and evaluators have to reckon with their developmental processes and be patient about expecting them to have impact.”¹³

The Alliance and the Go Goldfields Steering Committee recognise this and have expressed a commitment for the long term nature of the work.

EVALUATION PROCESSES

The evaluation process for Go Goldfields was in itself a journey, with many learnings to take forward into the next stage. Due to the fact that there is a long time frame before population level impacts of the work can be measured, short term indicators were included to demonstrate positive trends.

There has been mixed success in using the framework of indicators and flexibility has been required to capture the impacts of the work. Many of the indicators have still been too long term to demonstrate any change and some of the data required has been difficult to acquire.

The Evaluation Working Group has sat outside of the Alliance, and the evaluation measures have not been used within existing structures to drive change. As Go Goldfields moves towards a more conscious alignment with collective impact, shared measurement, and the use of a common set of measures to monitor performance, it will need to track progress toward goals, learn what is working and not working, and embed this within the Alliance.

IN CLOSING

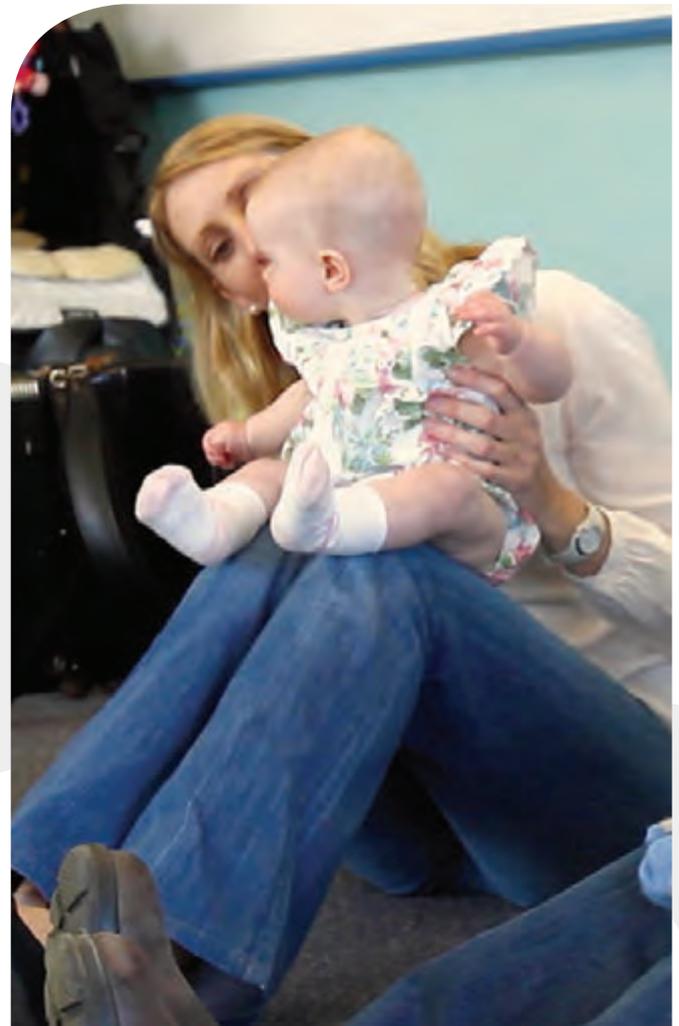
There is a great sense of excitement and appreciation that Central Goldfields has the opportunity to continue on this journey they have begun in addressing some of the most complex social problems in such an innovative way.

“I think it’s a joy and a privilege to work in this space.”

(Go Goldfields Alliance member)

This highlights that the community does believe that it can achieve its outcomes and has confidence in itself to push the boundaries and be at the forefront, seeing solutions rather than problems.

“Our community offers amazing opportunities and I think it’s about providing children and families with opportunities to achieve far beyond what they would have imagined. For me, that’s what Go Goldfields is all about.” (Go Goldfields Alliance member)



¹³ Network Impact & Centre for Evaluation Innovation. (2014) Framing Paper: The State of Network Evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.networkimpact.org/the-state-of-network-evaluation-a-guide/>





go goldfields
aspiring and achieving

Go Goldfields Evaluation Report / March **2015**

A PLACE BASED APPROACH

Many people are talking about using a 'place based' approach. It's become the flavour of the month in service development, following predecessors such as child/family centred care, partnership development and service coordination. As is the case with its predecessors the rhetoric relating to a 'place based' approach often outstrips the application. For those of us actively trying to deliver against this approach many challenges present themselves, not the least of which being how to measure change, intended or unintended, at a community, service or intervention level.

In the Central Goldfields Shire we have been developing our place based approach via a multi sectoral partnership called the Go Goldfields Alliance. This alliance has representatives from health, education, training, justice, disability, employment, the arts, community, local government and significant partnership strategies such as the Primary Care Partnership and Local Learning and Employment Network. We also have other partnership projects happening in this space such as Neighbourhood Renewal and the Prevention Community Model. The partnership has come together in response to the significant social health needs in our community that have not been addressed through traditional sectorally based funding and policy responses.

In a shire that has traditionally been 78th or 79th out of 79 shires in Victoria on many health and social indicators we believed that it is only by working together from combined strategies and approaches, based on true community need, that we will have any hope of impacting on these issues.

We have defined 'place based' as developing and deliver locally relevant responses to social issues that are too complex and too long-term for previous solutions. We have a particular focus on children, youth and families. To achieve this we are developing, implementing and evaluating shire wide approaches that meet the desired outcomes with our community.

The Go Goldfields Great Outcomes work has been made possible by a \$2.5 million grant from the previous Victorian Government. The funding is for three years, January 2012 until December 2014. It is to utilise a place based approach for children, youth and families. The funding has been given for us to achieve the following outcomes:

- A reduction in child protection reporting (a reduction in re-reporting and children going into out of home care)
- An increase in communication, literacy and numeracy skills for children and families
- In increase in positive social connection for children, youth and families
- Youth connected to education and training to achieve employment outcomes.

The journey in measuring change within the Go Goldfields Great Outcomes has been a steep learning curve. We have a commitment to evaluating the work that we do in a meaningful way and we really want to know if what we are doing is working and, at a later date, if it has worked. In line with this commitment we started planning the

evaluation early. Although we received the funding in January 2012 the funding had been announced the previous May, so a General Manager of Go Goldfields was employed in November 2011. This meant that by February 2012 we had an endorsed Evaluation Brief to employ a consultant to design an evaluation framework for Go Goldfields Great Outcomes.

This is where things started to get interesting. We had structured the Evaluation Brief as if we were evaluating a major project with a series of smaller projects embedded within it. We had looked at evaluation in a linear way i.e. we do 'this' and we will have 'that' outcome or we won't. We soon learned that this was not going to provide us with the evidence we needed to achieve an effective evaluation for the breadth of audiences that we needed to inform; audiences such as our local community, government and potential future funding bodies. Thankfully the appointed consultant also saw this and agreed to withdraw from the work.

In March 2012 we set up an Evaluation Working Group to oversee and inform this work on behalf of the Go Goldfields Alliance. This group had a mixture of people with previous experience in program and project evaluation and service leaders. It became obvious that to evaluate this work we needed to include others in the work internally, as well as accessing outside help.

In April 2012 we realised that this evaluation was fundamentally different to what any of us had done before. Our journey has therefore included tackling a number of conceptual challenges to achieve an effective evaluation framework for this work.

The challenges outlined below have been faced as they arise, but have really been recognised for what they are more in hindsight. To date, the challenges with this evaluation have included the following:

1. **Evaluation is not linear:** As suggested above, this work is not the same as considering the work within a project evaluation framework. One description we had was that, "it's like spaghetti that a child had been playing with". If we want to measure outcomes there is an interaction of strategies, events and activities that need to be understood and the outcomes, impact and process captured.
2. **There is no pre existing recipe to place based evaluation:** Our challenge is that we are working out how to do place based work and at the same time we are working out how to measure it.
3. **Those doing the place based work are not necessarily evaluation and research experts:** This has meant that we do not necessarily have the expertise to deal with the complexity of the evaluation, or the shared language around evaluation, to work our way through the process with those who do have expertise.
4. **Local evaluation experts are challenged:** Even for those of us who do have skills in this area, our 'local experts' are challenged in their area of expertise. This has resulted in frustration and concern for these team members as they try to grapple with the task at hand.

5. **Solutions don't always come from where you expect:** At times solutions have come from those with strong conceptual and problem solving skills rather than team members with evaluation backgrounds. The challenge is to see this and capture and incorporate the ideas into the work.
6. **Knowing when and how to have the right conversations with the right people:** If not careful it is easy to talk to everyone and not progress the real thinking and the work. Everyone has a different way of viewing place based work and how it should be evaluated. Distilling the information for the local environment is important but challenging.
7. **Balancing knowledge/evidence with new thinking and innovation:** This is often a challenge in developmental work and has also been a conceptual challenge in our work.
8. **Doing and measuring place based work in a sectorally driven world:** We are challenging the boundaries of roles and organisations and departmental funding streams. How do we measure that in a meaningful way at a local level?
9. **How to use other evaluation frameworks that exist in the prevention/early intervention space:** Our work is really around prevention and early intervention. There is much happening in evaluation in this space, such as the work undertaken by the CEIPS in the Prevention Community Model and Healthy Communities Initiatives. No one wants to reinvent the wheel but it is challenging to fit everyone's evaluation agenda together, especially when some of that evaluation is mandated.

OUR APPROACH TO THIS EVALUATION

Of note, some of our approach has been trial and error, some more systematic and strategic. At a strategic level the following questions have been useful in holding the direction of the work:

1. What parts of the past or current work can be taken into the new evaluation environment and still measure what we need to measure?
2. Along the journey we have had to deal with authority, anxiety, ambivalence and ambiguity. How do we do this in a supportive environment so that we can get the most from people and to allow experts to say 'I don't know'?
3. The alignment of the authorised environment with place based work is challenging in its own right, requiring paradigm shifts with players at all levels, departmental bureaucrats, service decision makers, middle managers and service provision staff and members of the community. How do we concurrently add 'evaluation' onto this in a meaningful way?
4. Who, when and how do we use external expertise to assist in our design and implementation of evaluation for this work?

Of all that we have done we believe the following have been the best tools to tackle the challenges of measuring change in a place based approach:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Consulting with experts early and often and not just from the one institution. We have involved the Murdoch Children's

Research Institute, RMIT and CEIPS. All have their different ways of approaching an issue. We have found different aspects of each have suited our needs to date.

- Looking at the literature with a 'place based' lens. For example, Sue West from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute sent us an article on Collective Impact that changed our thinking considerably. This approach helped us determine how we would measure the impact of our work at a population level, rather than a project by project level.
- Ensuring our Evaluation Working Group includes a broad range of skills in strategic thinking and problem solving, not only project management and evaluation skills.
- Reflecting on and challenging our thinking and work to date. This has meant at times being able to say, 'even though we have invested a lot in this direction, it is not right and needs to be reworked'.
- Picking up on the concepts of **Collective Impact** as the overriding framework for our outcome, process and impact evaluation.
- Adopting the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's **Wedges approach** to define what part of the issue we are working on as well as identifying what we are not working on.
- Being creative about reflection on practice, for example using YouTube type filming snippets to capture moments in time.
- Mapping the outcome, impact and process evaluation against our resources within a **program logic approach**, starting with outcomes and impacts and working back from there to strategies and activities.
- Identifying **realistic resourcing** for the work.

THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The purpose our evaluation framework is to define effective evaluation and performance measures for the stated outcomes over the three year duration of the project. This framework:

- Links overall priority action areas with targeted evaluation questions and activities.
- Defines the key performance measures for population outcomes, including early indicators and some individual project outcomes.
- Recognises diverse data sources, consistency, quality and existing limitations across the organisations that comprise the partnership.
- Proposes practical methodologies for evaluation that are easily implemented across the diverse range of projects, organisations and workers.
- Ensures the framework can be achieved within existing evaluation budget and resources.
- Provides timely information and recommendations for reporting requirements against the Funding and Service Agreement.
- Provides timely information on the place based partnership development needed to achieve the desired outcomes.

This work needs to be conducted in a way that supports our place based approach.

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The place-based approach to the work of the Go Goldfields Alliance suite of programs is, by its very nature, new and innovative. Our community has its own characteristics and complexities and it therefore stands to reason that the programs and relevant evaluation methods would be tailored to our community, our approach and the complexities of all that we are trying to do. As mentioned in the introduction to this document, the evaluation of place-based approaches does not necessarily fit with traditional evaluation frameworks because of the large scale social change required. This evaluation is no exception.

To ensure that we capture the impact of our initiatives and our platforms, as well as demonstrate how we have achieved our funded outcomes, we have incorporated a number of new concepts into our evaluation framework. Collective impact, the Wedges approach, indicators of success and early indicators of change are all explained below.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Collective impact provides a useful approach to evaluating large scale social change and the accompanying initiatives. A Stanford Social Innovation Review (Winter 2011), defines Collective Impact initiatives as *“long term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific problem”*.

The Stanford Review describes three preconditions for Collective Impact. Without an influential champion, adequate financial resources, and the urgency for change, Collective Impact will not bring about the large social change required to solve a society's problems.

In addition to the preconditions, there are then five conditions that need to be met to make Collective Impact work. These conditions are listed and explained in the table below and the way in which the Go Goldfields Alliance meets the criteria are also described in the table.

THE FIVE CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT	EXPLANATION OF THIS CONDITION	HOW GO GOLDFIELDS (GG) MEETS THE CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT
1. COMMON AGENDA	All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.	After many years of witnessing the demoralising statistics pertaining to our population health, GG Alliance members shared a common understanding of the problem. Accordingly, they developed a shared vision and a joint approach to solving it through the Great Outcomes Action Plan.
2. SHARED MEASUREMENT	Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.	This evaluation framework will ensure that we collect data and measure results consistently to meet this condition.
3. MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES	Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.	All activities will be coordinated through our Great Outcomes Action Plan.
4. CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION	Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.	Our Alliance Executive meets monthly and Action Groups as needed. A communication strategy has been developed to ensure consistent, open communication.
5. BACKBONE SUPPORT	Creating and managing Collective Impact requires a separate organisation(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organisations and agencies.	Central Goldfields Shire Council acts as the auspice agency and backbone support for the GG Alliance through a Section 86 of council. The GG General Manager coordinates participating organisations.

This impact will be measured by:

- Community surveys that investigate both the broader culture and perceived changes across the community.
- Targeted semi-structured interviews with community leaders to determine their perceptions of community issues and the impacts and outcomes that they evidence from our work.
- Semi-structured interviews with a cross section of the community via photo narratives.
- Population based outcome measures against our four funded outcomes.

THE WEDGE MODEL

The Murdoch Children’s Research Institute has developed the Wedges Model (see Figure 1). The original intention of this work was to provide a picture of the broad range of issues that need to be considered when thinking about achieving better outcomes for children, families and communities.

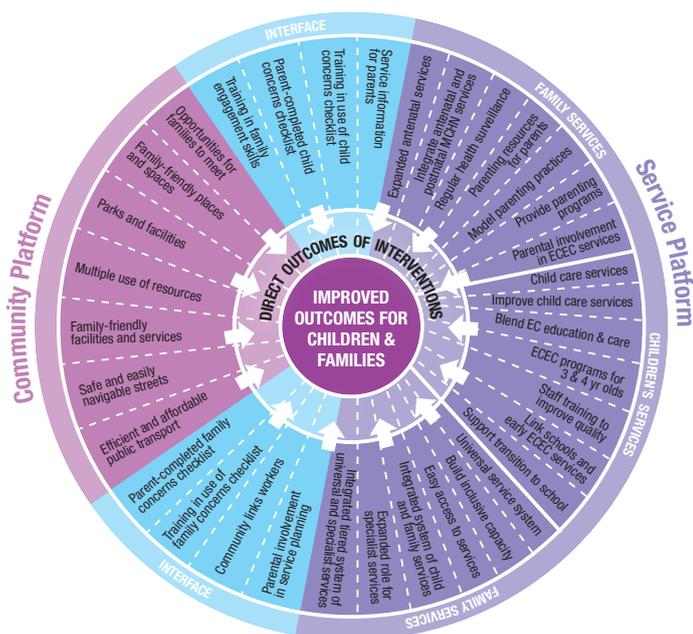


Figure 1: Wedge Model originally developed by the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute

The Wedge Model was designed to encourage holistic thinking about improving outcomes for children and families. A holistic perspective was seen to be important because typically, when thinking about improved outcomes for children and families, the focus is on the service system, rather than the community surrounding and supporting children and families, and the interface between communities and services.

The Murdoch Children’s Research Institute believes that services, communities and the interface between them are important to improving outcomes for children and families. They therefore assert that better outcomes for children, families and communities can be achieved via three broad key changes:

1. More supportive communities;
2. A more supportive service system, and;
3. A better interface between services and communities.
(This has consequently been integrated into the Wedge Model).

This thinking aligns closely with the Go Goldfields’ shire-wide approaches for the issues we are addressing.

The Murdoch Children’s Development Institute met with Go Goldfields and Best Start representatives to discuss the evaluation of this work. It became evident that the Wedges Model could be adapted for use in the evaluation of *Go Goldfields, Great Outcomes* work. Hence, the Wedges approach is being used as the foundation for the evaluation of our work against our funded outcomes.

We are exploring all issues that impact on the desired outcomes within our community and defining which of these our work is targeting. As work progresses we will be able to also identify other areas (wedges) impacted incidentally, and the unplanned consequences of our work. We also believe that we will add wedges as we progress and learn more about the areas that impact on the outcomes we are working to achieve. Finally we believe that we will never know all that there is to know about these issues, so we will leave some wedges blank to demonstrate that there is always more to learn.

The outcome for children, youth and families will be measured by defined baseline, early indicators and outcome indicators for the outcomes that we are being funded to deliver including:

- A reduction in child protection reporting (a reduction in re reporting and children going into out of home care).
- An increase in communication, literacy and numeracy skills for children and families.
- In increase in positive social connection for children, youth and families.
- Youth connected to education and training to achieve employment outcomes.
- An increase in breastfeeding rates (Note: this outcome measure reflects our integration with the Best Start work in our children’s and family area, creating ‘Best Start Stronger Families’).

MEASUREMENT OF INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

Each piece of work undertaken to implement the shire wide approaches developed are being scoped against a project planning template (see Attachment 1). Staff are also collecting data regarding process via a photo library of activities and events and a reflection diary on practice and outcomes. These will be analysed by:

- Six monthly workshops to 'theme' reflections.
- Six monthly review of project templates to identify which aspects of the work need to be showcased to tell 'the story of the work' and which need to be extended.
- Data kept that reflects reach of the work undertaken.

EARLY INDICATORS OF CHANGE

The Go Goldfields Alliance realised that it would need to 'build a story' very early on in the work to take people along on the journey of change. For this reason, action group participants and other stakeholders with expertise in specific areas, identified what we call the early indicators of change. These indicators may not prove that we 'got there' but they will show that we're heading in the right direction. For example, an early indicator for Youth Employment will be a decrease in the number of at-risk students as indicated by Maryborough Education Centre's traffic light system. Quantitative data will be collected at the six month mark, thus providing a good early measure.

PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION

The overall functioning of our partnership (Alliance) will be evaluated using the New York Partnership Tool. The tool was designed to help partnerships understand how collaboration works and what it means to create a successful collaborative process; assess how well their collaborative process is working, and identify specific areas they can focus on to make their collaborative process work better. The tool measures the partnership's level of synergy and is particularly useful with partnerships that are at least six months old and have a minimum of five members.

In addition, we will map the connections between organisations before the work of the Alliance begins, during implementation of the Go Goldfields initiatives and at the conclusion of the funding period i.e. end of 2014.

Our partnership work and evaluation will be informed by the elements of partnering outlined by the Youth Partnerships Project for DEECD Loddon Mallee region. What we will aim to do is assess how effective we are in meeting the proven success factors in partnering. These factors include:

- Governance structure
- Common values
- Shared vision

- Systems and processes
- Resourcing
- Skill set
- Mapping and evaluating system readiness

COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Although there is no targeted funding in the *Go Goldfields Great Outcomes* funds to undertake a cost benefit analysis, we would like to further explore the financial costs and benefits of this work to some extent. This is yet to be scoped.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

We need to ensure the evaluation we undertake happens within available resources. Within the Go Goldfields Great Outcomes funding we have set aside \$28,862 of the budget for evaluation. This has been supplemented by a \$13,400 partnership evaluation grant from the Central Victorian Health Alliance and \$100,000 of the Australian Council for the Arts funding for evaluation of the Art Central Project. The latter will resource the involvement of RMIT to measure the collective impact of our work on the culture of the community.

REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

There is a wide audience of stakeholders who are interested in our place based approach. We are cognisant of the need to keep these stakeholders informed throughout the implementation period and of course with the results of how we've performed in achieving our stated outcomes. Our audience for regular reporting on the progress of our initiatives and the dissemination of evaluation findings includes:

- State Government
- Commonwealth Government
- Go Goldfields Steering Committee
- The Go Goldfields Alliance Executive (partnership group)
- The Go Goldfields Action Groups
- Best Start Stronger Families Executive Group
- Decision makers within selected organisations
- The community.

ALIGNMENT OF EVALUATION WITH REGIONAL GROWTH FUND (RGF) OBJECTIVES

Go Goldfields Great Outcomes has been funded through Regional Development Victoria (RDV). Although it should be noted that this work is not that generally funded by RDV, following is an alignment of the Go Goldfields Great Outcomes evaluation with the strategic actions identified against the RGF objectives.

The RGF objectives are:

1. To strengthen the economic base of regional Victoria
2. To facilitate the creation of jobs and improve career options in regional Victoria
3. To support the resilience and sustainability of communities in regional Victoria
4. To increase the capacity of regional communities to drive development within the region.

The Go Goldfields Great Outcome work will, in the long term, have the potential to impact on all of these areas. In the short term there is most close alignment with Objective 3.

The following DRAFT table outlines how this will be incorporated into the evaluation framework for Go Goldfields:

GO GOLDFIELDS STRATEGIC ACTION AREA MAPPING DRAFT

RELATED OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIC ACTION AREA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTION	KPM	KPM TYPE	DATA SOURCE
'To support the resilience and sustainability of communities in regional Victoria'	Increase secondary and higher education and participation and attainment for regional Victoria	Has Go Goldfields improved the connection of young people to education and training to achieve employment outcomes?	• Number of at risk students 2012 vs 2014	Direct	Maryborough Education Centre student profile data School enrolment and exam data DEEWR LGAS data showing non-participation rates and year 12 equivalent.
			• School attendance increase for target youth	Direct	
			• Change in number of students completing year 12	Direct	
			• Change in number of students completing VCAL	Direct	
			• Change in number of students undertaking and apprenticeship	Direct	
	• Change in number of students undertaking Cert 3	Direct			
	Strengthen partnerships to investigate need and better inform priorities	Has Go Goldfields developed, implemented and evaluated a partnership that will better inform place based development of community solutions against priorities?	• Number of programs supported incorporating partners	Indicative	New York partnership survey Partnership mapping of connections through Go Goldfields Alliance workshop.
			• Change in New York Partnership Assessment • Change in quality of connection for partners in areas impacting on children, youth and families	Direct Indicative	
	Increase community leadership and community input into decision making	Has Go Goldfields created a supportive environment and structures for community to be involved in decision making?	• Community information utilised in decision making of the Go Goldfields partnership and partners.	Indicative	Monitoring of theming for reflection on practice RMIT community survey and semi-structured interviews
• Increased leadership participation on community committees			Indicative		

CONCLUSION

Measuring change in a place based approach is challenging. Although challenging we believe that the place based approach offers a way of addressing community need where previous approaches have failed. We believe we have by no means arrived at the end of this journey, nor are we experts in the field, but we believe we are trying to tackle these issues in a meaningful and honest way.

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APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTION

DESIRED OUTCOMES	KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS		DATA COLLECTION PROCESS	DATA COLLECTION PARTICIPANTS (IF APPROPRIATE)
Reduction in child protection reporting and out of home care	Reported increase in connection to appropriate services for vulnerable families within the shire	Qualitative	Locally collected data: Face to face interviews of service providers and parents. Reported number of services accessed and reported impact of family connection to services and other supports	10 Parents were consulted in one on one interviews
Reduction in child protection reporting and out of home care	Reduction in children going into out of home care	Quant - statistics	DHS Collects data regionally	
Reduction in child protection reporting and out of home care	Families accessing paid respite are referred for ongoing support re parenting/other services	Quant	Face to face interviews or written surveys completed with early years service providers	8 EYSP's responded. One face to face interview, 7 via online survey
Reduction in child protection reporting and out of home care	Increased confidence and personal skills in parenting	Qual -	Interviews with parents and early years service providers	8 EYSP's responded. One face to face interview, 7 via online survey. 10 parents were interviewed face to face
Reduction in child protection reporting and out of home care	Improved interface between Regional Child Protection and local Service providers	Qual -	Reflection themes identification with GG family workers and other key stakeholders	8 EYSP's responded. One face to face interview, 7 via online survey. GG worker reflections captured
Increase in language and literacy and positive life experiences for children, youth and families	Level of participation of children, youth and families in Arts Central Activities	Quant - statistics	Attendance numbers at Art Central Events	
Increase in language and literacy and positive life experiences for children, youth and families	Community expectations re children language and literacy development are more in line with age appropriate norms	Qualitative -	Interviews with parents of children 0-5 years old	10 parents were interviewed face to face
Increase in language and literacy and positive life experiences for children, youth and families	Effective Speech Pathology approach developed and implemented	Quant - statistics	Change in the numbers of children requiring speech path intervention upon entering school	

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Increase in language and literacy and positive life experiences for children, youth and families	Prep teachers and Education Support Assistants (ESAs) report improved language readiness for literacy	Mixed - survey (survey monkey)	Locally collected data (including literacy profile) Assessment results for Prep. Assessments; Interviews with Prep teachers and ESAs - AusVELs results	
Increase in language and literacy and positive life experiences for children, youth and families	Early years service providers are implementing the training from the Aust Literacy Foundation as a measure of increased uniformity across the service system	Mixed. Qual - interview with early years service providers and DEECD Quality Manager. Quant number of service transition reports and meetings completed across the shire	Face to face interviews. Australian Literacy Foundation assessment results	17 ALNF trainees attended a focus group and/or responded to an online survey
Increase in capacity of early years service providers and carers in language and literacy development	Reading and language stimulation activities are embedded in practice	Mixed	Number of service providers who report an increase application of new language and literacy development activities	18 ALNF trainees attended a focus group and/or responded to an online survey. 8 EYSP's responded. One face to face interview, 7 via online survey
Increased community ownership of literacy across the Shire	Literacy activities embedded in library and early years settings	Quant -	Audit of attendance story time activities in library and early years settings	
Increase in parents' skills in developing their children's literacy	Parents report a positive change in reading, talking and playing with their children	Qual	Parents report increased use of nursery rhymes and talking and reading in interactions with children 0-5 with and analysis of mothers' versus fathers' involvement	10 parents were interviewed face to face
Increased pre-literacy skills on prep entry	Overall increase in reading levels amongst prep children in the Shire	Quant data from all primary schools in the shire	%age of children achieving a minimum of level 5 reading by the end of Prep year	All primary schools provided data
Increased social connection for children, youth and families	Increased meaningful and positive community connection for children	Qualitative evaluation	Semi-structured interviews/ Most Significant change arts, Community leaders, BSSF exec, EYSP	8 Community Leaders
Increased social connection for children, youth and families	Increased meaningful and positive community connection for youth	Qualitative Evaluation	Semi-structured interviews/ Most Significant change arts, Community leaders, Youth service forum	8 Community Leaders

Increased social connection for children, youth and families	Increased meaningful and positive community connection for families	Mixed	Number of groups such as mother's groups, breast feeding groups being led by the community. Face to face and phone interview with key informants re most significant change in family (social connections via photo narrative) by snowball sample up to 10 people)	8 Community Leaders
Increased social connection for children, youth and families	Increased social, economic and civic participation	Qualitative	Semi structured interviews/ social network analysis arts, young and emerging leaders	8 Community Leaders
Increased connection to education and training to achieve employment outcomes	A decrease in unexplained absences for Year 5 and 6 students at MEC	Quant	Number of absences MEC year 5 students	
Increased connection to education and training to achieve employment outcomes	Increased engagement with parents in education and/or the school	Qual	Accessing information from Student Management tool - Parent Opinion Survey	
Increased connection to education and training to achieve employment outcomes	MEC staff and families report an increase in the number of positive interactions over contentious issues	Qual	Face to face interviews with staff and 'at risk' families	
Increased connection to education and training to achieve employment outcomes	Increased community conversations re the importance of school attendance and the value of education	Qual	Interviews with the Mayor and significant other community leaders	8 Community leaders were interviewed face to face
Increased community engagement in desired outcomes	Increased engagement of service providers and community members in parenting, children's language and literacy development and education and social connection	Qual	Interview with stakeholders. EYSP, Community leaders, parents, youth services	8 Community leaders were interviewed face to face. 10 parents were interviewed face to face. 8 EYSP's responded. One face to face interview, 7 via online survey
Community Arts embedded in GG work with children, youth and families	Community Arts seen as integral to GG work with children, youth and families	Qual	Interview with service providers	8 Community leaders were interviewed face to face. 10 parents were interviewed face to face. 8 EYSP's responded. One face to face interview, 7 via online survey

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That the development and implementation of shire wide strategies for children, youth and families was an effective tool to achieve outcomes	Shire wide strategies developed and substantially implemented for children and families (communication development, literacy development, stronger families), youth connection to education and training and family violence	Qual	Interview action group chairs. Review of documentation against strategies and Informative case study vignette. Evaluation Working Group	3 action group chairs responded via online survey
That the partnership processes and structures facilitated achievement of desired community outcomes	Organisations demonstrate and readiness for change that is reflected in practice	Qual	GG Alliance and Action Group members complete NY Partnership Tool Organisational readiness reflection captures annually. Survey Monkey To complete Wilder Collaboration tool and repeat NY tool	7 Go Goldfields Alliance members responded via online survey
That governance structures and processes supported the achievement of desired community outcomes	Governance structures and processes align with desired community outcomes	Qual	Interviews chairs of action group and chair of Go Goldfields Alliance	7 Go Goldfields Alliance members responded via online survey
That community leadership is engaged in the desired community outcomes	Formal and informal community leaders/ champions are reported to have had positive impacts on the progression of the work	Qual	Interviews GG staff and community leaders and	4 Go Goldfields staff were interviewed face to face. 10 community leaders were interviewed face to face
That community leadership is engaged in the desired community outcomes	Increased Community leadership engagement in children's language, literacy, parenting, family violence prevention and or youth connection to education and training	Mixed	Number of identified community leaders aligned with desired outcomes. Number of community leaders having participated in targeted leadership events and groups relating to Go Goldfields. Interviews with community leaders reflecting on most significant change	7 Go Goldfields Alliance members were interviewed via online survey. 10 community leaders were interviewed face to face
That community leadership is engaged in the desired community outcomes	Increased engagement of service leaders in children, youth and family outcomes	Mixed	Number of organisations with GG priorities articulated in strategic plans. Number of CEOs reporting impact of GG on strategic or operational directions within their organisation. Interviews with community leaders reflecting on most significant change	7 Go Goldfields Alliance members were interviewed via online survey

That community leadership is engaged in the desired community outcomes	That state government department representatives report that GG has had an impact on resource utilisation/allocation	Qual	Interviews with GG Steering Committee Members	
That there was strong alignment of GG desired community outcomes and positions funded	Staffing profiles reported to align with delivery against shire wide plans to deliver desired community outcomes	Qual	Interviews with Organisational leaders. Review of the GG staffing profile and reported changes in organisations' staffing to deliver on shire wide approaches	7 Go Goldfields Alliance members were interviewed via online survey
That the GG flexible, place based funding model delivered on desired community outcomes	Flexible place based funding evidenced to influences cultural change and/or achieve desired community outcomes	Qual	Interviews with Go Goldfields Alliance, organisational leaders on the impact of the funding model on the ability to deliver on shire wide approaches	7 Go Goldfields Alliance members were interviewed via online survey





ART CENTRAL 2014 OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

Art Central is a three-year cultural development project based in the Central Goldfields Shire beginning in January 2013. 2014 marks the second year of the project, where a focus on collaborative works with the community has driven the project vision and direction for the year. The Art Central artistic team includes a sculptor, a text artist and a visual artist. An essential component of the three-year Art Central project proposal, a large-scale public performance by and with the community was intended to be the main project event for 2014. However, the loss of the theatre director from the Art Central artistic team in 2013 meant that this event would not occur. In its place, Art Central drew inspiration from over-arching theme of dichotomies and opposites, where Art Central's artistic vision for 2014 explores the notions of TRUTH/LIES, FACT/FICTION and REALITY/FANTASY.

2014 ART CENTRAL VISION

COLLABORATE / PUBLIC / INCLUSIVE

INVENTION: Making things up

FABRICATION: Making things

PRESENTATION: Showing things off

This theme has informed much of the work developed in partnership with local schools, organisations and members of the Central Goldfields community. These works will culminate in a large scale, multi-sited public project featuring artistic works and creations made in collaboration with the community also known as the Museum of Truth and Lies (MoTAL). The museum showcased creative works produced by the community with the Art Central team, and has contributed to the Go Goldfields outcomes: increasing social connectedness, facilitating processes & partnerships, engaging youth & employment and improving language & literacy. In a nutshell, Art Central activities in 2014 continued via workshop series with various community members and organisations, some which is a continuation of 2013 engagement, others are new engagements, but all works created catered to the year's theme and led towards the pièce de résistance which was MoTAL.

THE ART SHOP

Art Central's core workshop program: *'IMAGINE. PLAY. CREATE'* continued throughout the year. In 2014, 172 High Street, also known as the Art Shop, continues to function as the project's operational base. Throughout 2013, regular workshops and programs were offered at the Art Shop. The project team maintained a dynamic process the workshop programming towards building on the theme of year - trialling ideas, reviewing and adapting creative programs in response to community needs and interest. Some of these workshops, such as the *Art on Demand* workshops were sustained as part of the project program. These workshops aim to build skills and community capacity, while at the same time generating creations and exhibitions for the MoTAL.

For many in the community, the Art Shop has become a focal point for arts and cultural activity in the Shire. The numbers of people visiting the shop includes returning locals and new visitors. The local community as well as visitors drop into the shop mainly to see what's going on, to say hello and engage socially with the artistic team or with one another in various capacities. Numbers of returning locals as well as visitors continue to grow. A total of 250 visitors were reported in 2014. While the presence of the shop has provided a comfortable home base and working space for many in the community, a cost-benefit analysis found that the cost of staffing and maintaining the shop far outweighs its benefits. These observations will be considered in 2015 project planning.

ART ON DEMAND

Art on Demand workshops are available on request with content being tailored to suit the needs and/or interests of participants. These are specifically targeted at organisations and community groups seeking a more supported initial engagement with Art Central. The *Art on Demand* workshops were popular in 2013, and continued on in 2014, as a way to foster community and individual connections and while presenting potential for further artistic collaborations.

TABLE 1: SOME OF THE PARTICIPATING GROUPS FOR THE ART ON DEMAND WORKSHOPS

GROUP NAME	ACTIVITY	NUMBER	CATEGORY
Zonta		6	Process/Partnership - Women's empowerment
St Luke's	Literacy collaboration Book Box painting Naidoc week painting	6 6 6	Social Connection - Mental Health
Kinder gym	Designing and screen-print T-shirts	37	Social Connection - Parents and children
Rotary	Trophy creation for MoTAL	30	Social Connection - Community
Mothers of pre-schoolers (MOPS)	Flying creatures for a	16	Social Connection - Parents and children
Shutterbugs	Postcard stand making, event management and launch planning, trophy making	6	Process/Partnership - Community photography group
Carisbrook Play Group		25	Social Connection - Parents and children

MUSEUM OF TRUTH AND LIES (MoTAL)

MoTAL was officially launched in the Central Goldfields Shire as part of the annual Spring Fling festival in October 2014. The launch was officiated by Councilor Geoff Lovett on Saturday 11 October 2014 at the Maryborough Railway Station. The opening gala ceremony was attended by almost 200 people, featuring performances by the Maryborough and District Pipe Band, local musicians, roving performers and speeches. The Museum installation and entertainment program were held at two locations: the iconic the Maryborough Railway Station and Dunolly Courthouse. Between its opening period of 11 October and 23 November, the museum has recorded over 667 visitors. Over 70 visitors have participated in tours of the museum including residents of Asteria disability services, Girl Guides and senior citizens from Havilah Aged Care. Approximately 40 visitors attended the *Sunday Soapbox* series, which offers a program of local choirs, musicians and poets opportunities to perform in the museum.

The Museum consists of about twenty exhibitions of objects made by approximately 300 artists and community members in Central Goldfields Shire. As you wander around the museum, a wonderful soundscape of stories and music recorded by sound artist Rose Turtle Ertler (who has recorded stories and sound bites with over 100 people) echoes throughout. The recordings were used for the *Light Night Out* projections, flight sounds for the *Flying Gallery* and *Just Pullin' Ya Leg* stories. *Just Pullin' Ya Leg* features a room of painted legs hanging from the ceiling. Pull a leg and hear a joke, a silly noise or a tall tale. *Box Dog*, also known as *Dog Ate My Homework*, is a giant puppy made of 400 cardboard boxes painted with words and images in black, white and grey – some are truths, others are lies and some are in the 'grey' area – open for interpretation. The *Golden* exhibition showcases precious objects donated and gilded by senior citizens, and the *Trophy Gallery* is a collection of D.I.Y. trophies for everything from the *Award for the Best Multitasking Mum* to *The Longest Two Minute Speech*. There's also the *Flying Gallery*, *Salon de Faux*, *Alter Egos* portraits, a mask collection, and individual artworks inspired by the theme.



TABLE 2: LIST OF GALLERIES IN THE MUSEUM OF TRUTH AND LIES

Alter Egos	People from the Shire reveal their 'other selves', a secret self, an imagined self, and inner self.
Archaeological Artefacts	Discovered 'objects out of time' with stories attached.
Box Dog (Dog ate my homework)	A giant puppy made of 400 cardboard boxes painted with words and images in black, white and grey.
Golden	Precious objects gilded.
Around the World in 80 years	Teaspoons and travel stories.
Flying Gallery	An 'in the air' exhibition of fish, pigs and donuts featuring sounds and snippets of flight.
Found Footage	A pineapple express story and video production by students of M.E.C. Beckworth.
Dig	Tribute to the region's history – from gold diggers to current gardeners.
In our Garden	A mural painted by students of M.E.C. Beckworth.
Just Pullin' Ya Leg	Paper mache legs suspended on the ceiling, which offers a joke or a sly dig when pulled.
PACT	Artwork which challenges negative assumptions, stereotypes and show the impact of these attitudes by families dealing with Child Protection.
Post	A collection of postcards and mailboxes where you can post your gripes, groans and grins.
Salon de Faux	Master painters and artists' work come to Maryborough, with a twist.
Light Night Out	Light projections on four Shire iconic buildings with soundscape by Rose Turtle Ertler.
Local Identities	Colourful community characters personified.
MASKS	A collection of ethnographic masks made by the community in workshops.
Trophy Wall	D.I.Y. trophies for various strange and funny categories.
The Truth	A painting of many parts by people in Asteria personifying Truth.
Where does Truth Lie?	Questions posed and answers displayed on a continuous scrolling LED display.

LIGHT NIGHT OUT

Light Night Out is a Video Architecture project led by a Castlemaine based video artist and filmmaker. It features images produced and sounds recorded by and with the community, projected onto iconic buildings across the Central Goldfields. The projections were set to a soundscape of community interviews and stories that come from Rose Turtle Ertler's interviews at Art Central, in community settings and music played on the Art Central *Play Me.Piano.* installation. *Light Night Out* is part of Jim's current project, Video Architecture, which involves collaboration with artists and community to develop large scale video projection installation works that focus on the use of psychical arts media such as painting, drawing and movement. The filmmaker visited schools in the Shire, introduced the concept of video architecture and created a colouring-in template of significant buildings which local school children coloured in. A colouring competition was advertised via newspaper media all across the Shire to encourage submissions and engagement with the community. Although the competition did not receive many entries it contributed to the event excitement and publicity.

Entries received and drawings by the students were then projected onto historical and significant buildings across the Shire. All *Light Night Out* events were broadcast live on Goldfields FM 99.1. The events across the Shire were attended by almost 420 spectators.

TABLE 3: LIGHT NIGHT OUT SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE

VENUE	DATE & TIME	ATTENDANCE
Maryborough Railway Station	11 October, 8pm onwards	200
Carisbrook Town Hall	24 October, 8-9pm	100
Talbot Market Square, Scandinavian Crescent	25 October, 8-9.30pm	50
Dunolly Courthouse	31 October, 8-9pm	70

Media coverage for the Museum includes newspaper advertising and radio interviews with ABC Radio Bendigo, ABC Radio Ballarat, Goldfields FM, Voice FM, Castlemaine Community Radio, Maryborough Advertiser, Bendigo Advertiser, ABC Online, the Sydney Morning Herald Sun, and community newspapers such as The Welcome Record. While efforts were taken to use available media tools to advertise and publicise the event, it was not as effective as could have been. The local papers are not widely read by the community, and advertising in the regional and state newspapers were submitted too late, after the museum has opened. The artistic team also observed that newspaper advertising for Art Central workshops and weekly programs did not add to the numbers of visitors and participants. Furthermore, the team also found that advertising has not capitalised on the potential of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to capture younger and tech-savvy audiences. However, the museum opening gala was video recorded and made available on YouTube as well as several media outlets via ABC online.

Feedback and reactions to MoTAL and *Light Night Out* events has been positive. The projection show drew crowds out into the streets at night, both young and old, transforming the townscape. As a local resident said on the Museum's opening night, "It's magical. I didn't think this could happen in Maryborough."

GO GOLDFIELDS AND ART CENTRAL

Art Central's artistic program is embedded into Go Goldfields to improve outcomes in community health, social connectedness, literacy and numeracy, training, communication and life experiences. Throughout 2014, Art Central community collaborations and activities occurred across the following four categories:

1. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

In 2014, Art Central work in language and literacy continues predominantly through the regular workshops and via the *Art on Demand* series, as well as works created for MoTaL. The works produced has culminated in a marriage of story telling, text and words with visual arts. They include:

The Ragbook Project

A regular group of parents and carers attended workshops with their young children in 2013 to make and screen-print T-shirts for children. They have since established a good working relationship with the Art Central team as well as with one another, becoming a very self-organised group. The Ragbook project is a screen-printed book made by this group with text developed with berni featuring images from the parents and their toddlers. Parents learnt screen-printing skills and completed producing the book themselves. Parents can then read the *Ragbook* with and to their children. The skills acquired by the group were instrumental to the start of several other projects i.e. *The Resource Book/Test Kitchen* as momentum and interest built. Whilst there is a regular group of attendees, usually between three to ten participants who are active in promoting to other parents, numbers attending have not grown.

The Art Resource Book/Test Kitchen

The philosophy behind the idea for *The Art Resource Book* is to provide arts activities and games for parents and children to bond and connect with one another, which can be duplicated at home with minimal resources. The book is aimed for parents with children aged between 0–5 years, including extension ideas for 5–8 years old. It subscribes to the theory that parents who spend time playing, reading and reading to their children increases numeracy and literacy skills in young children. This project was led by the Art Central text artist, who worked with a group of dedicated parents, Parents and Children Together (PACT) group from St Luke's as well as parents from Maryborough Community House. PACT is a support group for families dealing with child protection services. The book project begun with an initial think-tank group including parents who brainstormed and developed an overall structure for the book. The think-tank came up with a list of ideas to be tried and tested. A weekly '*Test Kitchen*' commenced where community members along with parents tried, tested and perfected recipes and games for the book. A total of 117 people participated in the *Test Kitchen* sessions and contributed to recipes, games and finessed ideas and arts activities. Some of the content of the book includes costume-making techniques and making D.I.Y. playdough, The first draft of the book has been compiled and circulated to all involved for further input, feedback. Further editing and production of the book is expected to be ready for distribution by early 2015.

Story Op Shop

The *Story Op Shop* was developed with the Maryborough Co-ordinator for Words in Winter, a Central Victorian festival of the word, held annually in August. It is an installation dedicated to collecting, passing on and sharing stories to the theme "Words on the Wild Side", collected in various formats including a vintage ribbon typewriter. The installation and collection of stories are exhibited in the Art Shop.

2. SOCIAL CONNECTION

Art Central continues its working engagement with Asteria services and St Luke's. Both service providers represent some of the most vulnerable and disengaged community members.

Asteria Services, a local disability services provider, began its involvement with Art Central through an Art on Demand session in July 2013. In 2014, Art Central continued its working relationship with Asteria Services. The workshops usually consist of five members accompanied by one support worker. The group attended Art Central workshops on a weekly basis and participate in visual arts and text activities, creating a range of text and visual arts works for MoTAL.

St Luke's Anglicare provides mental health and family care support such as PACT. Art Central first engaged with PACT in 2013. PACT represents Parents and Children with Together, where families are living with the threat of child protection services. In 2014, the group attended eight *Art on Demand* sessions to create a visual painting for the Family Inclusion Network Launch. The painting was inspired to challenge the negative assumptions and stereotypes of a family facing child protection. It shows the impacts of such negativity on the parents and child in contrast to kindness, compassion and support. Other projects include a literacy collaboration where 6 participants painted book boxes.



In 2013, Art Central first made connection with the Maryborough Community House (MCH) at a community consultation session. Maryborough Community House is situated in East Maryborough, one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Shire. The House promotes a sense of belonging, community spirit and aims to reduce social isolation within the community. Since then, further talks and engagement between MCH and the Art Central team has led to what is called the *Shipping Container* project. It is the design and painting of an old shipping container used for storage with local community members with Art Central artists. The artists held painting workshops at the House to plan the design and colours for the shipping container.

Play Me. Piano. is a piano placed outside of the Art Central Shop during its opening hours. The Piano is a simple way to keep the arts visible and accessible to the community. It was a huge success as entry into the Art Shop was not required, and the open door policy of the musical instrument meant that lots of people, including children and senior citizens, regularly stop to have tinkle or play. On several occasions community singing at the piano has occurred. The visibility and ease of the piano has helped draw people into the shop and become a landmark. In the past it has been observed that while the presence of the Art Shop on High Street in Maryborough has reaped much benefit to the project, there was still a slight hesitation for many community members to enter its doors. The presence of piano provided a people wandering along High Street a safe and non-intimidating approach as well as an opportunity to participate in the project. The Sound artist recorded sounds and stories at the piano with over 100 community members, which contributed to the soundscapes at MoTAL.

The Shutterbugs photography group came to Art Central to prepare for the launch of their postcards. The group originally formed as part of a Neighbourhood Renewal project in East Maryborough with a professional photographer. The group organised two exhibitions in 2011, and has since decided to continue going and become a growing group. They booked an *Art on Demand* session to create postcard stands, which were then distributed in various locations. They were also provided with event management assistance, such as how to structure a running order and plan a launch. They worked with the artists to hang large versions of each postcard in the Art shop and attended a trophy-making workshop.

3. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

In 2013, a collaborative painting project with the Youth Space in Maryborough was forged, however this relationship did not continue later on in the year nor did it blossom again in 2014. Youth-based works by Art Central mainly focused on a strong relationship and collaboration with the local schools in the Shire. A workshop session created specifically for young people not at school via referrals from the Shire Youth Workers, although attendance did fluctuate in numbers. Throughout the year there were 6 regular attendees. This group came together to make art installations for MoTAL.

Youth Art workshop sessions were also facilitated with students from VCAL classes via the Goldfields Employment and Learning Centre as well as Federation University. A total of 22 students attended the introductory session, and were encouraged to return independently and regularly on Friday afternoons to make art for the museum.

A video artist and filmmaker engaged with all the schools in the Shire via a colouring-in competition for the *Light Night Out* installation. The artist visited schools in the Shire, introduced the concept of video architecture and created a colouring-in template of significant buildings which local school children coloured in. A colouring competition was advertised via newspaper media all across the Shire to encourage submissions and engagement with the community. Although the competition did not receive many entries it contributed to the event excitement and publicity. The artist also engaged students to help with the setup of projection equipment at the events.

In 2014, Art Central continued its working relationship with the schools in the Shire. The following activities occurred:

- Professional Development and Information sessions for teachers.
- Dunolly Primary School – art workshops facilitated at the school.
- Timor Primary School – students from grades 3 & 4 came to Art Central to make portraits for *Alter Egos*, legs for *Just Pullin' Ya Leg* and flying things for *Flying Gallery* and record stories for the museum.
- Bealiba Primary School – students made a trip to the Art Central Studio in Maryborough to create art for the museum.
- M.E.C Beckworth students participated in the *Yard Project* led by Geoff Bonney to beautify the outdoor area around the Beckworth campus block by creating panels for the entranceway. Students also wrote a story presented in a video footage called *Found Footage* for the museum. *Found Footage* is one of the twenty galleries presented at MoTAL.

Overall, engagement with youth and employment in 2014 concentrated mostly with the schools in the Shire. This is due to the strong working relationship and commitment to participate by teachers and principals to Art Central activities. Engaging and retaining interest with the youth community has not been as easy, although the artistic team hopes that the excitement of visual arts and technology displayed at *Light Night Out* will encourage more youth involvement in the project in 2015.

4. PROCESS/PARTNERSHIP

In 2013, through the Go Goldfields Alliance partners, Art Central has successfully engaged with community groups and members from across the education, health, business, arts and community services industries. Most of the successful engagements were maintained in the following year.

Community leadership group

The community leadership group (clg) continues to be involved with the project, although membership of the group has fluctuated over the year. The current membership of the community leadership group includes:

- Bradley Saul (Community),
- David Sutton (MEC),
- Fay White (Community),
- Fiona Lindsay (Community),
- Martin Mark (CGSC),
- Nicole Fornal (St Luke's),
- Cllr Paula Nixon (CGSC),
- Peter McAllister (True Foods),
- Matt Broad (Go Goldfields, Youth School/Community Facilitator).

Member attendance to meetings has been sporadic, mainly due to time constraints as most members are also actively involved in other aspects in the community. In 2014, the role and contribution of the clg continues on although direction and responsibilities of the group remains transient and mainly committed to strengthening local connection to and participation into the arts.



In 2014, Art Central made new creative partnerships with several groups in the community. New community groups and creative partnerships forged in 2014 include:

- Zonta
- Maryborough Community House
- Rotary Club
- Shutterbugs

Processes towards a sustainable art practice

Some of these community groups first engaged with the project following an invitation to attend series of community consultation sessions called *Food for Thought* late 2013. As a result, Art Central has successfully forged connections with these groups, which has since been involved with museum artistic works as well as open new doors to community members who have yet to participate in any Art Central activities. An example is a partnership with Rotary Club, which involved the project team with senior citizens from the Shire who then participated in a gilding workshop contributing objects for the *Golden* gallery in the MoTAL. The project team observed a positive progress during the *Food for Thought* sessions. It is a shift in what may be described as more definitive formation of ideas and purposeful direction desired for Art Central activities compared to earlier in the year.

Following the success of past community consultation and engagement workshops, Art Central hosted an *Introduction of MoTAL* workshop for organizations and community members to gather ideas for the museum event at the end of year. Another workshop session was held for Shire Councillors titled "*What do we want the legacy of Art Central to be?*". This was definitely the mood and theme for 2014. In the second half of the year, the research team observed conversations hinting towards "future of Art Central." A member of the clg has since raised questions on how the positive outcomes from the project might be sustained in the community long after Art Central project funding has ceased. As we know, one of the greatest challenges to sustaining cultural development is to grow beyond a 'State of Local Government' funding' model in order for the community to continually benefit from a current project. This is a promising and an indication of a change in leadership and community mindset on matters of how arts and cultural funding should be managed within the community. This development has since led to a plan to make participatory arts practice a sustainable and on-going part of life in the Shire. An informal sub-committee of 'Sustainability of community arts' has been established, and a person employed to advance this conversation. Another person was employed in late 2014 to investigate and make recommendations for a sustainable structure for advancing community arts can be rolled out in the Shire.

The mentorship programme

One of the key sustainability strategies identified in Art Central project planning was a mentorship programme. In the very early stages of the development of this project, a group of local artists (writers, musicians, visual artists) had been identified in the Shire. The initial concept for the mentorship programme was based on the notion that there was a pool of available local professional artists who needed to develop skills in community-based practice, which the project could engage in and draw upon. While these local artists do exist in Shire, as project work commences into its second year, they have not demonstrated an interest to be involved in the project. Hence, the idea of a mentorship programme and the way that they are structured are a constant work in progress.

Formal and informal mentorship programmes commenced in 2014. Informal mentoring has occurred through:

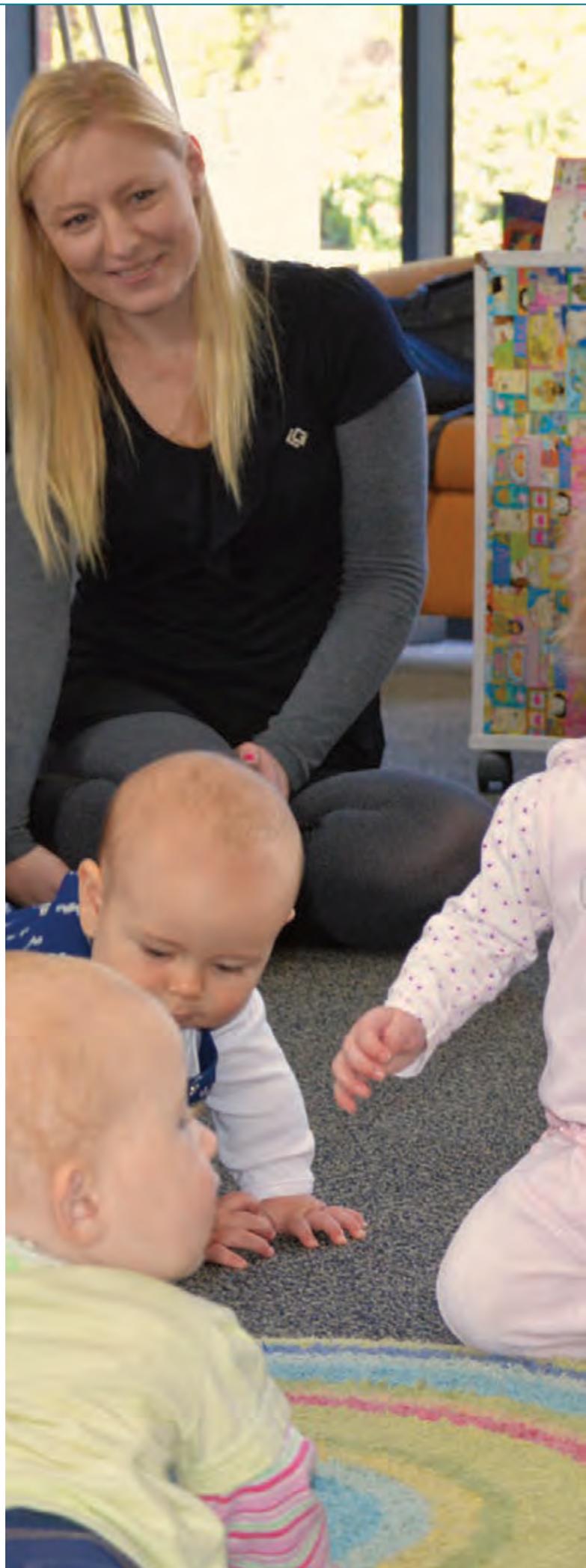
- Planning and implementing workshops and projects with individuals, groups and organisations, especially for *Art On Demand* and community collaboration workshops.
- Several local artists volunteer in the Art Shop workshops as assistants.
- Ongoing work with local artists to develop work for MoTAL. This includes regular meetings to plan, discuss and reviewing the work.

A workshop introducing a formal mentorship for community-based arts practice was held mid 2014. Only four people attended the session. Subsequently, two paid mentorship positions were advertised via the Council website. Whilst there were a number of people who registered their interest and applied for the roles, they were from outside of the Shire. The position required candidates to be residents of the Shire. Hence, only two candidates from the Shire applied for the role. Interviews took place and two mentees were employed - a practicing visual artist and an emerging writer.

Observations and lessons from the formal mentorship programme revealed that it was not neither fitting nor satisfactory for all parties involved. Conversations and feedback confirmed that in order for the mentor-mentee relationship to be most valuable, the mentee requires an existing solid arts practice, with some experience in, and understanding of community-based practice. If the gap in knowledge and experience is too great, Art Central artists do not have the resources mostly time, to commit to passing on the required knowledge.

Challenges in 2014

2014 has been a challenging year for the Art Central team. Some of the challenges came in the form of staffing changes. One main contribution was the absence of the Art Central Manager, who was on sick leave for many months in the first half of the year, before resigning in the middle of 2014. Her absence had negative impacts on the progress and running of the project had. As the artists were only working a 12-hour week each, the loss of an administrative component in the project team stretched the limited weekly hours the rest of the artistic team had. This meant that most of the administrative work required had to be juggled by the artists in their already tight schedules. An interim Project Manager was employed 2 days a week to assist the team with administrative work. In addition to the already stretched workloads and schedules, the text artist was away on sick leave for two months. This has slowed down the work in the community on the text based aspects of the project. The artist returned to work in time to successful complete works required before the launch of the museum in October.





Partnership Self-assessment Tool January 2015

Partnership report for: Go Goldfields Dec 2014

Report prepared by: Emma Shannon, CVPCP

Report adapted from the *CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES IN HEALTH*

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PARTNERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool gives partnerships an easy way to find out how well the collaborative process is working.

1. The Tool measures a **key indicator of a successful collaborative process** - the partnership's level of **synergy**.
2. The Tool also provides information that helps partnerships **take action to improve the collaborative process**.
 - a) It identifies the partnership's strengths and weaknesses in areas that are known to be related to synergy - **leadership, efficiency, administration and management, and sufficiency of resources**.
 - b) It also measures partners' perspectives about the partnership's **decision making process, the benefits and drawbacks** they experience as a result of participating in the partnership, and their **overall satisfaction** with the partnership.

SUMMARY

PARTICIPATION: Your partnership's response rate was **70%**

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE OR %	ZONE COMMENTS
SYNERGY	3.4	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential
LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS	3.4	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential
EFFICIENCY	3.2	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential
ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT	3.6	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential
NON-FINANCIAL RESOURCES	3.9	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential
FINANCIAL & OTHER CAPITAL	3.6	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

HOW TO USE THE INFORMATION IN THIS ASSESSMENT REPORT

This action-oriented report has five sections.

1. **Your Partnership's Respondents and Response Rate:**
Keys to interpreting this report
2. **Your Partnership's Synergy Score:** An important indicator of the success of your collaborative process
3. **Your Partnership's Strengths and Weaknesses in** areas that are known to be related to **Synergy**
 - a) The effectiveness of your partnership's **Leadership**
 - b) The **Efficiency** of your partnership
 - c) The effectiveness of your partnership's **Administration and Management**
 - d) The sufficiency of your partnership's **Resources:**
 - i) *Non-Financial Resources;*
 - ii) *Financial & other Capital Resources*
4. **Your Partners' Views about their own Participation in the Partnership**
 - a) How your respondents view the partnership's **Decision-Making** process
 - b) How your respondents view the **Benefits** and **Drawbacks** of participation
 - c) How **Satisfied** your respondents are with their participation in the partnership
5. **Conclusion:** How to use the information in this assessment report

MEAN RATINGS (WEIGHTED SCORE)	
1.0-2.9	Danger Zone: this area needs a lot of improvement
3.0-3.9	Work Zone: more effort is needed in this area to maximize the partnership's collaborative potential
4.0-4.5	Headway Zone: your partnership is doing pretty well in this area but has potential to progress even further
4.5-5.0	Target Zone: your partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining a high score

1. PARTICIPATION - RESPONDENTS AND RESPONSE RATE

In your partnership:

10 people were asked to complete the questionnaire
7 people completed the questionnaire

Your partnership's response rate is therefore: **70%**

2. SYNERGY - INDICATOR OF THE SUCCESS OF YOUR COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool assesses the success of a partnership's collaborative process by measuring its level of synergy. Synergy is a key indicator of a successful collaborative process because it reflects the extent to which the partnership can do more than any of its individual participants. Put another way, a partnership's level of synergy indicates the extent to which the partnership, as a whole, is greater than the sum of its parts.

A partnership's collaborative process achieves high levels of synergy by combining the different kinds of knowledge, skills, and resources of its participants. It is this combining power that enables the diverse people and organizations in a partnership to accomplish more than any of them can on their own. When a partnership's collaborative process achieves high levels of synergy, the partnership becomes stronger in three ways.

- 1) The partnership is able to come up with new and better ways of thinking about problems and solutions. By combining their different kinds of knowledge and perspectives, the participants in a synergistic partnership are able to:
 - break new ground, challenge the "accepted wisdom," and discover innovative solutions to problems;
 - see the "big picture" (i.e., understand how different kinds of services, programs, and sectors in the community relate to each other and to the problems the partnership is trying to address);
 - understand their local environment and determine which strategies are most likely to work in that environment.
- 2) The partnership is able to take actions that go beyond what any participant could do alone. By combining their complementary knowledge, skills, and resources, the participants in a synergistic partnership are able to:
 - attack a problem from multiple vantage points simultaneously;
 - carry out comprehensive interventions that connect multiple services, programs, and sectors;
 - coordinate services in the community (i.e., fill gaps in services, improve accessibility of services, reduce duplication of services, and/or provide services more effectively or economically).

- 3) The partnership is able to strengthen its relationship with the broader community. By working together, the participants in a synergistic partnership are able to:
- incorporate the perspectives and priorities of community stakeholders, including the community residents and organizations most affected by its work
 - focus on problems that are important to people in the community
 - communicate how the partnership's actions will address community problems
 - obtain the support of individuals, agencies, and institutions in the community that have the power to block its plans or move them forward.

When a partnership's collaborative process is not achieving high levels of synergy, the partnership is not realizing the full potential of collaboration to strengthen thinking, action, and relations with the broader community. In fact, such a partnership doesn't have much of an advantage over what individual people or organizations can do by themselves. In this kind of situation, partners may be justified in wondering whether the time and effort involved in participating in the partnership is really worthwhile.

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, synergy is measured by a set of 9 questions. Your partnership's overall synergy score is the mean of all of your respondents' answers to all 9 of these questions. It reflects the extent to which the participants in your partnership are accomplishing more together than they can on their own.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S OVERALL SYNERGY SCORE

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE	ZONE COMMENTS
SYNERGY	3.4	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

The table below shows how your partnership scored on each of the **9 questions** that make up the overall **synergy scale**. This table, which is more detailed than the overall synergy score, reflects the particular ways that the participants in your partnership are doing more together than they can on their own. The 9 questions each represent an attribute of synergy.

SYNERGY SCALE

HOW WELL, BY WORKING TOGETHER, THE PARTICIPANTS IN YOUR PARTNERSHIP ARE ABLE TO:	PARTNERSHIP MEAN
Identify new and creative ways to solve problems	3.4
Include the views and priorities of the people affected by the partnership's work	3.1
Develop goals that are widely understood and supported among partners	3.3
Identify how different services and programs in the community relate to the problems the partnership is trying to address	3.1
Respond to the needs and problems of the community	3.9
Implement strategies that are most likely to work in the community	3.6
Obtain support from individuals and organizations in the community that can either block the partnership's plans or help move them forward	3.6
Carry out comprehensive activities that connect multiple services, programs, or systems	3.4
Clearly communicate to people in the community how the partnership's actions will address problems that are important to them	2.9

Synergy is very difficult to achieve, so celebrate your partnership's strengths in this area. If your overall synergy score is high, communicate this important accomplishment to partners, funders, and members of the broader community. Because the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool gives your partnership a way to measure synergy, you can now document a critical outcome of the collaborative process that was previously invisible.

ACTION: To improve your partnership's synergy level, discuss what synergy means with the other members of your partnership, paying particular attention to the attributes of synergy in which your partnership is weakest (i.e., those with the lowest scores at the bottom of the table).

The rest of this report will tell you what your partnership can focus on to make those scores higher.

3. YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN AREAS THAT ARE KNOWN TO BE RELATED TO SYNERGY

The Center's National Study of Partnership Functioning¹⁴ identified four factors that are related to a partnership's ability to achieve high levels of synergy:

- the effectiveness of the partnership's leadership
- the efficiency of the partnership
- the effectiveness of the partnership's administration and management
- the sufficiency of the partnership's resources

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool measured your partnership's strengths and weaknesses in these areas. With this information, your partnership can readily identify what it is doing well and what it needs to focus on to improve the success of its collaborative process.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S LEADERSHIP

The National Study of Partnership Functioning showed that leadership is the most important factor related to partnership synergy. The kind of leadership that partnerships need to achieve a high level of synergy is *special* — **leadership that can promote productive interactions among diverse people and organizations.**

Partnerships that are effective in doing this often involve a number of people in the provision of leadership, in both formal and informal capacities. Together, these leaders help a partnership make the most of collaboration by playing the following roles:

- The leadership **inspires and motivates the people involved in a partnership** by articulating what the partners can accomplish together and how their joint work will benefit not only the community, but also each of them individually.
- The leadership **empowers partners**, helping them to articulate and communicate their own collective vision (rather than imposing the vision of the leader(s) on them).
- The leadership runs a collaborative process that **enables different kinds of participants to talk to, learn from, and work with each other.** To make this happen, leaders help participants develop a commonly understood, jargon-free language. They create an environment in which differences of opinion can be voiced. They foster respect, trust, inclusiveness, and openness in the partnership. They successfully manage, rather than avoid, conflict among partners.
- The leadership **helps participants do more together than they can on their own** by stimulating them to be creative and look at things differently, by relating and synthesizing their different ideas, and by finding effective ways to combine their complementary skills and resources.

- The leadership **reaches out to and recruits diverse people and organizations**, providing the partnership with the additional perspectives, skills, and resources that it needs.

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, the effectiveness of a partnership's leadership is measured by a set of 11 questions. Your partnership's overall score for leadership effectiveness is the mean of all of your respondents' answers to all of these questions.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S OVERALL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE	ZONE COMMENTS
LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS	3.4	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

The table below shows how your partnership scored on each of the **11 questions** that make up the **leadership effectiveness scale**. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score. The 11 questions each represent an attribute of effective leadership.

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES:	PARTNERSHIP MEAN
Taking responsibility for the partnership	3.7
Inspiring and motivating people in the partnership	3.7
Empowering the people in the partnership	3
Communicating the vision of the partnership	3.3
Working to develop a common language within the partnership	3.3
Fostering respect, trust, inclusiveness, and openness in the partnership	3.3
Creating an environment where differences of opinion can be voiced	3.6
Resolving conflict among partners	3.8
Combining the perspectives, resources, and skills of partners	3.3
Helping the partnership be creative and look at things differently	3.7
Recruiting diverse people and organizations into the partnership	3.1

¹⁴ To learn more about this study, see "Making the Most of Collaboration: Exploring the Relationship Between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning" in *Health Education & Behaviour* 29(6): 683-698, 2002

The attributes of leadership on this scale are very different from the kind of leadership that most people have experienced or have been trained to provide. Therefore, be sure to celebrate your partnership's strengths in this area. Identify the people in your partnership who are providing the attributes of leadership that received high scores. Recognize these participants for their important contributions to the partnership and encourage them to train other members in these skills so that the partnership's leadership will be sustained beyond the tenure of any particular individual.

ACTION: To improve the effectiveness of your partnership's leadership, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your partnership. See if any of them have, or know someone who has, leadership skills that the partnership is either under-utilizing or lacking. Use the information in the table to recruit new people into the partnership who can provide needed kinds of leadership. When you do so, look for people who are boundary-spanners — *people with backgrounds and experience in multiple fields who understand and appreciate different perspectives and can bridge diverse cultures.* Also, look for people who are comfortable sharing ideas, resources, and power.

THE EFFICIENCY OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP

The National Study of Partnership Functioning documented the importance of partnership efficiency in achieving high levels of synergy. **Partnership efficiency is a measure of how well a partnership optimizes the involvement of its partners.** An efficient partnership maximizes synergy and keeps its partners engaged by:

- **matching the roles and responsibilities** of its participants with their particular interests and skills
- making **good use** of its participants' **financial and in-kind resources**
- running a collaborative process—including meetings—that makes **good use** of its participants' **time**

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, the efficiency of a partnership is measured by a set of 3 questions. Your partnership's overall efficiency score is the mean of all of your respondents' answers to all of these questions.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S OVERALL EFFICIENCY SCORE

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE	ZONE COMMENTS
EFFICIENCY	3.2	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

The table below shows how your partnership scored on each of the questions that make up the **efficiency scale**. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score. The **3 questions** each represent a dimension of partnership efficiency.

PARTNERSHIP EFFICIENCY SCALE

HOW WELL YOUR PARTNERSHIP IS USING ITS PARTNERS':	PARTNERSHIP MEAN
Financial resources	3.4
In-kind resources	3
Time	3.3

As with leadership, celebrate your partnership's strengths with regard to partnership efficiency.

ACTION: To improve your partnership's performance, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your partnership, and get their ideas about how efficiency can be improved. In addition, examine your partnership's scores in other parts of this report. Often, partnerships can make better use of their members' time, skills, and resources by strengthening the leadership and management of the partnership, by enhancing participants' involvement in the decision-making process, and by addressing particular drawbacks that participants are experiencing.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

The administration and management of a partnership is the "glue" that makes it possible for multiple, independent people and organizations to combine their knowledge, skills, and resources. The findings of the National Study of Partnership Functioning suggested that partnerships need a **certain kind of administration and management** to achieve high levels of synergy—one that is very different from bureaucratic forms of management (which tend to be rigid and control what people do). Partnerships that maximize synergy, and are thus able to make the most of collaboration, effectively carry out the following kinds of administration and management activities:

- facilitating **timely communication**—not only among a broad array of partners, but also with people and organizations outside the partnership
- **coordinating meetings, projects, and other partnership activities**
- supporting partnership participants in **applying for grants and managing funds**
- providing the partnership with **analytic support**, for example, by preparing documents that inform participants and help them make timely decisions and by evaluating the progress and impact of the partnership
- providing **orientation to new participants** as they join the partnership
- **minimizing barriers** that can prevent certain participants from participating in the partnership's meetings and activities (for example, by providing transportation, child care, and translation services and by holding meetings at convenient places and times)

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, the effectiveness of a partnership's administration and management is measured by a set of 9 questions. Your partnership's overall score for the effectiveness of its administration and management is the mean of all of your respondents' answers to all of these questions.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S OVERALL SCORE FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS IN ITS MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE	ZONE COMMENTS
EFFECTIVENESS IN MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION	3.6	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

The table below shows how your partnership scored on each of the **9 questions** that make up the **scale**.

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:	PARTNERSHIP MEAN
Coordinating communication among partners	3.3
Coordinating communication with people and organizations outside the partnership	2.9
Organizing partnership activities, including meetings and projects	3.9
Applying for and managing grants and funds	4.6
Preparing materials that inform partners and help them make timely decisions	3.4
Performing secretarial duties	3.7
Providing orientation to new partners as they join the partnership	3.3
Evaluating the progress and impact of the partnership	4
Minimizing barriers for participation in partnership meetings and activities	3.3

Many of the administration and management activities on this scale are quite different from the traditional kind of administration and management that most people have experienced. Therefore, celebrate your partnership's strengths in this area. Identify the people in your partnership who are carrying out the administration and management activities that got high scores. Recognize these participants for their important contributions to the partnership and encourage them to train other people in these skills so that the partnership's administration and management will not deteriorate if a particular coordinator or member leaves the partnership.

ACTION: To improve the effectiveness of your partnership's administration and management, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your partnership. See if any of them have, or know someone who has, administration and management skills that the partnership is either under-utilizing or lacking. Use the information in the table to identify additional staff, partners, or volunteers who can contribute to, and strengthen, the partnership's administration and management.

Another way to take corrective action is to see if the person who coordinates the activities of your partnership is devoting at least 30 hours per week to administration and management. The National Study of Partnership Functioning documented that the effectiveness of administration and management is lower in partnerships that do not have a full time coordinator. You may be able to use the results of this report to help your partnership secure additional funds to pay a staff person to spend more time on the administration and management of the partnership, or to purchase equipment, like a fax machine or computers, that can help the partnership strengthen its administration and management.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S RESOURCES

The knowledge, skills, and other resources that participants contribute to a partnership are the basic building blocks of synergy. It is by combining these resources in various ways that participants create something new and valuable that transcends what they can accomplish on their own. Below we report on the ability of your partnership to obtain needed non-financial resources and needed financial and other capital resources.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S NON-FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The findings of the National Study of Partnership Functioning suggested that the ability of a partnership to achieve high levels of synergy depends on the contribution of **sufficient non-financial resources** from its partners. Important non-financial resources include:

- the broad array of **skills and expertise** that partnerships need to recruit partners, support the collaboration process, carry out comprehensive interventions, document and evaluate the work of the partnership, and get their message out;
- the various kinds of **data and information** that partnerships need to support joint problem-solving, such as statistical data; the perspectives, values, and ideas of different stakeholders and community groups; and information about the community's assets, politics, and history;
- **connections to particular people, organizations, and groups**, such as community residents directly affected by the problem the partnership is trying to address, political decision makers, government agencies, private sector funders, academic institutions, businesses, and other partnerships in the community;
- **endorsements** that give the partnership legitimacy and credibility with various stakeholders;
- **convening power**—the influence and ability to bring people together for partnership meetings and other activities.

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, the sufficiency of a partnership's non-financial resources is measured by a **set of 6 questions**.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S OVERALL SCORE FOR SUFFICIENCY OF NON-FINANCIAL RESOURCES

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE	ZONE COMMENTS
NON-FINANCIAL RESOURCES	3.8	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

The table below shows your partnership's scores for each kind of non-financial resource. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score.

KINDS OF NON-FINANCIAL RESOURCES:	PARTNERSHIP MEAN
Skills and expertise	3.9
Data and information	3.6
Connections to target populations	3.4
Connections to political decision-makers, government agencies and others	4.3
Legitimacy and credibility	4
Influence and ability to bring people together for meetings/ activities	3.9

Celebrate your partnership's accomplishments in obtaining non-financial resources. To sustain these resources over time, identify the people and organizations who are contributing these "in-kind" resources and see if they would be willing to make a formal commitment to the partnership to provide these resources on a continuing basis.

ACTION: To obtain non-financial resources that your partnership needs, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your partnership. See if any of them has, and is interested in contributing, resources that the partnership is either under-utilizing or lacking. Another tactic is to use this information to identify additional people and organizations that the partnership should recruit.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S FINANCIAL AND OTHER CAPITAL RESOURCES

Financial and other capital resources, including space, equipment, and goods, are clearly important assets to a partnership since they are essential for hiring staff and carrying out certain kinds of programs. Yet the relationship of financial resources to synergy is probably indirect; partnerships need financial and other capital resources to support their administration and management activities, which, in turn, promote synergy.

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, the sufficiency of a partnership's financial and capital resources is measured by a **set of 3 questions**. Your partnership's overall score for sufficiency of financial and capital resources is the mean of all of your respondents' answers to all of these questions.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP'S OVERALL SCORE FOR SUFFICIENCY OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER CAPITAL RESOURCES

	MEAN SCORE	ZONE	ZONE COMMENTS
FINANCIAL & OTHER CAPITAL RESOURCES	3.6	Work	More work needed to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential

The table below shows your partnership's scores for each kind of financial and capital resource. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score.

KINDS OF FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL RESOURCES:	PARTNERSHIP MEAN
Money	3.4
Space	3.9
Equipment and goods	3.6

As with non-financial resources, celebrate your partnership's accomplishments in obtaining financial and capital resources. To sustain these resources over time, identify the people and organizations who are contributing financial and capital resources and see if they would be willing to make a formal commitment to the partnership to provide these resources on a continuing basis.

ACTION: To obtain financial and capital resources that your partnership needs, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your partnership. See if any of these members has, and is interested in contributing, financial and capital resources that the partnership is lacking. You can also use this information to identify additional people and organizations that the partnership should recruit to help your partnership secure external sources of funding.

4. YOUR PARTNERS' VIEWS ABOUT THEIR OWN PARTICIPATION IN THE PARTNERSHIP

Partners are the source of most partnership resources. They provide partnerships with many resources directly. In addition, they use their resources—such as their skills, connections, and credibility—to obtain external funding and in-kind support. To achieve high levels of synergy, partnerships need to be able to recruit and retain partners who can provide needed resources. To make the most of collaboration, partnerships need to identify and actively engage participants with a sufficient range of knowledge, skills, and other resources to give the group a full picture of the problem it is trying to solve, to stimulate new, locally responsive ways of thinking about solutions to this problem, and to implement comprehensive interventions.

A number of factors influence the willingness of people and organizations to participate actively in partnerships:

- their views about the decision-making process of the partnership
- the benefits and drawbacks they experience as a result of participation in the partnership
- their overall satisfaction with participation in the partnership

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool measured your respondents' perceptions in these areas. With this information, your partnership can readily identify what it is doing well and what it needs to focus on to enhance its ability to recruit and retain partners. Of note, and as described in more detail below, improving your partnership's leadership, efficiency, and administration and management can not only maximize synergy but also make the collaborative process more meaningful and enjoyable for participants. Consequently, by improving your scores in the previous section of this report, you can also improve your scores in this one.

HOW YOUR RESPONDENTS VIEW THE PARTNERSHIP'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

A partnership's decision-making process determines who is involved in partnership decision making and how partnership decisions are made. In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, respondents' views about a partnership's decision-making process are measured by 3 questions.

WHEN RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED HOW COMFORTABLE THEY ARE WITH THE WAY DECISIONS ARE MADE IN YOUR PARTNERSHIP:

14.3%	Extremely comfortable
57.1%	Very comfortable
28.6%	Somewhat comfortable
0.0%	A little comfortable
0.0%	Not at all comfortable

WHEN RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED HOW OFTEN THEY SUPPORT THE DECISIONS MADE BY THE PARTNERSHIP:

28.6%	All of the time
71.4%	Most of the time
0.0%	Some of the time
0.0%	Almost none of the time
0.0%	None of the time

WHEN RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED HOW OFTEN THEY FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:

0.0%	All of the time
0.0%	Most of the time
28.6%	Some of the time
28.6%	Almost none of the time
42.8%	None of the time

Your partnership has cause for celebration if the vast majority of your respondents gave the most positive response to all 3 questions (providing, of course, that the people who were asked to fill out the questionnaire—and who actually filled it out—included those who could potentially have been left out of your partnership's decision-making process).

ACTION: If your decision-making scores are not as high as you would like them to be, discuss the findings with the other members of your partnership. In particular, find out what they know about the decision-making process, the roles they want to play in decision making, and the ideas they have for improving the process.

In addition, look at your scores in other areas of this report. You may be able to enhance your partnership's decision-making process by strengthening the effectiveness of your partnership's *leadership* (e.g., by fostering respect, trust, and inclusiveness and by creating an environment in which differences of opinion can be voiced); by improving your partnership's *efficiency* (e.g., by making good use of your participants' knowledge in making partnership decisions); and by strengthening your partnership's *administration and management* (e.g., by including information about the decision-making process in the orientation for new partnership members).

HOW YOUR RESPONDENTS VIEW THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF PARTICIPATION

One of the most important factors that influences the decision by people and organizations to participate in a partnership is their perception of the relative benefits and drawbacks involved. Partners who receive substantial benefits from participating in partnerships tend to be more active in the partnership than partners who do not. Minimizing the drawbacks that are associated with participation may be just as important to partners as providing them with additional benefits.

In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, your respondents were asked to compare the benefits and drawbacks they are experiencing as a result of participating in your partnership and to identify the particular kinds of benefits and drawbacks they have experienced thus far.

WHEN RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED HOW OFTEN THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN YOUR PARTNERSHIP COMPARE TO THE DRAWBACKS:

57.1%	reported that the benefits greatly exceed the drawbacks
14.3%	reported that the benefits exceed the drawbacks
14.3%	reported that the benefits and drawbacks are about equal
14.3%	reported that the drawbacks exceed the benefits
0.0%	reported that the drawbacks greatly exceed the benefits

BENEFITS

This table shows the percentage of respondents who have received each of **11 kinds of benefits**.

KINDS OF BENEFITS:	PERCENTAGE RECEIVING BENEFITS
Enhanced ability to address important issues	85.7%
Development of new skills	71.4%
Heightened public profile	42.8%
Increased utilization of my expertise or services	71.4%
Acquisition of useful knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community	100%
Enhanced ability to affect public policy	71.4%
Development of valuable relationships	100%
Enhanced ability to meet the needs of my constituency or clients	71.4%
Ability to have a greater impact than I could have on my own	85.7%
Ability to make a contribution to the community	85.7%
Acquisition of additional financial support	57.1%

DRAWBACKS

This table shows the percentage of respondents who have experienced each of **6 kinds of drawbacks**.

KINDS OF DRAWBACKS:	PERCENTAGE EXPERIENCING DRAWBACKS
Diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations	42.8%
Insufficient influence in partnership activities	28.6%
Viewed negatively due to association with other partners or the partnership	14.3%
Frustration or aggravation	14.3%
Insufficient credit given to me for contributing to the accomplishments of the partnership	0.0%
Conflict between my job and the partnership's work	14.3%

Your partnership has cause for celebration if the vast majority of your partnership's respondents are experiencing benefits that greatly exceed their drawbacks (providing, of course, that the people who were asked to fill out the questionnaire—and who actually filled it out—included those who may be having serious problems with participation). You may find the itemized list of benefits in this report useful in recruiting additional people and organizations into your partnership since it documents the benefits that current participants are receiving.

ACTION: If you would like to enhance the benefits that the participants of your partnership receive and minimize the drawbacks, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your partnership. In particular, find out what benefits each participant wants to receive, discuss what the partnership can do to make that happen, and talk about the drawbacks that participants most commonly experience.

In addition, look at your partnership's scores in other sections of this report. Improving your partnership's *leadership, efficiency, and administration and management* may help you address some of the drawbacks that participants experience, such as frustration and aggravation, diversion of time and resources, and insufficient credit. You may be able to address participants' concerns about their influence in your partnership by strengthening your partnership's *decision-making process*.

HOW SATISFIED YOUR RESPONDENTS ARE WITH THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE PARTNERSHIP

Participants who are satisfied with their involvement in a partnership are more likely to maintain and increase their level of commitment than participants who are not satisfied. In the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, your respondents' satisfaction with participation in your partnership was measured **by 5 questions.**

When respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the way the people and organizations in your partnership work together:

14.3%	reported they are completely satisfied
57.1%	reported they are mostly satisfied
28.6%	reported they are somewhat satisfied
0.0%	reported they are a little satisfied
0.0%	reported they are not at all satisfied

When respondents were asked how satisfied they are with their influence in your partnership:

14.3%	reported they are completely satisfied
42.8%	reported they are mostly satisfied
28.6%	reported they are somewhat satisfied
14.3%	reported they are a little satisfied
0.0%	reported they are not at all satisfied

When respondents were asked how satisfied they are with their role in your partnership:

28.6%	reported they are completely satisfied
42.8%	reported they are mostly satisfied
14.3%	reported they are somewhat satisfied
14.3%	reported they are a little satisfied
0.0%	reported they are not at all satisfied

When respondents were asked how satisfied they are with your partnership's plans for achieving its goals:

28.6%	reported they are completely satisfied
57.1%	reported they are mostly satisfied
14.3%	reported they are somewhat satisfied
0.0%	reported they are a little satisfied
0.0%	reported they are not at all satisfied

When respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the way your partnership has implemented its plans:

14.3%	reported they are completely satisfied
71.4%	reported they are mostly satisfied
14.3%	reported they are somewhat satisfied
0.0%	reported they are a little satisfied
0.0%	reported they are not at all satisfied

Your partnership has cause for celebration if the vast majority of your partnership's respondents reported being completely satisfied in all 5 of these areas (providing, of course, that the people who were asked to fill out the questionnaire—and who actually filled it out—included those who may not be satisfied with their participation).

ACTION: If your satisfaction scores are not as high as you would like them to be, discuss the findings with the other members of your partnership. In particular, try to find out more about what they expect from participation and is causing them to be dissatisfied.

In addition, look at your scores in other areas of this report. Strengthening your partnership's *leadership and administration and management* may make participants more satisfied with the way people in your partnership work together. Improving your partnership's *efficiency* may make participants more satisfied with their roles in your partnership. Enhancing your partnership's *decision-making process* may be helpful not only in improving participants' satisfaction with their own influence in the partnership, but also in improving their satisfaction with your partnership's plans and the way your partnership is implementing its plans.

5. CONCLUSION

HOW TO USE THE INFORMATION IN THIS ASSESSMENT REPORT

The information in this report gives you a **snapshot of your partnership**— a picture of how your partnership is functioning at this point in time. The findings are most meaningful if everyone who is familiar with the way your partnership works was asked to complete the questionnaire and did so honestly. As the text in each section of this report indicates, there are many ways your partnership can act on these results, both to sustain what it is doing well and to address its weaknesses. Used repeatedly over time, the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool gives your partnership a way to track the impact of its efforts to improve the collaborative process.

Think about this assessment report as a **starting point for discussion and corrective action**. It provides the people in your partnership with a framework for talking about the collaborative process and with objective, quantitative data to anchor and stimulate their conversation. Also, be sure to **keep a copy of this report**. You will need it to compare with the results of future assessments.

WHAT DO THE DATA IN THIS REPORT TELL YOU?

Your partnership's **level of synergy** indicates how successful your partnership's collaborative process has been thus far. The **overall synergy score** indicates how well the collaborative process is enabling the participants of your partnership to do more together than they can on their own. In other words, it tells the people involved in your partnership how much of an advantage they are getting from collaboration. The **detailed synergy scores** indicate the particular ways that your partnership's collaborative process is, and is not, strengthening its participants' thinking, actions, and relations with the broader community. These scores describe the value your partnership has already gotten from collaboration and indicate the additional value it can work to achieve.

The other data in this report provide your partnership with a road map to realize the full potential of collaboration. The overall and detailed scores in each of four areas related to synergy—**leadership, efficiency, administration and management, and resources**— indicate how well your partnership is doing at the current time and what it needs to strengthen to make the collaborative process work better. The data that show your participants' perceptions—about the partnership's **decision-making process**, the **benefits and drawbacks** they are experiencing as a result of participation, and their **satisfaction** with the partnership—indicate what your partnership can do to be more successful in recruiting and retaining needed partners.

HOW CAN YOUR PARTNERSHIP BENEFIT FROM THIS INFORMATION?

Ultimately, what your partnership gets out of the data in this report will depend on what it does with them. A good first step is for the coordinator and members of your partnership to **talk about the findings at partnership meetings**.

WHY?

Because the data in this report are based on information obtained from the participants in your partnership and because your partnership needs the ideas and talents of its diverse participants to understand how its collaborative process is working and to make the process work better.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN THE COURSE OF THESE DISCUSSIONS?

Bring the data alive by **telling stories** about your partnership. Illustrate the scores in this report with vivid examples of things that have and have not gone well in your partnership.

Celebrate the successes your partnership has achieved and use the data in this report (along with your vivid examples) to **communicate** these otherwise invisible accomplishments to funders and people in the broader community.

Use the results to **identify and acknowledge the contributions of people and organizations in your partnership** (e.g., those who have valuable leadership or management skills or who are contributing important in-kind resources). Encourage these partners to **train other members** in these skills and/or to **formalize their contributions** to the partnership.

See if current participants have **untapped knowledge, skills, or resources** that they would like to contribute and that could further the work of your partnership. Consider bringing participants who currently play a more peripheral role in your partnership into the "inner core." Use information in the report to identify **new** kinds of participants that your partnership should recruit, new kinds of staff it should hire, and/or new sources of funding it should explore. **Broaden involvement in the leadership and management** of your partnership.

Now that you know how members feel about their participation in your partnership, discuss what your partnership can do about it. In particular, see how improvements in partnership leadership, efficiency, and management can increase the benefits that partners receive from participation, reduce the drawbacks they are experiencing, and make them more satisfied with their influence and involvement in your partnership.



POSITIVE CHANGE CYCLE

UNINFORMED OPTIMISM

In the first stage of positive change, the person is excited and intrigued by the change. They look forward to it with eager anticipation, building a very positive and often over-optimistic view, for example that it will be much easier for them and resolve all of their current issues.

And for a time after the change (sometimes sadly short), there is a 'honeymoon period', during which they are positively happy with the change.

INFORMED PESSIMISM

The honeymoon period does not last forever and the rose-tinted glasses start to fade as the untidiness of reality starts to bite. The person finds that things have not all fallen into place, that other people have not magically become as cooperative as they expected, and that things are just not as easy as they had expected.

This pushes them over into a period of gloom when they realize that perfection, after all, is not that easy to attain. This may evidence itself in mutterings and grumbings, but still does not reach the depths of the depression stage of negative change perception (unless the person flips into a delayed negative cycle).

INFORMED OPTIMISM

Before long, however, their original optimism starts to reassert itself, now tinted by a resignation to the reality of the situation. After all, things are not that bad, and a positive sense of potential begins to creep back.

As they look around them and talk to other people, they make realistic plans and move forward with an informed sense of optimism.

COMPLETION

Eventually, things reach a relatively steady platform of realistic and workable action. The person is probably happier than they were before the change started and, with their realistic vision, have the potential to reach giddier heights of happiness as they achieve more of their potential.

(Kelley and Connor 1979)



go goldfields
aspiring and achieving

