



Planning and Evaluating Community Wellbeing Resource Guide



Government
of South Australia

Preventive Health SA

As the tier of government closest to communities, councils play a key role in creating vibrant and healthy communities. Councils are well placed to support preventive health policy and action to deliver better wellbeing outcomes for communities through the provision of a range of services, infrastructure and facilities which support community wellbeing.

Preventive Health SA, in partnership with the Local Government Association of South Australia, has developed a set of Resource Guides to support local councils in improving community health and wellbeing outcomes for their communities.

It is acknowledged that there is diversity across South Australian councils and that capacity to support and deliver health and wellbeing initiatives varies based on location and size, resourcing, priority focus areas and the interests and concerns of the local community. This diversity across council areas will influence and shape the design, implementation, and evaluation of community wellbeing initiatives.

The Resource Guides provide evidence-informed information and pathways to resources to support the planning, implementation and evaluation of community health and wellbeing initiatives. The Resource Guides are not prescriptive, and councils can tailor the implementation of community wellbeing initiatives to suit their specific operating environment. These may be useful to councils who are just starting their wellbeing journey, right through to those who are well established in their health and wellbeing strategies.



Preventive Health SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal peoples as South Australia's First Peoples and recognise Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners and occupiers of South Australian lands and waters. We recognise that their connection to the land and waters is integral to identity and cultures and should be honoured and celebrated. We give respect to Aboriginal Elders who have sustained culture, in days past, present and the emerging generation that will carry it into the future.

Preventive Health SA recognises and thanks the Councils and staff who have contributed to the development of these Resource Guides.

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Evaluation: key to planning

Evaluation is the systematic approach to collecting, analysing and using information to enhance learning, make informed judgments, and guide decisions¹.

Evaluation is an essential part of planning and should start early. Identifying goals, objectives and proposed outcomes of initiatives should be the priority to support effective implementation (strategies or activities)².

Identifying community health and wellbeing priorities

Working within communities is complex and local councils are well-placed to identify contextual health and wellbeing priorities through their connection with community and other sectors.

Understanding this context provides the foundation for action on planning, implementation and evaluation. Utilising strategic planning processes and other key council strategies, including Regional Public Health Plans strengthens the identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of actions to address key issues and priorities.

Local Council Public Health Planning

Regional Public Health Plans provide a framework for strategic public health and wellbeing planning and evaluation.

The LGA's [Guide to Regional Public Health Planning³](#) can assist councils in preparing and maintaining their public health plans, and to support planning and evaluating wellbeing initiatives.

The guide outlines the scope, principles and processes for consistent public health planning within South Australian local councils.



Steps to planning initiatives

Step
01

Collection and analysis of data on health and wellbeing

Research and analysis of existing data to inform understanding of the local context ensures an evidence-informed approach to identifying health and wellbeing priorities.

Access to, and translation of data provides an opportunity to bring research to life and can support conversations with key partners and the community to advocate for action.

Key components of evidence-informed planning include making decisions based on the best available scientific evidence, using data and information systems systematically, applying program-planning frameworks, engaging the community in decision-making, conducting sound evaluations, and disseminating what is learned⁴.

Local councils can access a range of data and information through a variety of sources. [Preventive Health SA's Open Data Portal](#) provides population health data across South Australia along with other useful information through the [Wellbeing Index](#), reports and publications⁵ and the Preventive Health SA [Epidemiology Team](#) are available to discuss additional data needs⁶.

[Torrens University Australia Public Health Information Development Unit \(PHIDU\)](#) have developed Local Government Population Health profiles which are also available online⁷.

Other useful data sources include:

- [ABS](#)
- [SA Health](#)
- [Reports Australian Early Development Census - Community profile](#)
- [SAPOL crime statistics](#)
- Council Community Satisfaction Surveys
- [Green Industries Reports](#)
- [EPA reports](#)
- Subscription-based data services.

Councils and community groups also collect relevant datasets which could provide an opportunity to establish systems to collect this data in the future.

This is detailed within the [Southern and Hills Local Government Association 'Indicators of Community Wellbeing'](#) project which provides a useful indicator framework for data collection⁸.



Step 02

Community engagement and consultation

Councils are experienced with community engagement across all areas of their work and can leverage this connection with community for robust planning and evaluation processes.

Community engagement ensures that councils can:

- **Gain genuine insight into community needs** – to gain genuine insight into the community’s health and wellbeing priorities.
- **Empower community to improve their health and wellbeing** – community engagement enables changes in behaviour, environments, policies, programs, and practices within communities. Therefore, community participation also produces ‘social capital’, a key indicator of building healthy communities through collective and mutually beneficial interaction and accomplishments with improved health outcomes.
- **Promote equity** – Engage priority populations or vulnerable groups facing the greatest health challenges or health inequities to inform planning to best meet their needs.
- **Facilitate co-design** – Effective engagement can provide a platform for undergoing a co-design process for decision-making and planning.

The following resources may be useful to support engagement:



LGA SA Community Engagement Framework⁹

A Model Framework for Leading Practice in Local Government in South Australia.

Better Together¹⁰

DPC Community Engagement

Organisations such as **IAP2**¹¹, or **Community Tool Box**¹² have developed engagement method tools.



Step 03

Identification and mapping of key partners

Council’s connection with their communities places them in a strong strategic position to coordinate actions within their region.

Supported by the mandated requirements of the [Local Government Act 1999](#)¹³ and complemented by their role as Public Health Authorities for their areas under the [South Australian Public Health Act 2011](#)¹⁴.

There is a strength in understanding the community landscape to inform plans dependent on community needs. A mapping process can be useful in identifying and formalising local partnerships and clarifying roles and responsibilities in actions on a particular priority, as well as identifying gaps and solidifying commitments.

The [LGA’s Guide to Regional Public Health Planning](#) (Section 3) outlines approaches to community participation and partnerships as well as considerations for ongoing partnership success³.

Developing partnerships with universities and research centres can also be useful to enable knowledge exchange and support the development of evidence-informed community health and wellbeing initiatives. Partnerships may operate on a continuum from networking, coordinating, cooperating to collaborating.

Step
04

**Alignment consideration
with state and local priorities
and programs**

In the planning stage, local councils can be guided by alignment with national, state and regional strategic directions.

Regional Public Health Plans, Disability Access and Inclusion Plans and Reconciliation Action Plans provide an avenue to demonstrate alignment of council priorities.

Strategies encompassing community engagement, sport and recreation, open space, libraries, and community centres all provide a range of existing or planned activities that can provide leverage for considering new wellbeing initiatives.

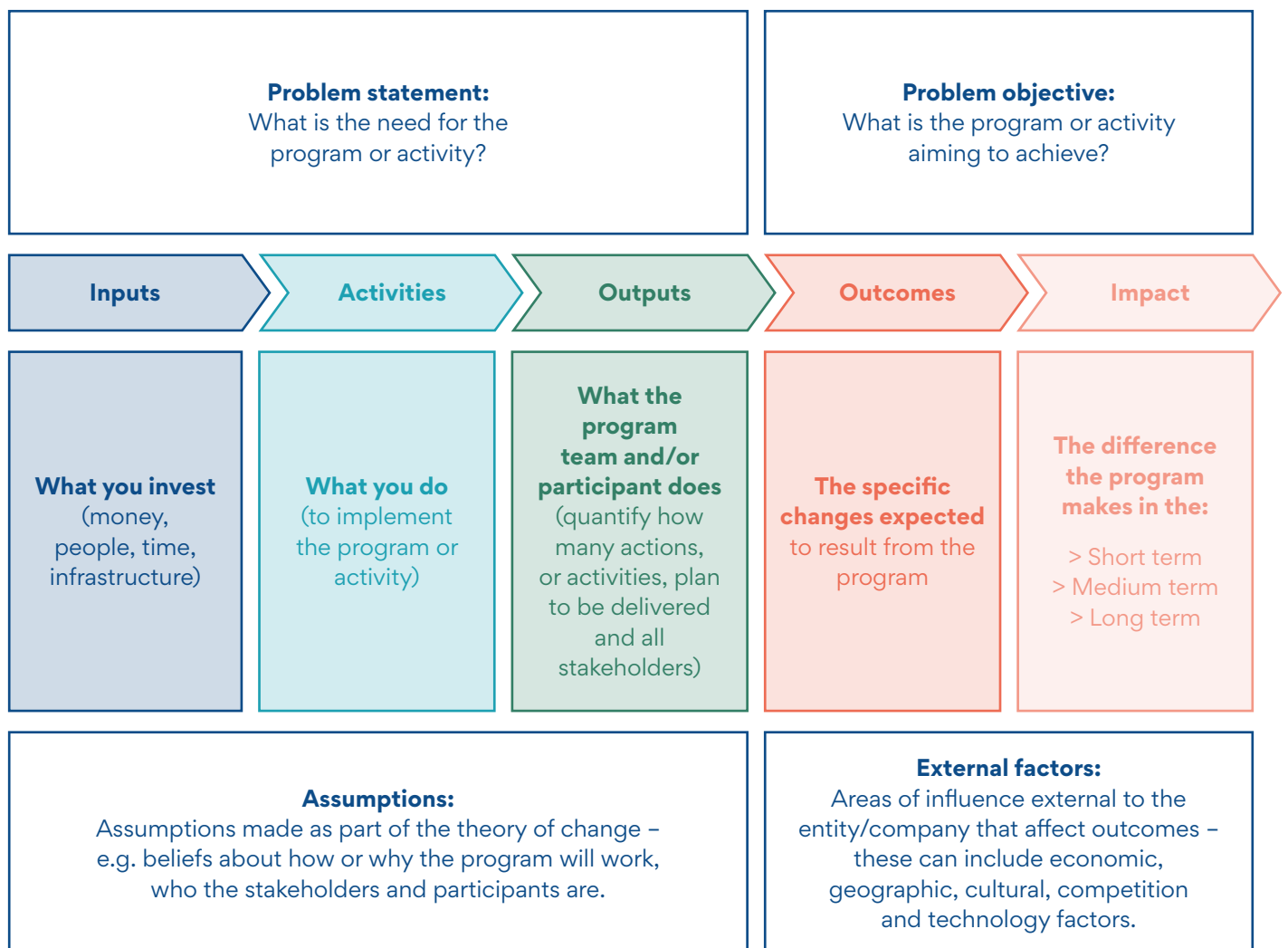


Evaluation planning

A program logic model (Figure 1) is often used to support planning for initiatives and provides the foundation for an effective evaluation plan.

It is a depiction of the relationship between outcomes (short and long term) with program activities and any theoretical assumptions or principles.

Figure 1: Program logic template with guidance (Source: Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2022 Evaluation Guidelines¹⁵).



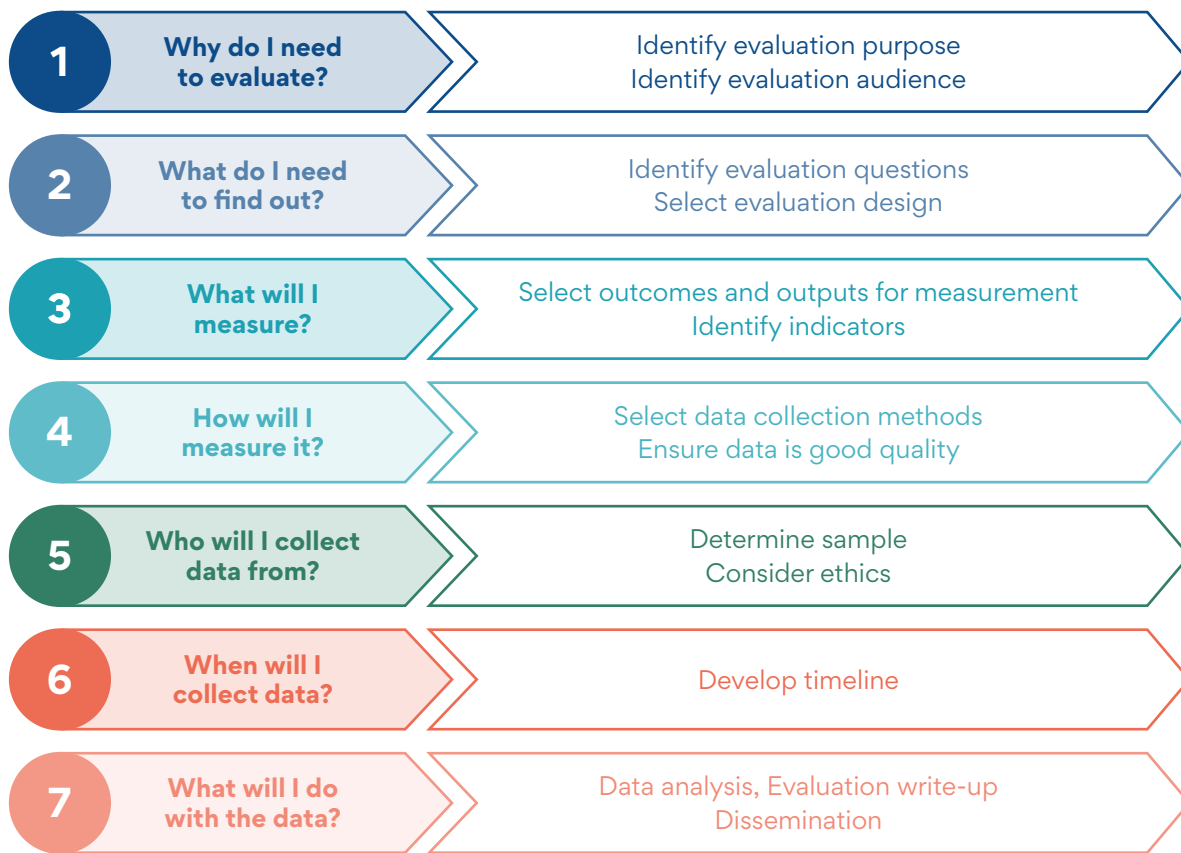
An evaluation plan provides detail to build on the program logic and needs to be developed in collaboration with the relevant project stakeholders.

The plan will first outline the evaluation purpose, scope, audience, timeline, governance and resourcing¹⁶ and will help to define the key evaluation questions (Figure 2).

These questions will help to assess the degree to which a particular initiative, is appropriate, effective and efficient.

The [Preventive Health SA Wellbeing Hub Implementation Guide](#) provides a toolkit, including guiding evaluation questions to evaluate the outcomes of Council initiatives¹⁷.

Figure 2: Key steps in an evaluation (Source: AIFS²)



The following resources provide evaluation tools and example surveys to measure social impact:



<p><u>Valuing Social Outcomes Tool</u>¹⁸ A tool to support councils in measuring the social value of their community services.</p>	<p><u>The Social Impact Toolbox</u>¹⁹ A library of curated tools, validated by academic research, for you to evaluate the social impact of your program.</p>	<p><u>Wellbeing Hub Implementation Resource Guide</u>¹⁷ A resource for Councils to support the establishment of a Wellbeing Hub.</p>
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Ethics and evaluation

Consideration should be made as to how to conduct an evaluation ethically.

In many situations, oversight of the activity is required to ensure adherence to the principles of confidentiality and privacy, and use of informed (and documented) consent may be sufficient without official ethics review but needs to be considered as part of the initial planning process.

The following resources provide a comprehensive overview of ethical considerations when conducting evaluation:



[Australian Evaluation Society - Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations](#)²⁰

[Australian Evaluation Society - First Nations Cultural Safety Framework](#)²¹

[Ethical Considerations in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities \(NHMRC\)](#)²²

[National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\) - updated 2018](#)²³



Case Study

Identifying Indicators of Community Wellbeing in the Southern and Hills Local Government Area



The ‘Indicators of Community Wellbeing for the Southern and Hills Local Government Area’ project was funded through a Local Government Research and Development Scheme grant in 2019.

The funding enabled the development of a tool to support councils in strategic public health, community planning and service provision based on a comprehensive set of indicators.

The project filled a critical need in defining measures of data indicators that could be used to inform decision-making relating to community wellbeing.

Leann Symonds, Manager Community Wellbeing at City of Victor Harbor, reflected on how the initiative began and why it was needed: *“The idea for the project was developed after staff in the Southern and Hills council regions expressed a need to formulate summary measures of social, economic and environmental phenomena that would allow tracking of complex issues in a simple way”.*

Extensive consultation with representatives from the six constituent councils of the Southern and Hills Local Government Area – along with SA Health, the former Wellbeing SA, the Torrens University Public Health Development Unit and

an industry consultant shaped the selection of indicators and the final framework for creating a practical tool for councils to use.

This framework has significantly influenced regional planning through Regional Public Health Plans, the Adelaide Hills Council’s Strategic Plan, and the City of Salisbury’s Wellbeing Strategy and offers ongoing opportunities to support planning and evaluation.

The project received recognition as the Regional Award Winner of the 2021 Minister for Health and Wellbeing – Excellence in Public Health Awards, celebrating the positive impact it has made.



Case Study

Planning connected, vibrant and more active communities – City of Charles Sturt



The City of Charles Sturt Council sought to address priorities of improving pedestrian safety, accessibility, fostering a vibrant community and planning through a road reconstruction project in Grange in 2021.

Understanding local insights was invaluable following the council seeking input from residents and local businesses. Through a series of roundtables, drop-in sessions, and online engagement, the community's voice became the guiding force.

Streetscapes Project Delivery Officer, Mike Blackie, highlighted the transformative power of this close collaboration, “*the outcomes of our initial consultation clearly showed there was a preference to prioritise pedestrians in the upgrades to improve liveability, amenity and safety along the precinct,*” Mike said.

“*Roundabouts and wide intersections with small refuge islands are notoriously difficult for people to cross the road, by giving people priority over drivers it helps improve pedestrian safety and access, enabling more people to walk for recreation and transport*”.

As a result, wider verges and a wombat crossing were included adjacent businesses and zebra crossings, including new lightning, were included on all side roads.

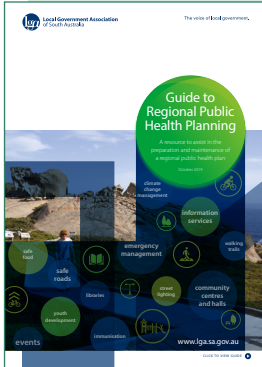
Initial concerns from local businesses about reduced parking were met with transparent discussions. By emphasising the project's focus on community wellbeing and precinct vibrancy, the council was able to build greater acceptance of the focus on pedestrians.

As part of ongoing improvement efforts, a parking and traffic survey will evaluate the impact of pedestrian-oriented treatments, reinforcing the commitment to a more active and connected community.





Useful Tools and Resources



Guide to Regional Public Health Planning³

A resource to assist local councils in the preparation and maintenance of regional public health plans.

[View document](#)



Wellbeing Hub Implementation Resource Guide¹⁷

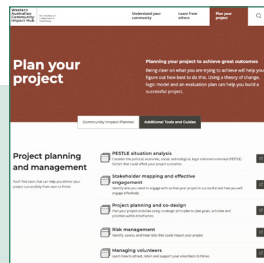
Resources to support planning, implementation and evaluation within a local council setting.

[View document](#)

Western Australian Community Impact Hub. Plan your project²⁴

Provides a range of tools for project planning and evaluation.

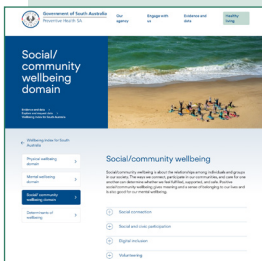
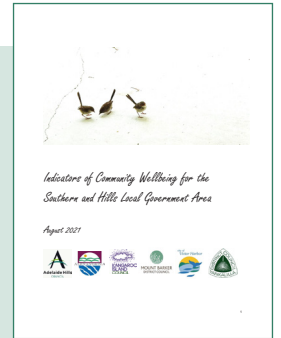
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Indicators of Community Wellbeing for the Southern and Hills Local Government Area August 2021⁸

Report developed to monitor the dynamic domains of community wellbeing that are within the influence of local government.

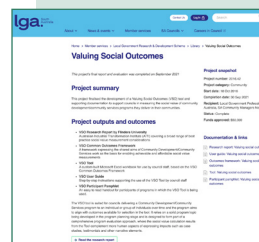
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Preventive Health SA⁵

Open Data Portal, Wellbeing Index and reports and publications pages provide access to wide range of population health data.

[View domain](#)



Valuing Social Outcomes Tool¹⁸

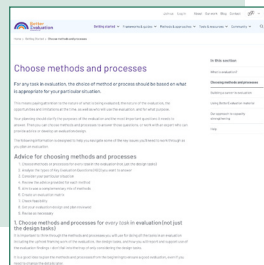
A tool to support councils in measuring the social value of their community services.

[View tools](#)

Better Evaluation²⁵

Provides guidance for evaluation processes and methods.

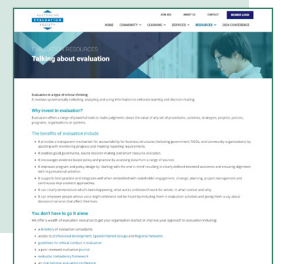
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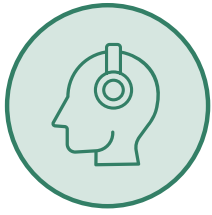


Australian Evaluation Society¹

Offers resources to start and improve evaluation approaches.

[View website](#)





Recommended Reading and Listening



Eastern Health, Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) guide²⁶

This guide identifies tools to reduce resistance and build support to improve men's engagement.

[View guide](#)

Video on public health evaluation types and methods²⁷

This is the first video of a series published by the UK Health Security Agency.

[Watch video](#)

Why evaluate?

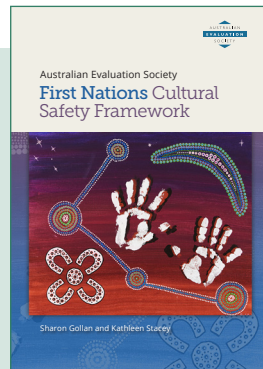
- It is a way of assessing whether project or policy objectives have been achieved.
- It is a way of assessing the outcomes of projects for people who use them.
- It is a way of learning from successes and mistakes.
- It might be a funding requirement, political request, or part of improving services as part of quality improvement cycle, or a matter of accountability ("what have we done with public money")

School for Public Health Research National Institute for Health Research

Australian Evaluation Society framework²¹

Provides practical guidance on what contributes to culturally safe and ethical practice evaluation among First Nations communities.

[View framework](#)



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- ¹² Community Tool Box (n.d.) [Designing Community Interventions](#), Community Tool Box.
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- ²⁴ Western Australian Community Impact Hub (n.d.) [Plan your project](#).
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