

Communities⁷ taking power

USING PLACE-BASED APPROACHES

TO DELIVER LOCAL SOLUTIONS

TO POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE

VCOSS, October 2016

About VCOSS

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) is the peak body of the social and community sector in Victoria. VCOSS works to ensure all Victorians have access to and a fair share of the community's resources and services, through advocating for the development of a sustainable, fair and equitable society. VCOSS members reflect a wide diversity, with members ranging from large charities, sector peak organisations, small community services, advocacy groups and individuals involved in social policy debates.

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VCOSS acknowledges the traditional owners of country and pays its respects to Elders past and present.

Communities taking power: Using place-based approaches to deliver local solutions to poverty and disadvantage

A dark blue speech bubble with a white tail pointing downwards and to the left. Inside the bubble, the text "Communities taking power" is written in white. The word "Communities" is on the top line and "taking power" is on the bottom line. A small orange L-shaped icon is positioned at the end of the word "Communities".

Communities⁷
taking power

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Communities have great power to drive the solutions that will give everyone the chance to connect, fulfil their potential, and share the benefits of social and economic growth.

Executive summary

Poverty, inequality, unemployment, social isolation and exclusion undermine communities and contribute to entrenched social problems. However, when people work together, these problems can be overcome.

If communities across Victoria are supported to address the causes and effects of poverty and disadvantage they face, while also building on their local strengths, the foundations will be set for building a Victoria where everyone has a greater chance to thrive and share the benefits of growth. Together we can build greater community cohesion and resilience, and make inroads into solving the social problems we face.

Adopting 'place-based' approaches and initiatives can be a highly effective way to do this.

Place-based approaches are ways of developing and delivering local solutions to local problems.

When done well, they bring together community members, community organisations, businesses, governments and public services such as schools and health centres, to solve local problems and build on local strengths. They empower people to develop and drive their own innovative community solutions, and integrate them successfully over the long term. They help build stronger communities that are better equipped to overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage, in places where it has built up over generations.

People within the community sector have significant knowledge, experience and expertise to help facilitate place-based approaches and initiatives, and there is much governments can do to assist.

This paper seeks to outline (i) reasons for adopting place-based approaches to help communities deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage, (ii) elements that form a framework for success, and (iii) how the community, the community sector and government can help make place-based approaches work.

Communities have great power to drive the solutions that will give everyone the chance to connect, fulfil their potential, and share the benefits of social and economic growth. Place-based approaches can be the key to unlocking it.



Place-based approaches delivering local solutions

The term 'place-based' has been discussed in many social policy papers and forums¹, but has not had a universally accepted, formal definition made.



For the purposes of this paper, place-based approaches are defined as ones that aim to help communities deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage by bringing local people, community organisations, businesses, government, and public services together. People in these groups work together to design and deliver innovative initiatives that address local gaps and build on strengths, tapping into the specific challenges and opportunities present in their community, while also drawing on the rich body of evidence available, with a long-term view in mind.

The Victorian Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry and Royal Commission into Family Violence each found there is a need for a fundamental shift in the way public, community and social services are delivered so they are better 'joined-up' and prevent people falling through the cracks. They also highlighted that primary prevention needs to be prioritised, and that solving complex social issues needs to start with empowering individuals and communities.

Place-based approaches aim to empower people to develop and drive local solutions and build stronger, more cohesive, resilient communities, where everyone has the chance to thrive, connect, fulfil their potential, and share the benefits of social and economic growth.

Why change to a place-based approach?

There are many reasons for adopting place-based approaches to deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage in communities.

Place-based approaches are a powerful way of connecting people right across the community, including people with lived experience of poverty and disadvantage, other community members, community organisations, businesses, government and universal service providers. This can reduce the social isolation people may feel when marginalised through poverty or disadvantage. Place-based approaches can empower people from across the community to develop local solutions, and integrate them into community structures and into their lives over the long term.

They help people develop innovative initiatives that best respond to local challenges and opportunities. By connecting people to bring together an overview of local issues, place-based approaches help coordinate and 'join up' policy, services and delivery in a way that will work best in each local community. They can inform and leverage existing support provided by social security and universal and targeted services, providing a linked and deeper response that helps people overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage in the long term.

¹ See for example Brotherhood of St Laurence, *What next for place-based initiatives to tackle disadvantage? A practical look at recent lessons for Australian public policy*, 2015; T.G Moore et al., *The evidence: what we know about place-based approaches to support children's wellbeing*, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and The Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health, 2014; S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, *Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings Project (Research Report No. 32)*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015.

Place-based approaches can be the key that unlocks the great power communities hold to develop and deliver local solutions that help overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

Helping communities deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage

At last count there were about 2.5 million people living in poverty in Australia, and about 650,000 of these people², roughly 14 per cent of the state's population³, were in Victoria.

Poverty and disadvantage tend to become entrenched in families across generations, and in communities, through intergenerational unemployment and lower levels of educational achievement.⁴ *Dropping off the Edge 2015*⁵ found “a marked degree of concentration of the state's social disadvantage within a limited number of Victorian localities”.⁶ The scale of the problem, its intergenerational nature and its concentration in various localities all highlight the failure of current policies, programs and services to overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

People living in more disadvantaged communities have poorer outcomes across almost every social indicator. Children living in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than their more advantaged counterparts.⁷ They have lower rates of school completion, lower participation in post-school education, and higher unemployment.⁸

People living in low socioeconomic areas overall experience poorer health, including higher rates of chronic illness, cancer and mental illness.⁹ Communities facing disadvantage have a higher rate of criminal convictions. A recent investigation by the Victorian Ombudsman found that half of Victoria's prisoners come from just six per cent of its postcodes.¹⁰

Place-based approaches can be the key that unlocks the great power communities hold to develop and deliver innovative local solutions that help overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

² Australian Council of Social Service, *Poverty in Australia 2014*, ACOSS, 2014, p. 30.

³ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁴ For example see N Héroult and G Kalb, *Intergenerational correlation of labour market outcomes*, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2008.

⁵ T Vinson, M Rawsthorne, A Beavis and M Ericson, *Dropping off the Edge 2015: Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, 2015.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 59.

⁷ Australian Early Development Census, *Findings from the AEDC*, see <https://www.aedc.gov.au/early-childhood/findings-from-the-aedc>, accessed June 2016.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Education and Training: Social Inclusion, 2009*, Cat. No. 4250.0.55.001, ABS.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends*, Cat. No. 4102.0, ABS 2010, p. 1.

¹⁰ Victorian Ombudsman, *Investigation into the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Victoria*, Victorian Ombudsman, 2015, p. 32.



Increasing community connectedness

Having a job and being socially connected within the community are key contributors to people's quality of life.



There have been marked changes in Victoria's demography and labour force patterns in recent decades. Growing numbers of Victorian workers have lost their jobs due to business closures, downsizing, or their particular skills being made obsolete.¹¹ Unemployment, underemployment and job insecurity are plaguing many vulnerable communities, which can isolate people from their community.

Traditionally, women have provided much of society's unpaid community development work, including establishing local community groups and organising community activities. However, in the past it was far less common for women to work in paid employment, whereas now, most women of working age are employed.¹²

People across the board are increasingly 'time-poor', juggling carer responsibilities, employment and often commuting long distances to work. At the same time people who are not in work, education or training, or are on low incomes or facing other forms of disadvantage, may be socially excluded and not able to participate fully in community life without support.

Place-based approaches can build on existing community activities and services to connect people with their community and develop solutions to local problems.

Developing solutions that address causes, rather than crises

Much of Victoria's targeted services system has been designed to support people through crises. It tends to address presenting problems, rather than emerging needs or background issues that cause people to be vulnerable in the first place.

For example, for many years homelessness services have provided temporary shelter to people suffering from homelessness, yet the level of homelessness has increased.¹³ Most resources in the child protection system go to dealing with the consequences of child abuse and neglect, rather than preventive support services for families. While these crisis services are important, they do not remove the underlying causes of disadvantage.

Place-based approaches can focus on prevention and early intervention approaches in addition to crisis services, to help support people and solve issues before problems escalate.

¹¹ V J Callan and K Bowman, *Industry restructuring and job loss: helping older workers get back into employment, Support document 1: literature review*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2015, p. 5.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Gender Indicators*, Cat. No. 4125.0 Australia, ABS, August 2015.

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistic, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness*, Cat No. 2049 Australia, ABS, November 2012.



Agencies tend to work on their own objectives, often without fully considering interrelated government objectives.

Buffering a social security system not designed to deal effectively with entrenched poverty

Pensions and benefits are important in providing a minimum income to people unable to work.

However sometimes these payments are below the poverty line and insufficient for people to meet their basic needs. Increasing these payments would help ameliorate poverty, as ACOSS and others have advocated.¹⁴ However they will not in themselves eradicate poverty. Moreover, the social security system is not designed to target the causes of entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

Place-based approaches can be used to increase people's participation in education and training, and increase local employment opportunities, which combined, will help people target the causes of poverty and overcome it in the longer term.

Coordinating and tailoring policy-making to deal with complex problems

It has long been recognised that government portfolios and departments are structured in a way that leads to policy work being performed in isolated 'silos'.

Agencies tend to work on their own objectives, often without fully considering interrelated government objectives.

As a result, government-funded services, whether they be delivered by government or community sector organisations, often struggle to collaborate, and at

worst can operate at cross-purposes. For example, if a child protection agency needs to remove a child from their family, the child may also need to change schools, which will disrupt their education at an already difficult time. The new school may struggle to re-engage the student, thus further exacerbating the child's vulnerability.

¹⁴ For example see 'Councils of Social Service call for development of national plan to tackle poverty and inequality in Australia,' Australia Council of Social Services, 11 October 2015, accessed August 2016.



Coordinating and tailoring policy-making to deal with complex problems (cont...)

Working beyond these silos and coordinating effort, for example, ensuring continuity of education when a child is removed from their family, is often discussed as a way to improve outcomes for people facing poverty and disadvantage, and for society. One OECD report states:

“It is widely acknowledged that efforts to co-ordinate employment policies with economic development strategies and social inclusion initiatives bring significant benefits.”¹⁵

Government departments also tend to roll out programs uniformly across their jurisdictions, despite covering a diverse range of communities. Increasingly it is being recognised that the places in which people live can affect their behaviour and outcomes, and that people also affect and shape the places in which they live.

As a Joseph Rowntree Foundation report commented: “Poverty and disadvantage are mediated by place, and places are affected by the poverty or otherwise of their inhabitants. Hence, it is reasonable to suspect that policies that dissociate people from places and vice versa may perform poorly.”¹⁶

Concentrated, entrenched poverty and disadvantage is an extremely complex policy problem. Problems found in the most disadvantaged locations are many and interrelated, presenting “a web of disadvantage” as described in *Dropping off the Edge 2015*.¹⁷ The effects of one form of disadvantage can reinforce other forms of disadvantage.¹⁸

Governments have been criticised for being ill-equipped to deal with such complexity.¹⁹ Their silos and centralised nature lead to uniform, top-down, policy prescriptions that struggle to provide holistic and real solutions in the long term.

Place-based approaches can help governments be part of a process that deals better with complexity, to bring more effective solutions over the long term.

Building a better coordinated service system

Disjointed policy settings, as described above, have led to a fragmented and poorly coordinated service system, with services that do not ‘join up’ cohesively.

This presents barriers for communities seeking to overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage. People face a complex web of service pathways, referral and intake processes. There can also be duplication or gaps in service delivery.

The Blue Sky Shifting Development Trajectories Project mapped the service system in one Victorian community facing disadvantage (see Figure 1). It found the complexity of family and children’s support services presented families with many blockage points

and barriers.²⁰ A complex map like this could be replicated in every community facing disadvantage across Victoria.

Place-based approaches can create linkages and connections between people and organisations that help ‘join up’ services and make it easier for people to access services when and where they need them. This can help tackle the causes of entrenched poverty and disadvantage and provide the early support people need to overcome its causes.

¹⁵ F Froyand and S Giguère, ‘Better integrating policies at the local level: Synthesis of country findings’, in *Breaking Out of Policy Silos: Doing More with Less*, OECD publishing, 2010, p. 13.

¹⁶ J Griggs, A Whitworth, R Walker, D McLennan and M Noble, *Person or place-based policies to tackle disadvantage?* Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008, p. 1.

¹⁷ T Vinson, M Rawsthorne, A Beavis and M Ericson, *Dropping off the Edge 2015: Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, 2015, p. 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.

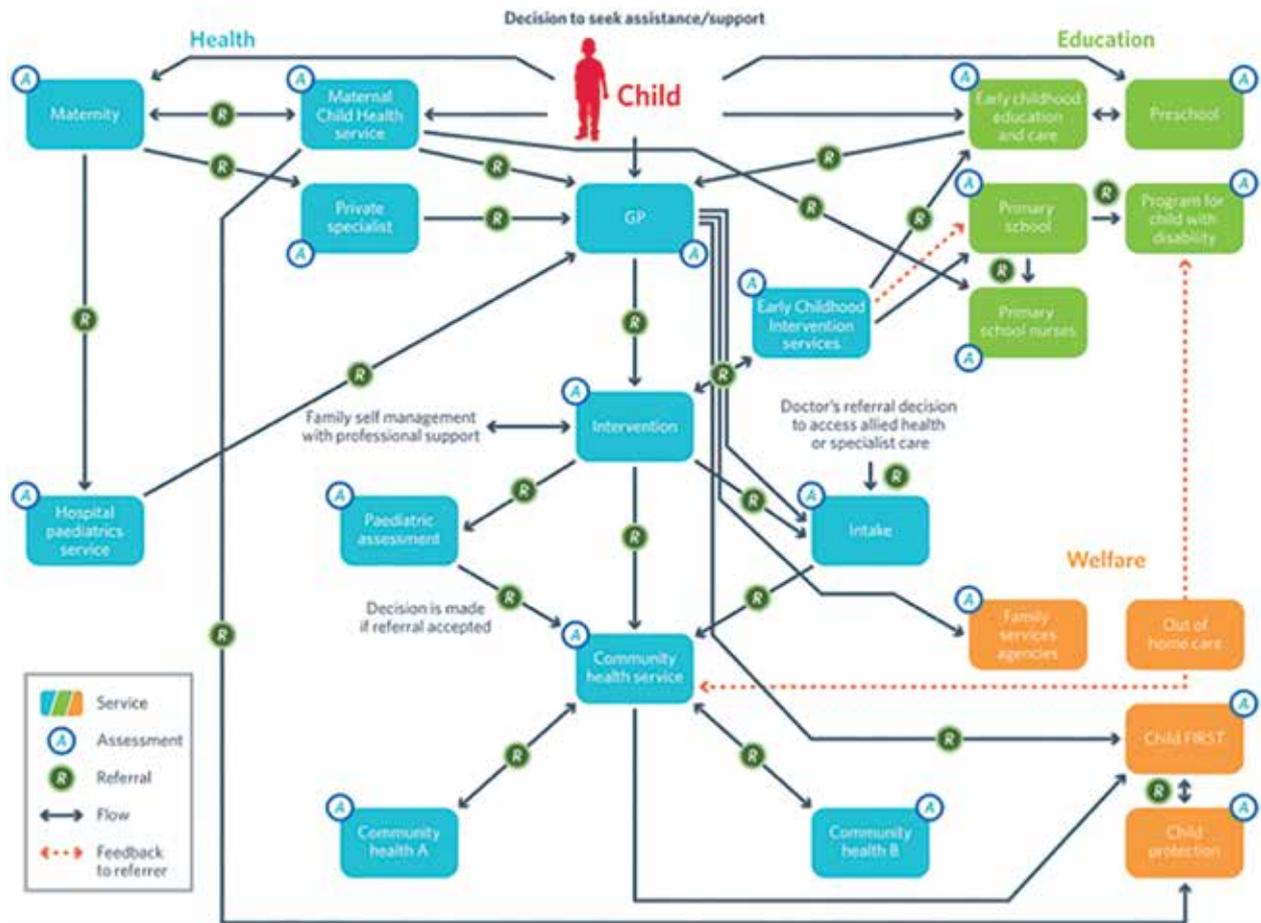
¹⁹ Australian Public Service Commission, *Tackling Wicked Problems: A public policy perspective*, Australian Public Service Commission, 2007.

²⁰ S Goldfeld, ‘Conceptual Challenges’, *Place-based reform: shaping change*, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and The Royal Children’s Hospital Centre for Community Child Health, 2012, p. 8.

The Blue Sky Shifting Development Trajectories Project mapped the service system in one Victorian community facing disadvantage.

Figure 1: Blue Sky Shifting Development Trajectories Project: Mapping the service system in one Victorian community

Mapping the current service system in Victoria



Source: Centre for Community Child Health, *Mapping the current service system in a Victorian community: Blue Sky*, Parkville, Victoria: Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, 2013.



Place-based approaches for local solutions ... a framework for success

In recent years many projects and programs have been developed and described as being 'place-based initiatives'.

These include urban renewal, regional development, welfare reform, employment development, school retention and early childhood education and care projects.

State and Commonwealth governments have also initiated and funded activities to address social problems in specific communities and have called these 'place-based'. Some projects have been initiated by community members, community organisations or local government and are unique to their locality.

However, not all these initiatives demonstrate the following 13 elements, which, when combined together, give a place-based approach its best chance of success in helping communities deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

1. A focus on place

'Place-based' approaches focus on particular geographic communities, as distinct from communities that form around common interests.

The communities can vary in scale, from a neighbourhood community surrounding a single service site, to large departmental regional boundaries.

Tasmania's Child and Family Centres are an example of a place-based initiative that uses a single service site to deliver integrated services to a surrounding community.²¹

Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal program was a place-based initiative focusing on public housing estates of a few hundred households with high concentrations of disadvantage.

Go Goldfields is a place-based initiative covering a whole local government area, the regional shire of Central Goldfields, with a population of around 12,500 people.

Often governments use departmental administrative areas to define the 'place' of their place-based initiatives. For example, Victorian Government Children and Youth Area Partnerships use Department of Health and Human Services regional boundaries, which are large geographic areas. The Outer East Children and Youth Area Partnership covers three local government areas, with a population of 418,652.²²

Whatever place is chosen, it should be identifiable as a community by that community. This is a crucial element for giving place-based approaches their best chance for success.

²¹ Tasmanian Department of Education, *An Overview of Child and Family Centres*, 2009.

²² Profile.id, Knox, Maroondah and Yarra-Ranges, Estimated Resident Population, 2015.

Whatever place is chosen, it should be identifiable as a community by that community.

Case study

Tasmania's Child and Family Centres seek to improve the health and wellbeing, education and care of Tasmania's very young children by supporting parents and improving access to services in the local community.

The goals of the Child and Family Centres are to:

- improve health and educational outcomes for children from birth to five years
- provide a range of local early years services to support children's development from birth to five years
- build on the existing strengths of families and communities and assist in their educational needs
- increase participation in early years programs
- build community capacity by developing partnerships with parents, carers and the community
- respond to child and family needs in a seamless and holistic manner.

Case study

The **Victorian Neighbourhood Renewal** project brought together the resources and ideas of residents, governments, businesses and community groups to tackle disadvantage in areas with high concentrations of public housing. To narrow the gap between some of the most disadvantaged communities in Victoria and the rest of the state, Neighbourhood Renewal sought to:

- increase people's employment and learning opportunities and expand local economies
- improve people's housing and the physical environment
- improve people's personal safety and reduce crime
- promote health and wellbeing
- increase people's access to services and improve government responsiveness
- increase people's pride and participation in their community.²³

Case study

Children and Youth Area Partnerships establish new ways of working to 'join up' Victoria's social services at a system level, to help vulnerable children, young people and their families raise their expectations and achieve better outcomes. Children and Youth Area Partnerships take a holistic view of child and youth vulnerability and use a collaborative and broad-based governance model. They bring together senior representatives in a local area from state, Commonwealth and local governments, the community sector and the broader community.

²³ For more information see <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/housing-and-accommodation/neighbourhood-renewal>



2. Support for groups facing disadvantage

Place-based approaches can target their efforts to groups within a particular geographic community, who face poverty or disadvantage.

These might include vulnerable children and young people, families, social security recipients, public housing tenants or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The means of identifying places and groups facing disadvantage has varied from initiative to initiative. Victorian and Commonwealth government place-based initiatives often target geographic areas with

high concentrations of people on low incomes and facing disadvantage. The Victorian Neighbourhood Renewal program focused on public housing estates, and the Commonwealth Government Communities for Children locations were chosen based on statistical indicators of disadvantage.

Case study

Centrelink Place-Based Services Initiatives were introduced in 2008 to promote social inclusion through partnerships between all levels of government, business and community organisations. Centrelink area level managers nominated projects to address local circumstances for people most vulnerable to social exclusion. Six projects were funded²⁴ and were found to connect or reconnect very disadvantaged Centrelink customers to the services they needed.²⁵

²⁴ For more information see <http://www.anao.gov.au/bpg-innovation/case-5.html>

²⁵ M Darcy and G Gwyther, Centrelink's "Place Based Services": *Can a national service delivery agency address local needs and conditions?* 'Innovation in public policy making and practice' Symposium, University of Lincoln, 2010.

²⁶ R.C Harwood, *Putting Community in Collective Impact*, Collective Impact Forum and Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, 2015.

²⁷ T.G Moore et al., Op Cit.

Place-based approaches can target their efforts to groups within a particular geographic community, who face poverty or disadvantage.

3. Roles for community members and service users

Community members, especially service users, play a significant role in place-based approaches.

The 'Collective Impact' framework shows the importance of genuine ownership by the larger community, and the high value of the knowledge that comes from authentically engaging the community.²⁶ Engaging service users in 'co-production' and 'co-design' of services is one such role.²⁷ Co-design brings people who will receive services and people who will deliver them, into the process of designing and implementing those services. It transfers and shares power with people affected by social

problems, builds the capacity of everyone involved, and helps deliver effective solutions to locally identified problems.

For example, the Neighbourhood Renewal evaluation found that best outcomes were achieved when significant government investment was combined with active community deliberation and co-design of responses with the community.

Case study

Victoria's Northern Mallee Community Partnership is a backbone organisation that supports community-based organisations to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their community. The partnership focuses on better understanding the root causes of its community's complex social issues and creating solutions that work, across early intervention, prevention, integrated care, and consumer and community empowerment. The partnership engages with community members affected by social issues and involves them in decision making. It also consults with the wider community to understand their ideas and priorities for action.

4. Effective engagement and communication

Place-based approaches require the engagement of community members, and a wide range of stakeholders across government, private and community sectors.²⁸

For this to work, continuous communication is needed between stakeholders to build trust and develop common objectives.²⁹ Effective engagement

and communication helps improve relationships, coordination and leads to productive and genuine partnerships within communities.

²⁸ S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, Op Cit.

²⁹ T. G Moore, et al. Op Cit.



5. Local decision-making

Place-based approaches need to include a local decision-making body that brings together a range of people.

This includes service providers (e.g. non-government community service representatives), community leaders (e.g. local council representatives), local decision-makers (e.g. departmental officers), people with lived experience of poverty and disadvantage, and business people.

The degree to which decisions are devolved to these local bodies has varied from initiative to initiative. Some, such as Go Goldfields, are completely devolved and have been allowed to innovate without prescription from government funding bodies. Others, such as Victorian Child and Youth Area Partnerships, have a more limited local level decision-making capacity.

Case study

The **Transport Connections** program helped regional and rural communities work together to improve access to local transport. It sought to address transport disadvantage through communities developing local solutions that made better use of existing public, private and community transport options. Project funding was used to hire coordinators, who assisted in identifying and implementing local initiatives.

Case study

Northern Futures is a partnership between government, business, universal service providers and community services, aimed at regenerating Geelong's northern suburbs by increasing opportunities for education, training and employment. It seeks to provide local area governance and coordination.³⁰

6. Shared vision and a joint approach

Place-based approaches need a shared sense of urgency for change, a shared agenda and coherent long-term vision.³¹

All participants need a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed actions.³²

Go Goldfields demonstrates this, seeking to address complex social problems using a 'Collective Impact' approach that engages the community in the design,

delivery and measurement of its work.³³

Its participants work together to deliver a set of shared outcomes that address issues facing children, youth and families in Victoria's Central Goldfields shire.

³⁰ For more information see <http://northernfuturesgeelong.net/>

³¹ T.G Moore, H McHugh-Dillon, K Bull, R Fry, B Laidlaw and S West, *The evidence: what we know about place-based approaches to support children's wellbeing*, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and The Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health, 2014.

³² R.C Harwood, *Putting Community in Collective Impact*, Collective Impact Forum and Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, 2015.

³³ 'Collective Impact' recognises that no single policy, government department, organisation or program can solve complex social problems. See <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/>

Place-based approaches adapt interventions, support and services to suit local circumstances.

7. Innovation

Place-based approaches recognise that the service system and the social security system have been unable to break the cycle of disadvantage, and so focus on new or different ways of providing services or developing communities.

Many focus on integrating services around a location (e.g. Tasmanian Child and Family Centres) or better coordinating services across a region (e.g. Communities for Children). Others seek to develop new services to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion (e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal program).

Others have adopted a community development approach to fundamentally shift the culture and attitudes of service providers, decision-makers

and community members, to develop positive aspirations and achieve positive outcomes for the community, rather than focusing on ameliorating deficits (e.g. Go Goldfields).

Innovation is not without risk and many innovations fail to achieve their objectives. Failure need not be considered a waste if lessons are learned and not repeated.

Case study

Go Goldfields covering Victoria's Central Goldfields Shire, is an alliance of organisations created to deliver local responses to complex and long-term social issues. Go Goldfields has developed a series of shire-wide, community-driven actions to help deliver a set of shared social, education and health outcomes for children, young people and families.³⁴

Go Goldfields involves families to help improve children's literacy, speech and language skills, and provide a better start to learning, as well as developing supportive learning environments for young people, to extend their career options. It engages professional artists and focuses on art as a way of building an aspiring community that fosters learning, confidence, motivation and connection.³⁵ A whole-of-community response is planned to deliver safe spaces for women and their children.

Case study

Communities for Children provides targeted services to about 50 communities facing disadvantage across Australia. At each site, a non-government organisation 'facilitating partner' delivers services to benefit children, parents and communities as a whole. These aim to deliver more, better coordinated child and family services, and a more 'child-friendly' community focus.³⁶

³⁴ *Go Goldfields Alliance Evaluation Report 2012-2014*, 2015, p. 2.

³⁵ For more information see <http://www.centralgoldfields.com.au/?id=25510100AFF8685CA5710B9ACA257B6B0006291D>

³⁶ S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, *Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings project*, Australian Institute of Family Studies and Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015.

³⁷ S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, *Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings project* (Research Report No. 32), Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015.



8. Flexible service delivery

Place-based approaches adapt interventions, support and services to suit local circumstances. This requires a flexible approach to service delivery according to community needs, as well as a flexible approach to funding.³⁷



This can help integrate service systems, developing a strong and inclusive universal set of services with well-developed 'horizontal' links between them, and 'vertical' links with secondary and tertiary services (referred to as 'progressive universalism').³⁸

The Tasmanian Child and Family Centres is an example of this, providing local programs for all families with babies and young children, and offering an integrated suite of high quality programs and services to meet the changing needs of the local community.

9. Capacity development

Developing innovative approaches to solving complex social and economic problems can require developing people's capacity to work in new ways.³⁹

Shared training across different professions to change service delivery methods or mentoring for community members in governance roles may be required.⁴⁰

For example, the Tasmanian Child and Family Centres recognised that genuine engagement with community

members and service users was needed to co-design desired outcomes for children and families, and so it developed and implemented a learning and development strategy to achieve this.

³⁸ T.G Moore, H McHugh-Dillon, K Bull, R Fry, B Laidlaw and S West, Op Cit.

³⁹ T.G Moore, et al., Op Cit.

⁴⁰ S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, Op Cit.

Place-based approaches need a 'backbone' organisation that coordinates participating organisations and government agencies.

10. Backbone funding and support

Place-based approaches need a 'backbone' organisation that coordinates participating organisations and government agencies.⁴¹

This requires sufficient funding for dedicated staff support within the 'backbone' organisation.

For example, the Communities for Children (CfC) funds non-government organisations to act as facilitating partners, to establish CfC committees

with broad community representation. The facilitating partners and committees oversee the development of community strategic plans and annual service delivery plans. The facilitating partners manage the overall funding allocations.

11. Outcomes-focused measurement

Place-based approaches focus on measuring outcomes, and collect data that will support this.

Outcomes-focused measurement is becoming more common across social policy and programs, as governments seek to measure the impact of their social spending on people's lives, and community

service organisations seek to confirm they are making a difference in the lives of their service users and communities.

Case study

The **Promise Neighborhoods Initiative** is a USA federal government program supporting community-driven, place-based efforts to improve educational and developmental outcomes for children in distressed communities. It is a key component of the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, an interagency federal partnership focused on empowering local communities to develop tools and resources that transform neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty into neighbourhoods of opportunity, and support children and families' development and wellbeing.

⁴¹ Ibid; see also the Collective Impact Framework <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/>



12. Good governance

Place-based approaches involve many organisations working together with community members. The most effective initiatives appear to be those with governance structures that comprise community members, community organisations, business and government agencies.⁴²

Good governance includes having a clear structure that ensures accountability and responsibility of those involved. In particular, government funding accountability standards require good governance, especially if there is local discretion in the allocation of government resources.

Victoria's Geelong Region Alliance (G21) is an example of this, with its governing board comprised of local government representatives, business and community leaders.

Case study

The **Geelong Region Alliance (G21)** is a formal alliance of government, business and community organisations working together to improve the lives of people across five council areas in Victoria's south-west: Colac Otway, Golden Plains, Greater Geelong, Queenscliffe and Surf Coast.

It provides a forum for discussing regional issues across interest groups and council areas, resulting in better coordinated research, consultation and planning.

G21 supports the delivery of region-wide projects across council boundaries and provides a platform for the region to speak with one voice to all levels of government. It is the official Strategic Planning Committee for the entire region and is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the region's strategic plan.

The G21 alliance is made up of more than 300 community leaders and specialists who are passionate about the future of the G21 region and who volunteer their time to be involved in G21 as directors, pillar members and within working groups.

The majority of its financial support comes from its five council members, its broader membership base and occasional government or community foundation grants.

13. Long-term timeframes

Taking a long-term approach is critical for the success of place-based approaches.

Sufficient lead time is needed to set up initiatives,⁴³ build relationships with communities, develop trust between partners,⁴⁴ and build capacity within service organisations and community members. Addressing

the causes of entrenched poverty and disadvantage in communities takes time, and often it will be many years before outcomes improve substantially.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ T.G Moore, et al., Op Cit.

Figure 2: Place-based approaches for local solutions ... a recipe for success

Place-based approaches can provide the best recipe for helping communities to deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

First take a few basic ingredients...

1. A focus on place
2. Support for groups facing disadvantage
3. Roles for community and service users
4. Effective engagement and communication
5. Local decision-making
6. Shared vision and a joint approach
7. Innovation
8. Flexible service delivery
9. Capacity development
10. Backbone funding and support
11. Outcomes-focused measurement
12. Good governance
13. Long-term timeframes

Then get everyone to the table to mix it up using the following method...



Communities need:

An approach that identifies place
 One place, one plan
 Involvement of people with lived experience of poverty and disadvantage
 Community engagement
 Strengths-based community development
 A focus on prevention and early intervention
 Local economy building
 Resources
 Flexibility
 Time



Community organisations can:

Use their experience and networks
 Build and facilitate relationships
 Build community engagement
 Take the lead in data collection and sharing
 Advocate for solutions
 Strengthen the long-term view
Community organisations need:
 A social innovation fund
 Flexibility



Governments can:

Establish a social innovation fund
 Develop a focus on place
 Consult to develop a shared vision
 Focus on building local economies
 Support workforce training and development
 Carefully consider competitive tendering
 Shift to outcomes measurement through consultation
 Share data
 Take a long-term view



Making place-based approaches work

Bringing communities to the table

What do communities need?

Communities have great power to drive place-based approaches and local solutions, working together with community organisations and governments. The following elements help foster communities' involvement.

An approach that identifies place

Identifying the true boundaries of a community is important to the success of a place-based approach. It is important that the people within the 'place' identify themselves as a community. In some cases a community's boundaries may not correlate closely with local government or departmental boundaries. The 'place' may be smaller than a local government area, such as a public housing estate. Many successful place-based initiatives are located on a service site (e.g. school or early childhood centre) and serve the local community connected to that service (i.e. service users and their families).

One place, one plan

To bring the community together and join up services, it is important to develop one approach as the umbrella for the initiatives that unfold. Contrary to this, in recent years there have been many examples of governments implementing several 'place-based' initiatives in the same location.

For example, the town of Shepparton in Victoria's north has two separate federally funded 'place-based' initiatives running: the Commonwealth government place-based Communities for Children Program, and a Commonwealth government income management trial.⁴⁵ The problem is not that there are too many initiatives (although reform fatigue can be an issue), but that the multiple place-based initiatives are not connected or coordinated, and may even run counter to each other.

Another common occurrence is that, particularly in regional centres and rural areas, the same people may sit on more than one place-based governance structure.

Rather than this, a single place-based governance structure should be used to coordinate the multiple efforts of Commonwealth, state and local governments, as well as non-government organisations. The local governance structure can facilitate and coordinate planning for the place-based approach, as well as identify gaps and duplication. In this way there is one plan per place, albeit with a number of sub-plans and initiatives working together.

⁴⁵ D Tennant, 'How Place Fares in Place Based Solutions', *Insight*, Vol. 7, 2015, pp. 34-35.

The 'place' may be smaller than a local government area, such as a public housing estate.

Involvement of people with lived experience of poverty and disadvantage

If initiatives are planned and designed without the input of the people they aim to support, even when based on the best available research and data they can overlook the reality and complexity of people's lives. They are then unlikely to achieve their identified goals, because when implemented, they will not run as envisaged, because people will interact with them differently than what was planned.

Involving people facing poverty and disadvantage in developing place-based initiatives recognises their strengths and better incorporates their experience, circumstances, values and goals. This goes beyond consultation, requiring 'co-design', where people who receive services and people who deliver them, work together to design and implement those services, and play governance roles. It transfers power and shares it with people affected by social problems, building the capacity of everyone involved.

The VCOSS report, *Walk alongside: Co-designing social initiatives with people experiencing vulnerabilities*,⁴⁶ outlines how working together through co-design helps deliver programs and services that address the complex forms of disadvantage people face. When a community sets its own goals there is a greater chance of people achieving them.

Community engagement

Place-based approaches engage community members in developing and delivering solutions, and integrating them into community structures and people's lives over the long term. Core features of effective community engagement strategies include:⁴⁷

- starting from the community's own identified needs and priorities rather than those dictated from outside

- inviting and building local autonomy, giving leadership to people in the community
- building the capacity of families and the community to meet their own needs more effectively
- a flexible service system that can be tailored to meet local needs
- balanced partnerships between providers and consumers based on mutual trust and respect
- working with the community rather than doing things *for* them or *to* them
- sharing information so the community can make informed decisions
- providing the community with choices regarding services and intervention options.

Strengths-based community development

While place-based approaches focus on the causes of poverty and disadvantage, they should also identify a community's strengths, opportunities and goals. They should take into account the community's assets (human, physical and social) and potential.

A strengths-based community development approach utilises a community's existing resources to the fullest extent possible, and uses them to leverage additional resources from outside the community.

Acknowledging and promoting a community's strengths also helps mitigate the potential problem of research reports and media stories perpetually focusing on a community's level of dysfunction. Such stories often further entrench people's feeling of hopelessness and isolation. A strengths-based approach can also be described as an 'Asset Based Community Development' approach.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Victorian Council of Social Service, *Walk alongside: Co-designing social initiatives with people experiencing vulnerabilities*, VCOSS, July 2015.

⁴⁷ T Moore, M McDonald, M McHugh-Dillon and S West, *Community engagement A key strategy for improving outcomes for Australian families*, Child Family Community Australia, Paper No. 39, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of Asset Based Community Development see, for example, A Mathie and G Cunningham, *From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development*, Coady International Institute, 2002.



Making place-based approaches work

Bringing communities to the table (cont...)



A focus on prevention and early intervention

Government and community sector services tend to focus on supporting people when they have reached a crisis point. While this provides an important safety net, it does not achieve social change. Compared with prevention and early intervention, it is also a relatively expensive and ineffective approach to helping people overcome disadvantage and poverty, as by the time they reach crisis point, people's difficulties have likely become more entrenched, interwoven, and harder to shift.

Place-based approaches focus on effective prevention and early intervention, as outlined in the following examples:

- **Supporting people to participate**

Traditional services might support someone to overcome barriers to participate in social, economic or cultural activities. In contrast, a place-based approach would seek to remove the barriers. For example, a traditional service might provide individuals with transport to appointments, shopping and social events, while a place-based approach might seek to ensure transport was available and accessible to all.

- **Supporting people who are unemployed**

Social security will provide people a minimum safety net payment and employment services will help people find work after they become unemployed. A place-based approach might focus on improving people's school achievement, retention and completion rates and increase their participation and completion in post-school education and training, to help them avoid becoming unemployed, as well as creating more employment by building local economies.

- **Supporting people's health**

Hospitals and allied health services often treat people once a person has an acute health problem. Place-based approaches would improve the social determinants of health – the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age – to help people improve their health and wellbeing and prevent problems occurring, rather than treat mental and physical health problems once they emerge.

Local economy-building

As well as focusing on improving service delivery, especially by integrating services, it is also important to focus on building local economies.

Increasing people's participation in employment by helping them improve their educational outcomes, and pairing this with local economic development, is an extremely effective way of reducing unemployment.

Using the community's skills and knowledge, including that of businesses and social enterprises, to develop economic opportunities stimulates demand for employees. Improving people's education and training outcomes increases the number of suitably qualified local workers to take up the jobs created.

Resources

Place-based approaches need resources for management and governance, and to develop and deliver initiatives. Effective place-based initiatives usually require a coordinator early in the process, and other staff as project activities commence. Funding is usually from various tiers of government, but can also be from philanthropic organisations. Businesses may also contribute, especially in-kind resources. All funding will require some degree of accountability.

While having a range of sources may bring multiple accountability requirements, it also reduces the risk of a single funding body having too much control. A spread of funding sources may also make a wider range of activities possible.

Place-based approaches engage community members in developing and delivering solutions, and integrating them into community structures and people's lives over the long term.

Flexibility

Place-based initiatives will and should evolve over time as new partners come to the table, new activities are developed and new funding becomes available. Initiatives must be flexible and able to respond to changing circumstances, while still focusing on their main goals. VCOSS member organisations report they are currently constrained by rigid funding models and eligibility, and that flexible funding models and agreements are needed to adopt place-based approaches.

Time

Communities are not able to overcome entrenched disadvantage overnight. Quick-fixes do not produce sustainable change, instead, a long-term approach is required to address the complex problems communities face.⁴⁹

Too often governments fund projects or activities for short periods (e.g. 1-3 years), which can raise community expectations of continued support, without this being the reality. If government agencies

do not plan for continued funding, they can leave communities without a feasible strategy to sustain the activities beyond the funding period.

VCOSS members state that involvement of a diverse range of organisations (e.g. community services, businesses, police) and individuals with different experiences, knowledge and interests, also requires longer decision-making timeframes. It takes time to build good working relationships and a collaborative culture.

This is not to say that shorter term, interim results are not important, as these can help build momentum and raise funds. Success breeds success and funding can follow success. However, holding a longer term view is also imperative.

⁴⁹ G Galster, J Cutsinger and U Lim, 'Are Neighbourhoods Self-stabilising? Exploring Endogenous Dynamics', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2007, pp. 167-185.



Bringing the community sector to the table

How can community organisations help?

The community sector has great expertise and community connections that can help facilitate place-based approaches. However they require resources, support and flexible funding to do this.



Using their expertise and networks

Community sector organisations connect people and support them to overcome poverty and disadvantage. They work with people across a wide range of service areas, including early education and care, services for young people, family services, health services, housing and homelessness services, employment assistance, disability services, aged care services, services for Aboriginal people, and services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Many community sector organisations also undertake research, community development and social justice advocacy to tackle the causes of poverty and disadvantage. Many operate social enterprises. Community sector organisations have strong knowledge and close links with the communities they serve and are able to collaborate with other organisations.⁵⁰

For all these reasons, they are well placed to play a leading role in place-based approaches. They can help connect the community with government, business and services.

Building and facilitating relationships

VCOSS member organisations stress that relational aspects are critical to the success of place-based approaches. They require coordinated effort across a wide range of sectors; including education, health, law enforcement, justice and business. They also stress that local governments are a key partner. They also suggest that the facilitator of place-based initiatives should not be prescribed, as sometimes the lead may come from the community sector, at other times it might be local government, or other players.

Community organisations can help build relationships across these sectors. They can use their local knowledge of people, services and networks to kickstart place-based initiatives by identifying potential allies, including community members, other community sector and public service organisations, local government and business enterprises, and help build relationships between them.

⁵⁰ See for example, Australian Red Cross, *Beyond the Blanket: The role of not-for-profits and non-traditional stakeholders in emergency management*, 2nd National Disaster Resilience Roundtable Report, Melbourne, 2015.

Community sector organisations have strong knowledge and close links with the communities they serve and are able to collaborate with other organisations.

Building community engagement

Place-based approaches engage community members in developing and delivering solutions that reflect the often complex reality of their lives, and integrate solutions into people's lives and community structures over the long term. Community organisations can help facilitate this by drawing on their local knowledge and networks with clients, volunteers and volunteer board members to identify community members who could play a part in the governance, development and delivery of place-based initiatives.

This can help overcome a tendency for place-based initiatives developed by state and federal governments to be delivered in a top-down fashion, with a limited role for community members and organisations in the planning, design and pre-implementation stages.

Taking the lead in data collection and sharing

Community organisations involved in place-based approaches can establish a process for collecting common data, and measure and share results on community level indicators. Agreed measurement methods can ensure the collective efforts of all are focused on common goals. Sharing results can help organisations to learn from each other. The Collective Impact framework suggests that this is a challenging aspect of working together.⁵¹ Many community organisations are collecting measures of their impact using the collective impact, results-based accountability or other frameworks.

Advocating for solutions to poverty and disadvantage in their communities

With their local knowledge and expertise, community sector organisations are well placed to recommend changes to government policies and programs to help overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage in their communities. Being independent, self-governing entities they are able to advocate on behalf of their communities in a manner that government agencies are unable to do. This advocacy might involve:

- Raising community awareness of the extent of poverty and disadvantage in their communities
- Bringing issues and solutions to the attention of politicians, public servants and other decision-makers
- Bringing their local knowledge and expertise to government reviews and parliamentary inquiries through written submissions and presenting evidence at hearings.

Strengthening the long-term view

The community sector can help strengthen long-term views around achieving goals, helping overcome tendencies to pursue solutions based on short-term agendas that follow political cycles, often only with pilot funding. Community organisations are also generally trusted and valued institutions, having longevity and history in communities, strengthening their ability to help advocate for and implement initiatives over the long term.

They can help advocate for the long-term funding and viewpoint required for fostering effective community engagement and communication, building strong relationships, developing solutions and achieving outcomes.

⁵¹ See <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/shared-measurement/>



Bringing the community sector to the table (cont...)

What do community organisations need?

A social innovation fund to deliver resources

Community sector organisations can draw on their local knowledge and networks to help develop and deliver place-based approaches. However, they often lack the funds and flexibility required to initiate, facilitate and participate in place-based approaches. A government-funded social innovation fund could help overcome this.

Initially, funding could be used to develop and support a backbone organisation to coordinate and build the relationships between participating organisations, and the community engagement needed, to develop initiatives. It could also be used to deliver the initiatives themselves, once designed. Funding could also be put into developing agreed outcomes measures for the community.

A social innovation fund would enable community organisations to participate without diverting resources from existing community services they are providing for people.

Flexibility

A social innovation fund would also give community organisations the flexibility they need to help deliver the type of innovative new projects that characterise place-based initiatives.

One of the constant barriers to place-based approaches noted by VCOSS member organisations is a lack of investment in the innovation required. Community sector organisations are funded by government to deliver services to agreed outputs and targets. However a place-based approach requires funding to build the capacity of the whole community, without having agreed outputs and targets at the outset. Place-based approaches evolve over time as new partners come to the table, new activities are developed and new funding becomes available. The initiatives must be flexible and able to respond to changing circumstances, while still focusing on their main goals of helping communities overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

VCOSS member organisations report they are currently constrained by rigid funding models and eligibility, and that flexible funding models and agreements are needed to adopt place-based approaches. A social innovation fund could deliver this and enable community organisations to facilitate place-based approaches that help communities overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage.

A social innovation fund would enable community organisations to facilitate place-based approaches without needing to divert resources from their existing services.

Bringing government to the table

What can government do?

There are many things government can do to help develop place-based approaches across Victoria, including funding approaches through a social innovation fund, consulting to develop a shared vision, developing a focus on place, taking a long-term view, supporting local initiatives with social procurement and workforce training, consulting on service selection and measurement options, and sharing data.

Establish a social innovation fund

The Victorian government can help communities overcome entrenched disadvantage by establishing a social innovation fund. This could be used to support community-led, place-based approaches and initiatives that combine government, non-government and private sector efforts to address gaps, build on strengths and raise social and economic activity in communities.

A social innovation fund would enable community organisations to facilitate place-based approaches without needing to divert resources from their existing services. It would also support place-based initiatives by giving community organisations flexibility in developing and delivering services. They would be able to adapt government-funded services to the needs and goals identified by the local community, rather than being required to deliver a standard service.

As the development of place-based approaches progresses, governments could consider 'Whole-Place Community Budgets'. These have been trialled in the United Kingdom and have been described as a "promising model for future policy design and delivery".⁵²

Governments and the community sector need to be innovative in approaching social policy and programs. With current policies and programs failing to tackle the causes of entrenched poverty and disadvantage, it is counterproductive to keep doing the same things

and hope for different outcomes. Innovation is inherently risky, and some things may fail, but without it, social policies and programs will keep delivering the same results. Government needs to be able to support innovation and accept that some initiatives may fail, knowing that failure need not be considered a waste if lessons are learned and not repeated.

Develop a focus on place

All governments operate in departmental silos and there are often silos within departments. Place-based approaches and initiatives, by their nature, break down these silos. To make them work, governments will need to ensure their employees are able to work across silos and that departmental policies and procedures do not hinder place-based initiatives. Government agencies wishing to go further could "... work jointly by aligning their objectives, activities and resources where they believe a collaborative approach can add most value".⁵³

The Victorian government has recognised the importance of place in recently establishing the Regional and Metro Partnerships and Children and Youth Area Partnerships, as well as the more longstanding Primary Care Partnerships. The government could build on these initiatives by supporting authorising governance arrangements that promote place-based initiatives at local community, regional and central levels, encompassing the 13 place-based elements described in this paper.

⁵² National Audit Office, *Case Study on Integration: Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Whole-Place Community Budgets*, 2013, p. 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.



Bringing government to the table

What can government do? (cont...)

Consult to develop a shared vision

Devoting the time to consult with communities, community organisations, businesses and other services to develop a shared agenda and coherent long-term vision are important for developing and delivering place-based approaches.⁵⁴

Community sector organisations and local governments can initiate these discussions in their communities. The Victorian government can provide employees in local public sector agencies and services with the time and flexibility they need to participate.

Focus on building local economies

A successful place-based approach needs to include a focus on building local economies. This is a different approach to building employment through industry-specific strategies. Focusing on increasing people's employment opportunities in a community by improving their educational opportunities, engagement and outcomes, and pairing this with building the local economy, is an extremely effective way of reducing unemployment and helping people overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage in communities.

Government agencies purchase a wide range of goods and services. By adopting a local procurement policy as part of a place-based approach, government agencies can help build local economies. Buying goods and services from local businesses or social enterprises increases local employment. Policies could also include where relevant, targets for employment of people with disability, trainees and apprentices, or people who have been long-term unemployed.

Support workforce training and development

Governments can help develop place-based approaches by funding or providing training and professional development across sectors and professions. Much of the workforce is divided through professional silos, and while collaboration is often cited as a way to improve outcomes, improving training and professional development collaboration across professions would also help.

More emphasis is needed on building community development skills within government and the community sector. It is less common now to find people with community development skills in both the public service and community sector. This reflects a move away from community development teaching in universities, and among vocational education and training providers.

Carefully consider competitive tendering

Governments in recent years have preferred to use competitive tendering processes when choosing organisations to provide government-funded services. Governments grant tenders on the basis of submissions that best meet tender document selection criteria. However, since local knowledge and existing community connections are not usually referenced in many tender processes, the successful organisation is not necessarily the best placed to provide the services, particularly if a place-based approach is to be adopted, requiring local knowledge and connections.

Place-based approaches rely on having trust and time to develop, and changing service providers may have significant consequences for them. This is not to say that providers should not be changed, particularly if they are performing poorly, but that existing connections with the community should be valued by governments.

⁵⁴T.G Moore, et al., Op Cit.

Devoting the time to consult with communities, community organisations, businesses and other services to develop a shared agenda and coherent long-term vision are important for developing and delivering place-based approaches.

Shift to outcomes measurement through consultation

Governments collect an extensive range of data from their own operations and those of government-funded community sector services. However the data collected is often focused on inputs and outputs, rather than outcomes. A shift to measuring outcomes would help to better measure the progress of place-based initiatives. Outcomes measurement needs to be developed in consultation with communities and service providers to avoid duplication and improve the relevance and utility of data collected. The first step in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of data collection would be for those involved in place-based approaches to agree on the outcomes intended to be achieved through funding and services.

Share data

Governments and non-government organisations all collect data. However, while funded non-government organisations regularly report on their activities to government, this data is then rarely shared or reported at a community level. Government agencies do not publicly report it or regularly make it available for others to use and analyse. Governments should seek to ensure data collected in place-based approaches is publicly available for use by communities.

As the Collective Impact framework points out, collecting data and measuring results consistently at the community level helps align efforts.⁵⁵ It also allows for success and failure to be recognised and learnt from.

Initially supported by VicHealth, Community Indicators Victoria⁵⁶ began collecting and reporting on a wide range of useful data around health and wellbeing, allowing comparisons across local government areas and regions. The Victorian government could support this, or a similar project, by contributing administrative data and financial support. Community sector organisations could also contribute data. VCOSS member organisations consistently report that the compliance and red tape burdens they face means they are collecting data repeatedly, and often to no end. The direct cost of reporting across all Victorian community sector charities is estimated to be \$23 million per year.⁵⁷

Organisations also suggest a need for a coordinating body to collect evidence of good practice in place-based approaches, along with further research and evaluation.

Take a long-term view

In modern-day politics, policy time horizons have become shorter, despite the fact that economic, social and environmental problems require long-term solutions. Governments can better support place-based approaches by focusing on long-term goals identified by communities, over and above the frenetic pace of social media, the daily media cycle and political terms. Short-term thinking is not the best way to achieve sustainable outcomes. Wise decisions are not made without due consideration. The complex problems of poverty and disadvantage are not going to be overcome through strengths-based place-based initiatives within short timeframes. To progress a place-based approach, governments need to shift policy views to take in longer term goals and outcomes.

⁵⁵ See <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/shared-measurement>

⁵⁶ See <http://www.communityindicators.net.au/>.

⁵⁷ Victorian Council of Social Service, *More than Charity: Victoria's community sector charities*, VCOSS, July 2016.



Conclusion



Working together, communities, the community sector and government can develop and deliver innovative place-based approaches and initiatives that address local gaps and build on strengths, helping communities deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage in the long term.

People within the community sector have significant knowledge, experience and expertise to help facilitate place-based approaches and initiatives, and there is much governments can do to assist.

There are 13 basic elements of place-based approaches that provide the best framework for success. There are also some policy and practice shifts required in the way these are delivered within the community, the community sector and by government.

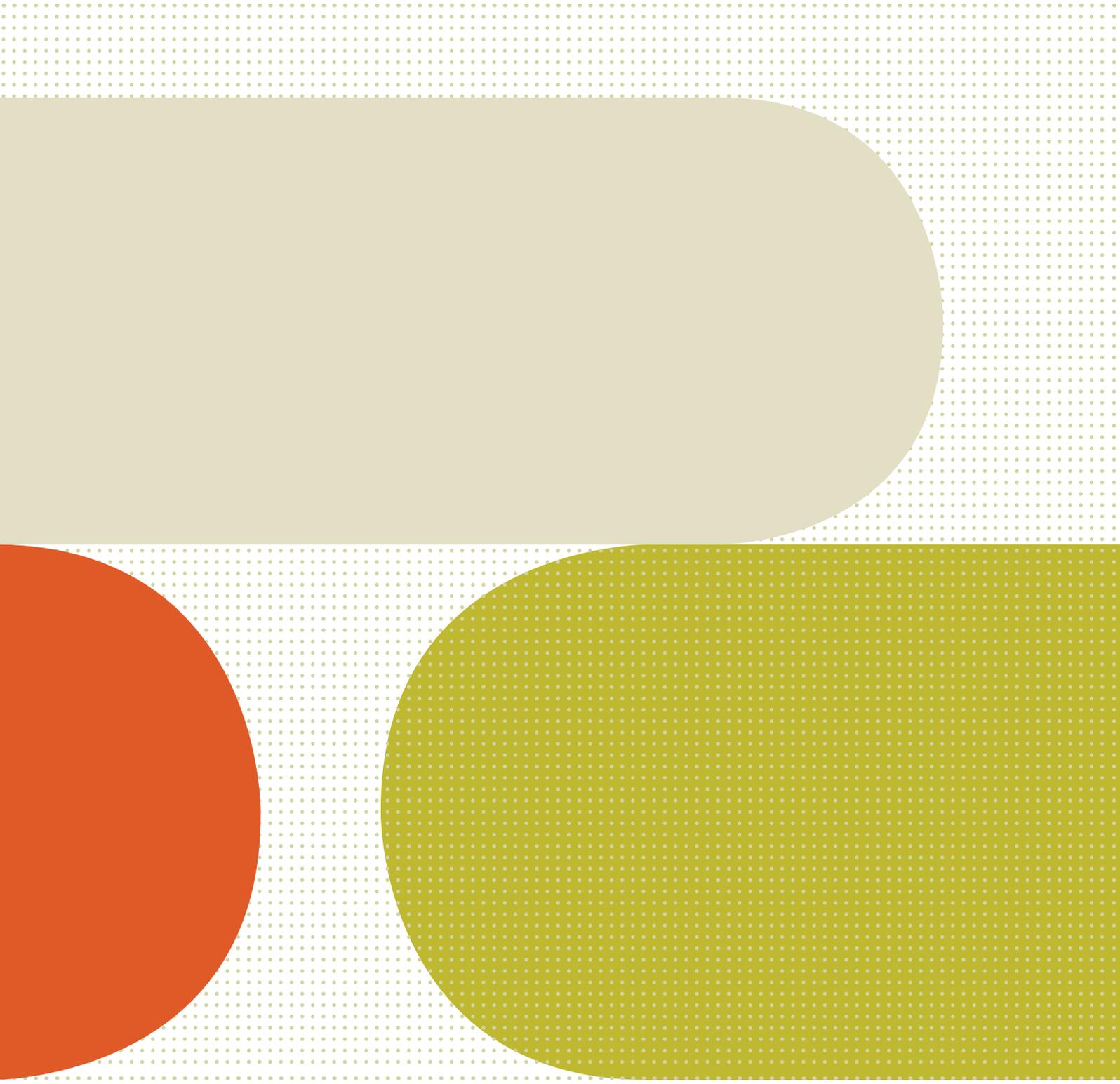
By working with these elements, communities across Victoria can unlock the power of place-based approaches to overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage, driving the local solutions that will give everyone the chance to connect, fulfil their potential, and share the benefits of social and economic growth.



Working together, communities, the community sector and government can develop and deliver innovative place-based approaches and initiatives that address local gaps and build on strengths, helping communities deliver local solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage in the long-term. ┘



People within the community sector have significant knowledge, experience and expertise to help facilitate place-based approaches and initiatives, and there is much governments can do to assist.



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