



# **A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector**

**Response to Department of Social  
Services Issues Paper**

**November 2023**

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# Overview

## About Logan Together

Logan Together is a community movement committed to the wellbeing of every child in Logan, from 0 to 8 years of age. Our big goal is to see Logan's children happy and healthy now and for generations to come.

We believe that the only way this can be achieved is to listen to the community and work together with the community, co-designing and implementing ways to see every child in Logan have every opportunity to be the very best they can be.

As a Collective Impact initiative, Logan Together is focused on systems change. We walk alongside community leaders and work across sectors to change how we work. This means putting First Nations first, having children at the heart and being community led in all that we do.

We believe that by changing how we work we will see systems change. By changing mindsets, power structures and relationships, we will see reform across policy and services, and have resources distributed and used in ways that matter to community. Ultimately, by working and collaborating together we will see sustainable change that improves the holistic wellbeing of children and their families in Logan.

## Funding arrangements that support community-led, place-based change

At the core of Collective Impact is ensuring that everyone is working to a community-led vision and shared agenda. This means pooling skills, resources and assets in ways that are adaptable and flexible. This requires a shift from the traditional approach of government block-funding programs and projects that are often not tailored to the needs or context of the community, to exploring new ways of supporting the flow of resources that meet community needs and reflect community context.

Place-based, community-led work can be supported by funding arrangements that support shared decision-making. Ideally, funding needs to be adaptable, flexible, and independent of individual organisational requirements so that it can be applied as needed to achieve the shared agenda.

Shared decision-making is about people and communities determining their own futures by having a genuine and informed say about what happens in the community and sharing the power to influence local outcomes. Community-led initiatives are seeking the opportunity to share the responsibility for how policies, programs, service delivery and funding are developed, designed and aligned to community needs, at the guidance of community members and local governance groups, while sharing the accountability for risk management, evaluation, impacts and outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Stronger Places Stronger People partnership and Backbone Alliance Group: Shared Decision-Making Paper, April 2023

Relevant funding arrangements are one way to facilitate and support community-led, place-based change and are an important way of supporting shared decision-making. A recent experience of modelling shared decision-making in Logan Together highlighted the importance of:

- Identifying and understanding the assets of community-led collaboration and the associated levers for change
- Having a clear 'ask' of government in relation to shared decision-making
- Setting ground rules for shared decision-making

## Response to Issues Paper questions

### 5.1 What is your experience with and reflections on place-based funding approaches?

Logan Together is a community-led, place-based Collective Impact initiative funded through Stronger Places, Stronger People. We also receive funding from philanthropic and corporate partners, with significant in-kind contributions made by community leaders, community organisations and partners, service providers, and others.

Place-based funding works best when it is flexible and responsive to the needs of the community. The allocation of resources should be a tool to embed and build capability for shared decision-making. This means pooling resources so that all investors and funders are accountable and responsible for achieving the shared vision of the initiative. The approach to funding should ensure that all parts of the sector see their role as part of a collaborative whole, and that resources are distributed in ways that are responsive to the vision and needs of community.

Place-based funding approaches need to reflect the long-term nature of the social contract, and the most impactful investment occurs when funding is in place for 5-10 years. There needs to be flexibility to front load the investment to achieve key collaboration milestones.

Communities are clear that they want relational service delivery with high levels of cultural safety; services which embed the voice and preferences of community. Procurement and commissioning processes currently, however, are biased towards large corporations.

### 5.2 What innovative approaches could be implemented to ensure the grant funding reaches trusted community organisations with strong local links?

Understanding funding as a tool to support shared decision-making is a way to ensure that funding reaches organisations and initiatives that make sense for community.

Over time, ready communities across Australia have been able to establish strong foundations which can serve as assets for our work with Government. These assets mean that place-based, community-led initiatives offer meaningful solutions for change. For example, at Logan Together we have generated:

- well organised and aligned community leadership with high levels of accountability
- increasing community agency and voice
- a collective vision and well-articulated plan
- cross-sectoral partners who are aligning behind the plan
- priority outcomes indicators mapped across the life course of a child, 0-8 years
- a strong and capable triumvirate of governance, including the Logan Together Board, the Leadership Table and the First Nations governance of Gnirigomindala Karulbo
- a commitment and embedded practice which allows us to increasingly operate within the middle space
- the resultant opportunity for targeted funding flows which are aligned, efficient and enable real impact.

Having identified their assets, communities are then able to determine what is needed from government to work collaboratively. Working together means de-risking the situation for government by ensuring accountability, civic organisation and buy-in to create real traction and impact. At Logan Together, our request of government has included:

- sit with us in Circle to build relationships that will last, as equal partners
- integrate government priority indicators to align with our vision
- gradually embed the Equity Agreement within all funding documentation
- commit to funding agreements which require collaboration
- align with the Logan Together Collective Plan and priority indicators
- include Logan Together in funding and procurement decisions
- share the data – our data – that offers us deeper insight into areas of hope and concern
- work across Commonwealth and State governments to align new investment around the Collective Plan
- work alongside us to reallocate funds and to pool funding using our plan
- consider the streamlining of reporting for efficiency across government departments
- communicate both upwards to central offices and Ministers, and outwards to communities
- leverage the existing ‘Stronger Places Stronger People’ Collaboration Agreement between the State and Commonwealth governments
- allow the time for us to sit Circle with community to achieve deep understanding and broad authentic involvement in Shared Decision-Making

This request is further developed through the creation of ground rules for shared decision-making. At Logan Together, we have the expectation that individuals and agencies involved in shared decision-making:

- have the authority to make the commitments
- be explicit in how this fit within their own agency strategy
- consider a range of supports and investment, including policy and process reform, two-way learning, financial contribution etc.
- understand that solutions proposed by community will be holistic, in line with its ways of working, and will therefore inevitably cross policy domains, agencies and departments

- understand the commitments will be mutually reinforcing (i.e. the work of shared decision-making is about weaving together opportunities that support each other, rather than compiling a list of ‘good ideas’)
- are aware that commitments made in Circle require time to explore and consider via established community governance protocols and processes, prior to full endorsement. Endorsement will be made as the proposals are mapped against our foundational documents and enacted ways of working: the Roadmap and Collective Plan, the Three Pillars, the Elders’ Values, and the Ingredients for Success in Logan.

### **5.3 Which areas do you consider have duplicative funding or gaps you think need to be addressed, and what is the evidence?**

Funding arrangements for place-based work that are focused on implementing projects and programs will often not grapple with the fundamental shift in mindset and power structures required to co-design and implement work in ways that meet the needs of community. Siloed funding arrangements for discrete programs also have the potential to foster duplication and overlap as different government agencies may seek to address the same or related challenges through different funding mechanisms. This can add confusion and complexity into systems that are already challenging to navigate.

Moving to an approach focused on identifying and achieving a shared vision across sectors provides opportunities to collaborate, streamline and align funding. This reduces the possibility of duplication and gaps, as everyone is clear about the outcomes sought and how they can be achieved, together.

### **5.4 Where there is a community-led change initiative, could shared accountability to community and funders (government) strengthen service delivery?**

Yes. The experience of community-led systems change shows that if services are procured or funded in ways that set meet the needs of the funder, and not the community, services will generally be designed and delivered to meet contractual obligations that do not always grapple with the needs of community.

In contrast, where accountability lies in realising a shared community vision or agenda, funders and service providers are equally accountable for delivery and achieving the shared agenda.