



Pathways in Place

Co-Creating Community Capabilities

How does public policy frame practices necessary for well- functioning systems?

An analysis of Australian federal public policy on place-based
approaches

March 2024





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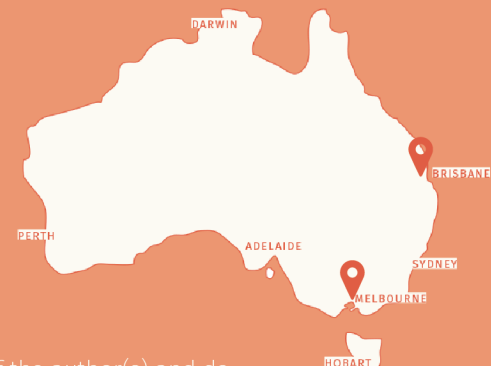
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Pathways in Place: Co-Creating Community Capabilities is an innovative program of research and action that works closely with communities to achieve positive, sustainable, and systemic change.

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Summary

Place-based systems change approaches have shown promise in addressing complex problems such as unemployment or educational inequality to improve population outcomes and are gaining popularity as a result. The team at Pathways in Place-Victoria University (www.pathwaysinplace.com.au/victoria-university) developed a Theory of Systems Change¹ to advance understanding of place-based system change approaches. A central proposition of the [Theory of Systems Change](#) is that well-functioning systems create the conditions necessary for improved population outcomes.

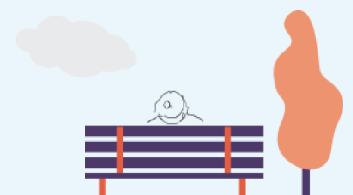
So, what are some of the necessary practices of well-functioning systems? In the Theory of Systems Change, we propose that *adaptation*, *alignment*, *collaboration*, and *evidence-driven action and learning* are four practices necessary for well-functioning systems. These practices apply across a range of domains, including research, practice, and public policy.

In this report, we examine how Australian federal policies related to place-based approaches frames these four practices. This understanding is important for two key reasons:

- first, it enables public policy to foster a supportive policy environment for place-based systems change, therefore driving meaningful and sustainable change at the local level; and
- second, it encourages the uptake of these practices within public policy and/or policy-making ensuring that the policy process, from development to implementation, contributes to and reinforces a well-functioning system.

Therefore, the report is primarily aimed at the Australian federal-level decision makers and public servants, especially departments and sectors engaged in place-based initiatives. However, the content may provide valuable information that can inform decision-making at state and local levels.

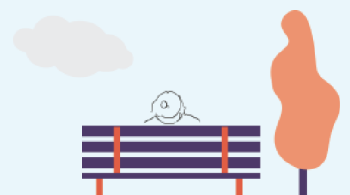
Building on these findings, our previous research¹⁻³ and experience working on a place-based systems change program, we propose the following suggestions for public policy:



- provide detail on the integration of adaptability within the Australian public service, explaining how it will be measured and improved over time;
- test the development (and implementation) of adaptive public policies, particularly those that regulate place-based systems change approaches;
- provide more detail on how alignment between, within and across various parts of the system will be achieved (e.g. coordination of services to reduce duplication, alignment across existing place-based programs, alignment between partners in a place-based initiative related to mutual goals or sense of identity);
- present a balanced perspective related to collaboration by recognising not only the advantages of collaboration but also its inherent risks, costs, and challenges and provide suggestions on how to mitigate them;
- embed monitoring, evaluation, and learning within and across all place-based approaches; and
- outline, promote and support processes for the sharing and dissemination of data, best practices, learnings and evidence across place-based approaches.



If you would like to access all resources, evidence, tools and guidance [Pathways in Place-Victoria University](#) developed on place-based, systems change approaches, please visit our [Knowledge Hub](#).



Background

Place-based approaches and systems thinking

Place-based approachesⁱ are programs or initiatives designed and delivered at the local level to address issues within a specific geographic area. These approaches generally:

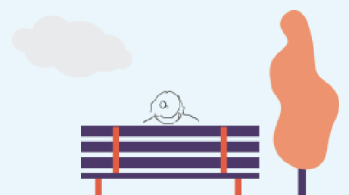
- consider the unique contexts, resources, and needs of a particular area, community, or population; and
- involve the collaboration of multiple, cross-sector stakeholders (e.g., government, research institutions, for purpose organisations, businesses, and community members) working together to address a specific problem (e.g., unemployment, educational inequality).

Place-based approaches and systems thinking perspectives are compatible in that place-based approaches require a re-alignment of systems to support the community, and both seek to tackle complexⁱⁱ problems.⁴ However, not all place-based approaches apply a systems thinking perspective or aim for systemic change.

When we apply *big picture* or systems thinking in place-based approaches, the focus shifts from attempting to change individual behaviour, to making changes to the broader structures and underlying conditions that hold complex problems in place. From a systems perspective, addressing complex problems requires change to occur across all levels of the targeted system, from individuals, to organisations and the government. Complex systems are made up of a myriad of interconnected parts, and the relationships between these parts can contribute to the root causes of complex problems. Governments and their public policies are well-placed to

ⁱ Place-based approaches share similar characteristics, and sometimes are used synonymously with 'neighbourhood-based initiatives', 'community-based initiatives', 'area-based initiatives', and 'collective impact approaches'.

ⁱⁱ Complex problems are unpredictable and do not follow set patterns or rules. They involve many components that interact in unpredictable ways, leading to outcomes that are not always directly linked to the initial conditions. For example, managing a pandemic is a complex problem. It involves unpredictable elements such as human behaviour, virus mutations, and global travel patterns. Even with the same initial conditions, the outcome can be different due to the high degree of interconnectivity and unpredictability.



create an environment that can enable or hinder sustainable change, and as such, play an important role in realising place-based systems change.



If you are interested to know more about place-based approaches and evidence around them, read our [findings snapshot](#).



If you would like to know more about the value of systems thinking and seductive nature of traditional, 'programmatic thinking', read our [blog](#).

Practices necessary for a well-functioning system

Increasingly, researchers, practitioners, policy makers and community members are recognising the value of looking at complex problems from a system thinkingⁱⁱⁱ perspective. We developed the Theory of Systems Change¹ to enhance our understanding of how place-based systems approaches can improve population outcomes.⁸ The Theory of Systems Change has several central propositions elaborated [elsewhere](#) in detail.¹ In this report, we will present only those aspects of the Theory of Systems Change that are relevant for this public policy analysis.^{iv}

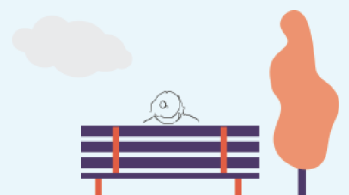
One of the central propositions of the Theory of Systems Change is that:

well-functioning systems create conditions for improved population outcomes for current and future generations.¹

But what are some of the practices individuals within a system, such as practitioners, policy-makers and researchers could adopt to contribute to a well-functioning system? How can organisations and institutions support these practices? How can the practices be reflected in organisations and public policies? There is no simple answer to these questions, but we believe it is important to propose some practices that constitute a well-functioning system to:

ⁱⁱⁱ Systems thinking highlights the need to consider the dynamic and interconnected nature of systems that create our social world.⁵⁻⁷ Applying systems thinking perspective shifts attention away from intervening in the life and behaviour of individuals, to examine the impact of factors and the underlying causes in the system that contribute to the problems.

^{iv} Policy analysis can be broadly conceptualised as the process of 'finding out what governments do, why they do it, and what difference, if any, it makes'^{9(p4)}. In this report, we conceptualise policy analysis as a 'policy-relevant research' that audits or assesses one or more aspects of specific policy document.¹⁰



- provide clarity on the roles and contributions of stakeholders, their organisations, and their outputs in relation to system performance and functioning;
- focus efforts on supporting well-functioning systems; and
- make it possible to measure well-functioning systems and evaluate the success of place-based systems change approaches.

In the Theory of Systems Change, we propose that every system needs certain practices to be considered well-functioning.

These four inter-related practices are *adaptation*, *alignment*, *collaboration* and *evidence-driven action and learning* (Figure 1).

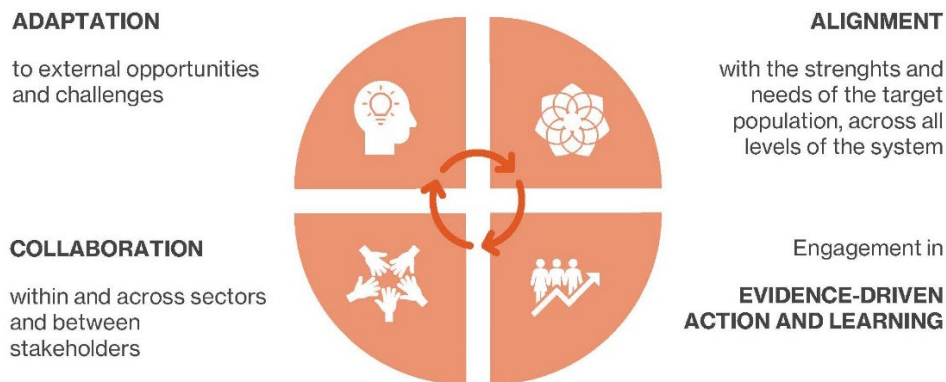
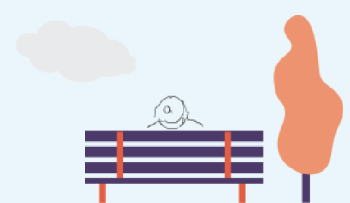


Figure 1 - The four proposed practices of a well-functioning system

Suppose we perceive a person as a system. In that case, they need characteristics, such as a 'strong and positive body image', the ability to cope with challenges, and 'inner harmony' ¹¹ to function well. Even though each person is different, these characteristics can be applied universally, and we can assume that a person with these characteristics will generally be healthier than someone without them.

We can apply the same principles to systems. Although communities and the problems they face are different, some practices can be applied across communities and problems they face.

We propose that adaptation, alignment, collaboration and evidence-driven action and learning can be applied across a range of domains, including research, practice and public policy.^{1,12} In Table 1, we explain why these practices are important, and how they are defined in the Theory of Systems Change.



Alignment, adaptation, collaboration and evidence-driven action and learning are practices necessary for a well-functioning system.¹



If you would like to know more about the Theory of Systems Change and practices within a well-functioning system, you can access the full academic publication at the following [link](#).



If you are interested in how the Theory of Systems Change was developed, you can read our [methods snapshot](#).⁸



If you are interested to know more about how success can be defined for place-based systems change approaches, you can read our [findings snapshot](#).²

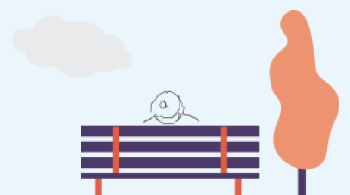
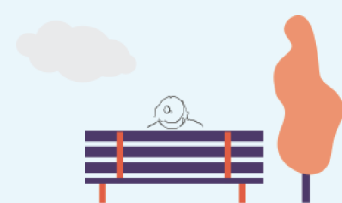


Table 1 – Practices necessary for well-functioning systems^v

Practice	Why is it important?	How we define it?
 <p>Adaptation</p>	<p>Adaptation is important because systems exist in dynamic environments that continually change. Facing uncertainties and effectively responding to these changes allows for correction of errors and adjustments so systems can preserve their functionality and improve over time. Adaptation is not just a valuable property of a system but organisations that are able to adapt to external pressures tend to be more successful.¹³</p>	<p>'...ability to respond to external changes – both opportunities and challenges'^{14,15,1}</p>
 <p>Alignment</p>	<p>Alignment across a system is crucial for effective and efficient functioning of the system.¹⁶ Alignment facilitates the interconnectedness and interdependence of all parts of the system. Lack of alignment can lead to systemic failures, inefficiencies, or unintended consequences, as the individual parts of the system may accidentally work against each other.</p>	<p>'...sharing the same or complementary perceived needs of the target population and how these needs will be met across various system levels (e.g. target population, practitioners, researchers, policy-makers)^{16,1}</p>
 <p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Cross-sector and multi-sector collaboration is crucial for place-based, systems change initiatives.¹⁷ Collaboration between and across sectors has many benefits such as improved service delivery, increased social capital, improved population outcomes, knowledge and information exchange, mobilisation and/or leveraging of new resources, the formation of a critical mass for action, and increased sustainability of evidence-informed interventions.^{18–20}</p>	<p>'...any joint activity by two or more parties to link or share information, resources, activities, and capabilities to achieve aims that no single party could have achieved separately'^{21,1}</p>
 <p>Evidence-driven action and learning</p>	<p>Evidence shows that when collaborative entities actively engage in evidence-driven action and learning, they enhance health-related behaviours, potentially resulting in better overall health outcomes for the population.²² Additionally, the Theory of Organisational Learning proposes that established methods and processes of learning from failures play a crucial role in building resilient and reliable organizations.²³</p>	<p>Evidence-driven action and learning is a continual cycle that guides decision-making and action across research, practice, and public policy and includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Situation analysis and problem framing, which includes drawing on different evidence to understand the current situation and frame a problem; 2. Co-created, purposefully coordinated evidence-driven actions that target multiple levels of the system to address underlying causes; 3. Monitoring and evaluation, which includes cycles of learning to assess if, how, and why actions achieve the expected outcome(s); and 4. Communication and dissemination of knowledge and facilitating its application through networks and across the system.¹

^v This table is reproduced from our findings snapshot titled: [Defining success for place-based systems change approaches.](#)



What does this mean for public policy?

Governments around the world often play a crucial role in place-based systems change. Some key ways in which governments and their public policies contribute to place-based systems change are through:

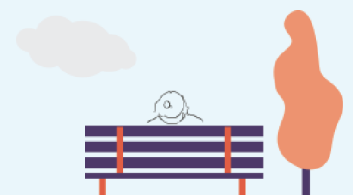
- the creation of policy frameworks (e.g. legislation, regulations, and guidelines) that promote and support place-based systems change;
- the allocation of funding and resources for place-based systems change initiatives;
- the facilitation of processes to engage various stakeholders such as community members, practitioners, and researchers in shared decision-making;
- the collection of data on local conditions, challenges, and opportunities within a specific community that can inform evidence-based decision-making (e.g., data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics);
- investment in capacity building to support the implementation of place-based approaches; and
- the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of place-based systems change approaches.

Australian Government and place-based approaches

In Australia, the government is a major funder of place-based approaches.²⁴ A prominent early place-based initiative of the federal government (i.e. Commonwealth Government) was the Australian Assistance Plan (1972-1975), which aimed to improve social outcomes by regionalising welfare services through ‘social planning and local action’.^{25,26} The Australian Assistance Plan facilitated community partnerships between local citizens and government officials, aimed to reach and engage with ‘disadvantaged and isolated’ groups, and included a flexible funding model.^{26,27} Since then, Australian federal, state and local governments have had a ‘hot and cold’ relationship with place-based approaches.^{28,29}

These fluctuations in interest in place-based approaches could be attributed to factors such as:

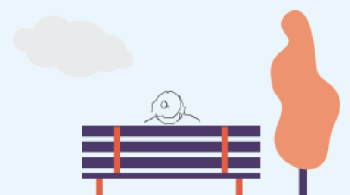
- a lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of place-based approaches^{30,31};
- difficulties in determining the costs and benefits of place-based approaches^{32,33};



- a lack of political will due to varying and shifting government policy priorities (e.g. elections and other changes to the political system, including structural modifications to governmental bodies such as departments and agencies)³⁰; and
- a natural inclination of policy-makers and other decision-makers to focus on traditional, short-term programs that offer ‘quick wins’ rather than making a long-term commitment to pursuing the systems change often required in place-based approaches^{28,34}.

In the last decade, the Australian Government has once again amplified its support for place-based approaches, establishing partnerships with state and local governments, and other relevant stakeholders and actively funding, developing, implementing, and/or evaluating place-based initiatives throughout the country.^{29,35,36}

Therefore, understanding how Australian federal policies frame the proposed practices of a well-functioning system is important so public policy can more efficiently contribute to creating a supportive policy environment for place-based systems change.



What did we do?

We conducted an analysis of:

publically available Australian federal policy documents related to place-based approaches to explore how they frame the practices that are, according to the Theory of Systems Change, necessary for well-functioning systems: adaptation, alignment, collaboration, and evidence-driven action and learning.

The analysis was conducted by Pathways in Place-Victoria University team (see Appendix A for more information). We conducted a targeted search using the key words 'place-based' or 'place based' within the search engines of government departments, as well as on Google. The goal was to identify policy documents associated with place-based approaches. We the documents based on pre-determined inclusion criteria. We analysed documents based on our Theory of Systems Change¹ and the framework method³⁷. The content analysis we conducted explored:

- mentions of key terms that is, adaptation, alignment, collaboration, and evidence-driven action and learning; and
- mentions of their synonyms and/or other terms that may have been used to mean similar things (e.g., cooperation, coordination, evidence-based, flexibility, modification).

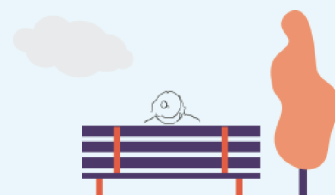
We used web-based software *Atlas.it* to assist us with labelling, categorising, and analysing the data.



If you would like to know more about how we conducted the search, you can read the Methodology section of the academic publication available [here](#).³



If you are interested in how to get the best result from your Internet search, you can read our [methods snapshot](#).³⁸



What did we find out?



Adaptation

Adaptation, conceptualised in the Theory of Systems Change as an ‘...ability to respond to external changes – both opportunities and challenges.^{14,15,1}, was the least frequently mentioned practice in the policy documents. While ‘adaptation’ was referenced as one of the phases of the collective impact methodology, the documents did not elaborate on what the practice entails:

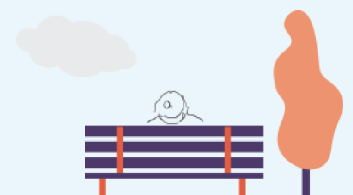
...social change movements using collective impact methodology tend to evolve over a series of progress phases of exploration, emergence, adaptation, maturation, and sustaining.³⁹

Adaptation was also mentioned in the context of ‘adaptive learning’, with reference to the ‘observe-orient-decide-act’ loop.⁴⁰ An emphasis on flexibility and adaptability within the Australian public service was also observed in two documents from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.^{41,42} The ‘Adapting to Change’ section in the Government’s reform agenda for the public service recognised the necessity for Australian public service to be adaptive, agile and responsive:

The Australian Public Service needs to evolve and adapt amidst change... ...(and) respond to new and emerging challenges – economic, social, technological and geopolitical.⁴²

The above quote was not explicitly related to place-based approaches. However, it recognises that adaptation (i.e., the ability to respond to external changes) is one of the key practices that should be embedded into the Australian public service.

Across the documents, adaptation was mainly conceptualised as ‘flexibility’ and responding to or tailoring services based on community needs.^{39,41,43–46} When conceptualised as the flexibility for organisations or services to adapt to different priorities and needs^{43,45–47}, adaptation was seen as one of the enablers of place-based approaches.



It is important to mention that there was a cross-over between adaptation and the other practices of a well-functioning system, which is not surprising due to their inherent interconnectedness. For example, flexibility for organisations or services to adapt to different priorities and needs of the people they serve^{43,45-47}, can be interpreted as adaptation and alignment. 'Flexibility' can include responsiveness to changes in the system more broadly, such as shifts in community needs and priorities depending on contextual factors (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic). Adapting to different priorities and needs may also indicate that organisations and services are expected to alter their goals to align with the needs of the community or target population.

Another conceptualisation of adaptation as flexibility was by positioning a policy document as a 'flexible statement', which provides 'non-prescriptive guidance'.⁴⁴ The document explicitly states that it is not intended to function as a 'formal, prescriptive, national strategy,' assuming that this could encourage bottom-up leadership.⁴⁴ Such 'non-prescriptive' approach may indicate government's recognition of a need for public policies to be more adaptable to the ever-changing social and economic conditions and circumstances.

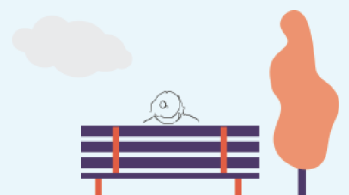


Alignment

Alignment, conceptualised as sharing the same or complementary needs/goals of the target population, was present in the documents we analysed. Many documents emphasised the importance of responding to or aligning with community needs or priorities^{39,40,44,47-50}, tailoring solutions or services to community needs^{43,45,50-52}, and ensuring that government investments complement community priorities^{47,48}.

Besides a focus on aligning with the target community's needs, alignment was also conceptualised as 'coordination', which included:

- alignment between partners in a place-based approach^{44,46,50} through sharing a sense of identity and goals⁴⁴, an understanding of community progress³⁹ or an understanding of a place⁵¹;
- alignment between services and service providers^{39,50,53};
- alignment across existing place-based programs^{39,44};
- alignment between various activities⁴⁴;
- alignment between government policies on different levels^{39,44}; and especially in investment coordination^{39,47}.



One document emphasised the readiness of the government to engage with communities in a more aligned manner:

Commonwealth and state/territory governments are ready to engage with communities in an aligned manner. This includes alignment, where possible with existing government initiatives that provide services in each community.³⁹

Mostly, there was little information on how alignment, when conceptualised as coordination, would be achieved beyond building on existing programs and services and reducing duplication.^{50,53} On the other hand, 'responding to community needs' was identified as one of the key enablers of place-based approaches, with a frequent emphasis on accomplishing alignment through community engagement and the involvement of community members in decision-making processes.

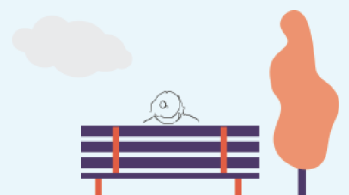


Collaboration

Collaboration and other 'co-concepts'⁵⁴, such as cooperation, co-design, co-delivery, co-creation, consultation, co-production, and terms such as partnership, participation, and 'working together', were widely acknowledged as key enablers of place-based approaches.^{39,40,45,47-49,51,52,55-57} This is consistent with the literature that places collaboration at the centre of successful place-based approaches and emphasises the need to build trusting relationships and collaborative mindsets and skill sets.^{24,27,34,58,59}

Collaboration was the most frequently mentioned of the four practices. Collaboration was framed as both an enabler and an expected outcome of place-based approaches. Yet, only a few documents discussed what it means to collaborate successfully. While 'geographic concentration' was important for the development of 'trusting collaborations'⁴⁴, there was also a recognition that to be effective, public services require the 'authority, flexibility and capabilities' to successfully collaborate with the community.⁴¹

The public service must have the authority, flexibility and capabilities to collaborate with different communities in different places to develop and implement different approaches.⁴¹



The conceptualisation of the stakeholders who should be involved in collaborative practices ranged from very broad ('all stakeholders', 'a broad range of stakeholders', 'all levels of government', 'cross sector'/'cross-actor collaboration') to more concrete actors, including specific service providers (e.g. employment, health), a specific level of government (e.g. local, state), and specific 'users' (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) involved in collaboration. Broad descriptions of stakeholders were more prevalent across the documents. It was often unclear who the 'users', 'stakeholders', 'citizens', 'partners', and 'community members' were within a collaboration.



Evidence-driven action and learning

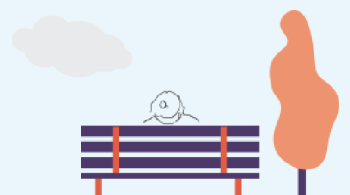
The significance of making decisions based on diverse forms of evidence was emphasised throughout the documents, including the widespread adoption of evidence-driven decision making practices.^{39,47,50,57} One document explicitly referenced an 'adaptive learning' cycle⁴⁰, while another discussed the integration of a learning circle reflection process within a place-based program³⁹.

The types of evidence mentioned across the documents included:

- community voice, lived experience, local knowledge;
- market data, historic data, public-sector data, local data;
- modelled projections;
- practice-based knowledge;
- best-practice evidence;
- evidence from other place-based approaches and
- research.

The first phase of the evidence-driven action and learning cycle – *situation analysis and problem framing* – was reflected in the content of several documents.^{40,48,52,55,56} In some cases, the importance of 'understanding the place' was highlighted as a potential facilitator of successful place-based approaches.^{48,55} The types of important evidence used to inform the situation analysis, were historical data, market data, modelled projections, research, and best-practice evidence.

Coordinated evidence-informed actions, the second phase of the evidence-driven action and learning cycle, was demonstrated through the notion that implementing initiatives and actions within place-based approaches needs to be based on evidence, best-practice and learnings from other place-



based approaches.^{39,44,45,51,53,55,56} In some documents, it was clear that there was strong ‘international and domestic’ evidence supporting the design and implementation of the initiative⁴⁴. In contrast, in others, there was a recognition that ‘evidence on the success place-based approaches is still being developed’⁵¹.

One document mentioned research and evidence as important for informing service design but highlighted the crucial role of involving the target population in key decision-making processes:

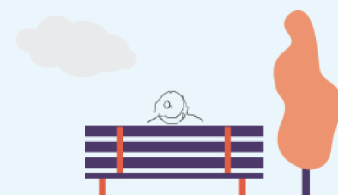
... research and evidence will inform but cannot take the place of involving families and children in the design of services.⁵¹

Elsewhere, the importance of coordination between various actions was mentioned. Still, little detail was provided on whether activities need to be evidence-based.⁴⁴

Monitoring and evaluation – the third phase of the evidence-driven action and learning cycle – may be key to the success of place-based approaches.^{17,24} Monitoring and evaluation efforts were mentioned across several documents.^{39,39,40,44,45,48,50,53} In two instances, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet emphasised the importance of ‘learning’ from existing place-based approaches and building on these lessons.^{41,42} However, out of the various place-based programs mentioned across the documents, the monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes and mechanisms were most extensively developed and detailed in the policy documentation pertaining to the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative.³⁹

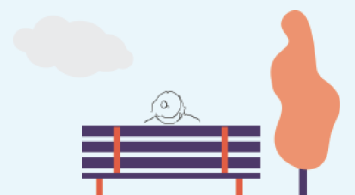
The role of government in the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative was thoroughly explained and included activities related to evidence-driven action and learning such as:

- facilitating access to data, evidence and resources;
- responding to data, evidence and feedback;
- measuring progress;
- supporting the implementation of understanding, measurement, evaluation and learning strategy and plan at the national level; and
- actively participating in learning and evaluation.³⁹



Communication and dissemination, the fourth phase of the evidence-driven action and learning cycle, was related to sharing data^{50,57}, best practices⁴⁴ and learnings⁴¹. It was the least prevalent component of the evidence-driven action and learning cycle present across the documents.

Discussions regarding data sharing and best practices were predominantly related to internal sharing between partners engaged in a place-based approach or between different place-based approaches. Beyond this, intermediaries or brokers were positioned as well-placed to share information with the partners comprising a place-based initiative.⁵²



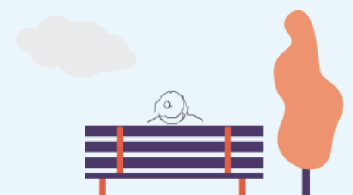
Policy suggestions

We found that Australian federal public policies related to place-based approaches incorporate the proposed four practices necessary for well-functioning systems. Some practices, such as collaboration, were more prevalent than others.

Building on these findings, our previous research¹⁻³ and experience working on a place-based systems change program (see [Appendix A](#)), we present several policy suggestions that may contribute to a more supportive policy environment for place-based systems change by strengthening the integration of practices that we propose contribute to a well-functioning system.

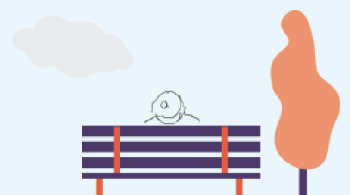
- Given the recognition that adaptation is one of the key practices the Australian public service should adopt, future public policies could provide concrete details as to how adaptation will be integrated or strengthened within the Australian public service and how this might be measured and improved.
- The government could consider testing the development (and implementation) of 'adaptive policies'^{vi60} that 'respond to changes over time and make explicit provision for learning,'^{61(p282)} especially when it comes to regulating place-based systems change approaches.
- To foster transparency and accountability, future policy documents could consider providing details on how alignment between, within and across various parts of the system will be achieved (e.g. coordination of services to reduce duplication, alignment across existing place-based programs, alignment between partners in a place-based initiative related to mutual goals and outcomes or sense of identity). For example, horizontal alignment (across federal departments) can be strengthened by developing a whole-of-

^{vi} Adaptive policies are designed with flexibility in mind, allowing for changes in response to shifts in the environment or conditions under which they operate. Their key purpose is to increase resilience and effective response to external uncertainties. A known example of an adaptive policy in Australian context is the monetary system of the Reserve Bank of Australia, which has built-in triggers and monitoring mechanisms that are used to adapt to changing economic conditions and make necessary adjustments.⁶⁰



government theory of change that incorporates outcomes of place-based initiatives across Australia or development of high-level strategic policy document related to place-based approaches.

- Given the essential role of collaboration in place-based initiatives – both as an enabler and its key attribute³ – it is important for future policy documents to present a balanced perspective related to collaboration. For example, they could provide more realistic expectations about collaboration that outline not only the advantages of collaboration but potential risks, challenges, and costs of collaboration. Additionally, they should offer practical strategies for managing and mitigating these issues.
- Following the example of the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative, monitoring, evaluation, and learning could be explicitly outlined across all place-based approaches, and sustainable mechanisms for sharing learnings across sites should be explored.³
- Building on the previous suggestion, it would be of great value to policy-makers, practitioners and researchers for future public policies to promote, support and outline processes for the wide sharing of data, best practice, learnings, and evidence.



Limitations and future research

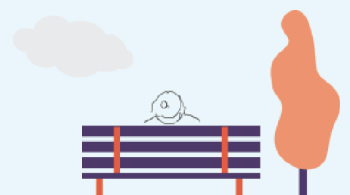
We propose that adaptation, alignment, collaboration, and evidence-driven action and learning are four practices necessary for a well-functioning system. However, know these are only some practices that could be important for place-based systems change. Since these are our propositions that are still being tested, we cannot make a definitive claim that the adoption of these practices across public policy would:

- contribute to a more supportive policy environment for place-based systems change; and/or
- there would be no unintended consequences.

Therefore, we invite others to test the propositions suggested in our Theory of Systems Change ³

Additionally, while we examined publically available Australian federal public policies, we do not have concrete insight into the day-to-day practices within the public service or the insights related to policy documents that our search strategy omitted, such as internal government documents. We also have a limited understanding of whether and to what extent these four practices exist in Australian state and local policies related to place-based approaches, or in other policy contexts, both within and beyond the Australian context. Therefore, we suggest further research to explore the the proposed practices necessary for well-functioning systems in:

- the day-to-day practices within the public service (i.e. exploring the actual application of the practices through place-based related work of policy-makers or government officials);
- state or local government public policies related to place-based approaches;
- public policies related to place-based approaches in other countries.



Appendices

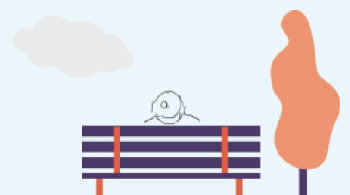
Appendix A: About Pathways in Place

Pathways in Place: Co-creating community capabilities (www.pathwaysinplace.com.au/victoria-university) is a 5-year research program funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation. Pathways in Place adopts a place-based systems change approach and is jointly led by Victoria University (Victoria, Australia) and Griffith University (Queensland, Australia).

This report is based on the work of the [Pathways in Place-Victoria University](#) team. We work with practitioners, policymakers, researchers and communities to:

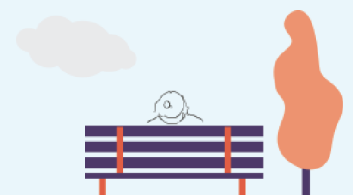
- develop theory, methods and evidence for place-based systems change approaches;
- build capacity to support the design and implementation of effective place-based systems change approaches; and
- understand our impact on both advancing science and improving community outcomes.

To access more resources, evidence, tools and guidance on place-based, systems change approaches, please visit our [Knowledge Hub](#). It contains links to our peer-reviewed publications, snapshots, reports, blog posts and tools for practice.

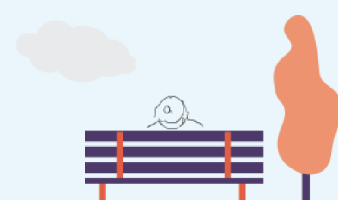


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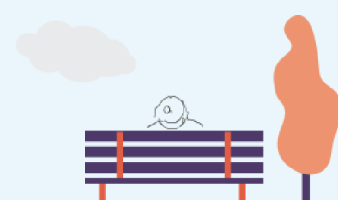
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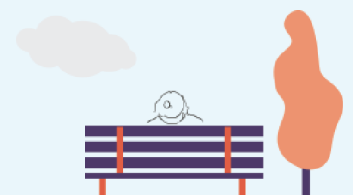
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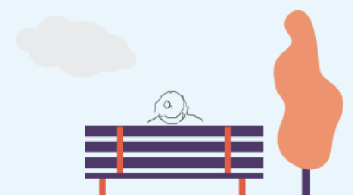
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