



## A New Tool to Measure the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices

Local organisations that provide health, education, and social services play a crucial role in supporting communities to thrive. These organisations are one of the vehicles through which systems operate, and organisational practices are potential levers for system change<sup>[1,2,3,4,5]</sup>.

Currently, no validated tools exist to measure an organisation's capacity to engage in practices that support systems change. Without such tools, leaders and practitioners may find it challenging to identify where to focus their efforts when aiming for systems change. To address this need, we developed the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale—a tool designed to assess an organization's capacity to engage in system practices



Want to learn more about Pathways in Place?

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## What is the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices Scale?

Based on the [Theory of Systems Change](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale measures practices across four key areas:

**Adaptation:** How well an organisation can respond to opportunities and challenges.

**Alignment:** How effectively an organisation’s goals and actions align with their target population group and other stakeholders.

**Collaboration:** The ability of an organisation to work with others to achieve shared goals.

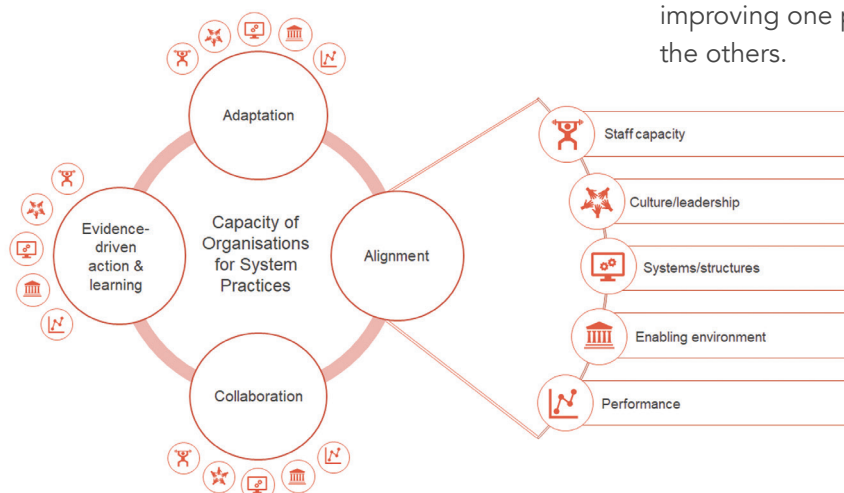
**Evidence-Driven Action and Learning:** How well an organisation uses data and evidence to inform decisions and improve practices.

Organisational capacity consists of four dimensions <sup>[7,8]</sup>:

- staff capacity,
- culture and leadership,
- systems and structures, and
- the enabling environment.

Figure 1 shows the structure of the scale.

Figure 1: Structure of the Scale



## How was it developed?

We developed the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale through a robust, three-step process:

- 1. Developing the questions:** We started with 97 potential questions designed to measure the four practices. The questions were identified by reviewing relevant literature and measures.
- 2. Pre-testing:** Experts and representatives from relevant organisations reviewed the questions, reducing them to 60.
- 3. Structural testing:** We gathered data from 126 participants and examined how well the questions work together and how well each performs. We made modifications based on the analysis, resulting in a final set of 31 questions (see Table 1).

## What did we find?

The final scale, which contains 31 questions (see Table 1), showed acceptable results, making it a useful tool for practical purposes. However, the results didn’t fully meet the highest statistical standards, so further improvements and testing are necessary.

We found that the four practices—adaptation, alignment, collaboration, and evidence-driven action and learning—are important individually and are also interconnected. This means that improving one practice could positively influence the others.

Table 1: Final Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (SA to SD)

<b>Adaptation</b>	
1	My organisation prioritises adaptability when recruiting staff
2	Funding guidelines encourage my organisation to respond quickly to external opportunities and challenges
3	My organisation has effective systems to respond to external opportunities and challenges
4	My organisation is good at responding to external opportunities and challenges
5	Staff in my organisation have the skills to respond to external opportunities and challenges
6	Leaders in my organisation value staff who can respond to external challenges and opportunities
<b>Alignment</b>	
7	My organisation has systems that allow us to identify young people's needs
8	Funding guidelines encourage my organisation to tailor our activities to the needs of young people
9	My organisation is good at tailoring our activities to build on the strengths of young people
10	There is consistency between the vision of decision-makers, practitioners and young people in our community
11	Staff in my organisation have the skills to identify the needs of young people
12	Staff in my organisation have the skills to address the needs of young people
13	Leaders in my organisation prioritise activities that meet the needs of young people
<b>Collaboration</b>	
14	My organisation commits adequate budget and resources to collaborating with other organisations
15	My organisation is flexible and responsive to the requirements of other organisations
16	My organisation evaluates our collaborations
17	My organisation has systems that make it easy to collaborate with other organisations
18	Funding guidelines encourage us to collaborate with other organisations
19	My organisation is good at collaborating with other organisations
20	Staff in my organisation are skilled at developing and maintaining relationships with other organisations
21	Leaders in my organisation prioritise collaboration with other organisations
<b>Evidence-driven action and learning</b>	
22	My organisation rewards risk taking and experimentation
23	My organisation has systems to support continuous cycles of planning, action and learning
24	My organisation uses the outcomes of our evaluations to inform future activities
25	In my organisation it is important to consider our activities as part of a broader system
26	My organisation engages in continuous cycles of planning, action, and learning
27	Funding guidelines encourage my organisation to engage in a continuous process of planning, action and learning
28	Staff in my organisation have the skills to monitor and evaluate our activities
29	Staff in my organisation have the skills to use diverse forms of evidence (e.g., professional experience and research) to inform our activities
30	Leaders in my organisation prioritise continuous improvement
31	Leaders in my organisation encourage staff to learn from failures

## How could the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices Scale be used by organisations?

The Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale, once fully validated, could be a practical tool to help organisations:

**Self-Assess:** Evaluate their current capacity for systems practices and identify areas for improvement.

**Test strategies:** Test the effectiveness of initiatives or programs (e.g., training) to enhance their capacity for systems practices.

**Understand outcomes:** Combined with other data, explore how improving organisational capacity for the four practices can lead to broader systems change and better outcomes for communities. [9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17]

The Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale is a step toward better understanding and enhancing organisations' roles in systems change. While it doesn't capture every aspect of how systems behave, it could provide insights into organisational practices that can contribute to systems change.

### What's Next?

We will continue refining the scale and the underlying Theory of Systems Change. Although the Capacity of Organisations for System Practices scale shows promise, it needs further refinement and testing before we can widely recommend it for use. Once validated, it could also be adapted for other areas, such as public policy.

For further details, you can access our peer-reviewed publication [here](#).

## About Pathways in Place

**Pathways in Place: Co-Creating Community Capabilities** is an innovative program of research and action that supports flourishing of children and young people. This Program is jointly delivered by Victoria University (Victoria, Australia) and Griffith University (Queensland, Australia) with funding generously provided by the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

The Program teams are each leading one of two complementary streams:

1. Early learning and development pathways (children and youth 0-15 y.o.), led by Griffith University in Logan (Queensland, Australia).
2. Pathways through education to employment (youth 15-24 y.o.), led by Victoria University in Brimbank (Victoria, Australia).



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