



# Planning Tool for the Place-based Evaluation Framework

Scoping out a MEL plan for a place-based delivery approach

## About this planning tool

This planning tool aims to help people scope out a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan (MEL) for a place-based delivery approach (PBA). It draws strongly on Clear Horizon's standard MEL planning tools that we use as part of our training program. This version of the tool has been tailored for PBAs. It was as an additional tool made to support the Place-based Evaluation Framework (2018) developed by Clear Horizon on behalf of the Queensland Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS), the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS), and Logan Together.

It is not a stand-alone tool. Instead, it should be used in conjunction with training, or with the Place-based Evaluation Framework (2018) that we hope will be publicly available soon.

By working through the planning tool with your partners, we hope you will be able to scope out a contextually tailored monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan. This should help you choose a set of key evaluation questions, and select the most appropriate tools. Remember every MEL plan is different because every context is different!

We recommend working through the separate planning tool using a workshop format. We find 2-3 full-day workshops are usually required: one to scope out the needs and set the principles; one for the theory of change; and one to agree on key evaluation questions and tools.

## Copyright and acknowledgments

We are happy to provide a Creative Commons licence on this tool so that anyone can use it. We'd love to be acknowledged, where possible (acknowledge '[Clear Horizon](#)'). We also welcome feedback on the tool so that we can keep improving. Contact us at [info@clearhorizon.com.au](mailto:info@clearhorizon.com.au).



# 1. Frame and scope the evaluation task

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## 1.1. Clarify the 'thing' you are evaluating (referred to as the 'evaluand')

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Boundaries:</b> What is going to be actually evaluated? What is in scope?</p>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The work of the facilitating partner</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The PBA leadership</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The work of the broader collaboration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The role of the funders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The role of an intermediary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One particular project within a broader PBA</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> An in-depth evaluation study</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Others....</li> </ul> |
| <p>What, if anything, is out of scope?</p>   |  |
| <p>If it includes the work of the broader collaboration, list here whose work this includes</p>            |  |
| <p>Who will 'own' and be responsible for creating this Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan?</p> |  |
| <p>Who will 'own' and be responsible for implementing this MEL plan?</p>                                   |  |
| <p>Who funds the MEL work?</p>   |  |



**1.2. Clarify the audience for the MEL plan and their requirements (including governance and sign-off for reporting)**

|  | Who | What are their evaluation requirements? |
|--|-----|---|
| <p>Who will be the <u>primary audience</u> of this MEL plan?</p> <p><i>E.g. Who will be primarily reflecting, learning and improving as a result the data collected?</i></p> <p><i>Who will be contributing resources and/or time to development of the MEL and ongoing activities under the plan?</i></p> <p><i>Who will be expected to contribute information (data) to inform MEL activities?</i></p> |     |   |

|  | Who | What sort of information might they be interested in? |
|--|-----|---|
| <p>Who are the secondary audience?</p> <p><i>E.g. People who will read the reports written</i></p> |     |   |



| Who is responsible for signing off on the MEL plan? | Who is responsible for signing off on reports? | Who needs to have input into reviewing the reports? |
|---|--|---|
|   |  |   |
|   |  |   |
|   |  |   |

### 1.3. Clarify the purpose of the MEL

Describe the key reasons why MEL is being conducted – what will the findings be used for?

### 1.4. Clarify what success would look like for your MEL plan

What would good monitoring, evaluation and learning look like for us, in terms of the process, types of method or level of rigour?



### 1.5. Clarify resourcing and degree of investment in evaluation and choose your 'level'

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Who is available to help conduct the MEL (number of people and whether they are full time or part time)? |  |
| Budget for the MEL – <i>existing or proposed that will be sought</i>                                     |  |
| Existing data/evaluations to draw on   |  |



## Suggested scale/degree of rigour

The Place-based Evaluation Framework provides some general guidance regarding the sort of monitoring and evaluation resources and activities that might be expected at three levels of funding. Please note this is a rough schema to provide a broad sense of resourcing. It is based around a rule of thumb of 10-20% resourcing for evaluation. In this 10-20% we including all aspects of monitoring, evaluation and learning. It includes time to develop the theory of change, developing routine monitoring tools, developmental evaluation, and development of the shared measurement framework at the population level as well as funding for any externally commissioned evaluation and research studies. Please note that this table was developed for single-site PBAs. In the case of multiple sites, more resourcing would be required, and may require evaluation resourcing both for an 'intermediary' organisation as well as for each location.

It offers three levels of resourcing: light, medium and extensive.

Refer to Section 6.3, Table 2, of the Framework document for more details.



## 1.6. Determine who should be engaged in MEL

This table should be developed with reference to the boarder engagement plan of your PBA and expands upon the identification of your primary/secondary audiences.

| Stakeholder groups | Level of engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate) in MEL | ...in the theory of change | ...in building MEL plan and tools | ...in data collection | ...in data analysis and sense-making and recommendations | In developing or agreeing on recommendations | In reviewing any reports |
|--------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
|                    | Inform   |                            |                                   |                       |  |  |                          |
|                    | Consult  |                            |                                   |                       |  |  |                          |
|                    | Involve  |                            |                                   |                       |  |  |                          |
|                    | Collaborate  |                            |                                   |                       |  |  |                          |



## 1.7. Clarify which aspects of context you need to consider

What elements of the history and context of the place need to be considered when planning this evaluation?

- The location will affect what is possible in terms of data collection due to hard-to-reach remote locations.
- There are transient populations.
- The languages spoken are other than English.
- The cultural protocols need to be observed.
- People with local knowledge/connections and credibility need to be involved in fieldwork.
- What has gone before may inhibit people's willingness to participate in the MEL/evaluation.

Our strategy for ensuring the design is appropriate and effective for our context:





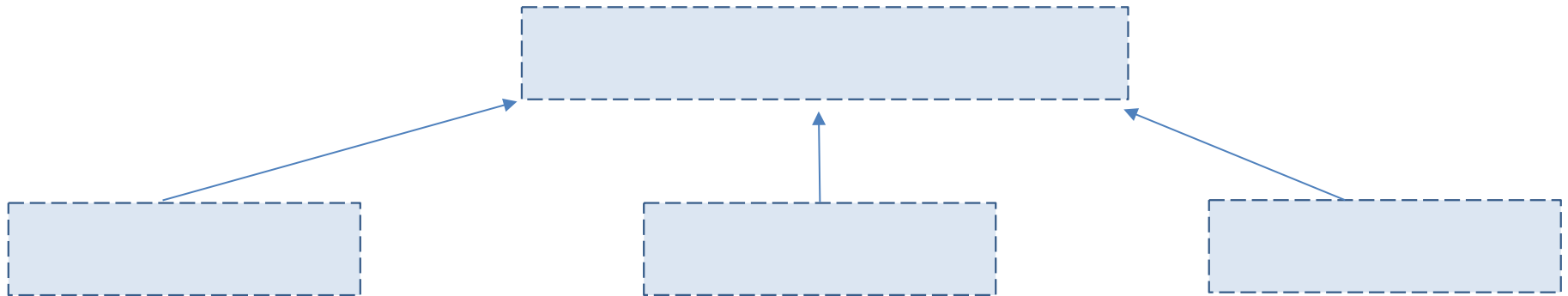
## 2. Clarify the theory of change and principles

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### 2.1. Clarify the high-level theory of change – the population-level changes you are seeking to improve

Here you should note your high-level population outcomes and any key preconditions you believe need to be in place.

The Place-based Evaluation Framework provides simplified and detailed models of change for place-based delivery approaches you could adapt for your context. See Section 4.5 of the Framework document.



## 2.2. Clarify the locally developed practice principles and enablers for change

| Core approaches  | How will we know they are meaningful to our stakeholders? | How will we know if they are showing up in early results? |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Community priorities and aspirations direct activities and investment | •   | •   |
| 2. Capacity building to achieve sustainability and self-determination    | •   | •   |
| 3. Transparent governance with a common agenda                           | •   | •   |
| 4. Multisector collaboration and joining-up services                     | •   | •   |
| 5. An integrated learning culture  | •   | •   |
| Practice principles from our context                                     | How will we know they are meaningful to our stakeholders? | How will we know if they are showing up in early results? |
| 6.   | •   | •   |
| 7.   | •   | •   |
| 8.   | •   | •   |



## 3. Plan the monitoring, evaluation and learning

### 3.1. Select your key evaluation domains

| Domains on generic theory of change  | Key evaluation domains that we want MEL to include  | Relevant?                |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| Level 1: Foundations   | Analysis of foundations   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Setting the population outcomes and indicators, and collecting the baseline   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Role of the facilitating partner/ PBA leader/ funders in catalysing the enabling conditions                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Level 2: Enablers for change   | Level 2.1: Community priorities and aspiration direct activities and investment                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 2.2: Capacity building to achieve sustainability and self-determination   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 2.3: Transparent governance with a common agenda  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 2.4: Multisector collaboration and joining-up services  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 2.5: An integrated learning culture   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community specific practice principles   | Context specific principle: [insert]  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Context specific principle: [insert]  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Change associated with Level 3: Systemic changes in our community to Level 4: Instances of impact            | Level 3.1: Systemic changes in community agency – communities lead change and decision-making structures are embedded | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 3.2 Systemic changes in resources – better flow of resources, funding and infrastructure                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 3.3 Systemic changes in ability to act and solve – local, specific innovations to improve our place             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 3.4 Systemic changes in our practices – policies, practices, norms, and service models improve at place         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Level 4: (Early) instances of impact for individuals and families (specific cohorts and/or for micro-places) | Level 4.1a: Instances of change for individuals, families and communities who live there                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 4.1b: Instances of change for specific cohorts  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Level 4.1b: Instances of change for micro-places  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Tools for evaluating complexity: Planning tool for the Place-based Evaluation Framework



| Domains on generic theory of change | Key evaluation domains that we want MEL to include  | Relevant?                |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Population impacts                  | Level 5: Sustainable positive population level impacts  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strategic learning                  | What have we learned about designing PBAs to match place?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | What are we learning about systems change?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | What did we learn from each project (prototype/pilot)?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | What did we learn about how to scale?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | What have we learnt across place-based initiatives about conditions to create systemic changes? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Process                             | To what extent are the facilitating partner learning and managing the process well?             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | To what extent are the PBA leaders learning and managing the process well?                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | To what extent are the funders learning and managing the process well?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                     | To what extent are the intermediaries learning and managing the process well?                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |



### 3.2. Select your progress markers so that you have a sense of where you expect to get to after 1-2 years

| Domain of change | In the next 12 months, success would look like... | In the next 2 years, success would look like... |
|------------------|---|---|
|                  |   |   |
|                  |   |   |
|                  |   |   |
|                  |   |   |
|                  |   |   |
|                  |   |   |

It is probably not worth putting too much detail in too far ahead due to the emergent nature of PBAs. But having some agreed progress markers for the next 12 months can help with accountability and progress reporting



### 3.3. Select your key evaluation questions

This table accompanies sections 9.1 and 9.2 of the evaluation framework. As stated in those sections, not all the KEQs will be relevant and will depend on the phase of your PBA, who you are, and the level of resourcing that you have available.

| Key evaluation questions   | Phase                      | Relevant? | If so, rewrite to tailor to your PBA |
|--|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. What is the stage of place readiness and what are the implications for the design?  | Year zero or as needed     |           |                                      |
| 2. To what extent are the facilitating partner/ PBA leaders/funders learning and managing the process well?  | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 3. To what extent are the funders being flexible and adaptive and helping to create an enabling environment?   | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 4. To what extent has the facilitating partner/PBA leaders been effective in helping to establish the enabling conditions for systemic change within the community and beyond? | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 5. To what extent have community aspirations and priorities driven activities and investments sufficiently?  | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 6. Has <b>capacity building</b> been sufficient to foster sustainability and self-determination?   | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 7. To what degree is the <b>governance</b> transparent and sufficiently representative of those with a stake in the system?  | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 8. How well has data been used for <b>strategic learning</b> – to understand and adapt to the problems, opportunities and progress?  | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 9. To what extent is <b>multisector collaboration</b> occurring and helping join up services?  | Every year                 |           |                                      |
| 10. To what extent have context-specific practice <b>principles</b> been followed?   | From mid-to late years     |           |                                      |
| 11. What expected and unexpected results are emerging from <b>projects</b> ?   | From mid-to late years     |           |                                      |
| 12. What is <b>changing in the system</b> because of the collaborative work?   | From mid to late years     |           |                                      |
| 13. What are the instances of impacts for the individuals, families (micro-communities and specific cohorts)?  | From initial to late years |           |                                      |



| Key evaluation questions  | Phase                       | Relevant? | If so, rewrite to tailor to your PBA |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 14. What are the population-level impacts for individuals, families and communities across the place? | Late years                  |           |                                      |
| 15. How has this work influenced things beyond place?   | From mid to late years      |           |                                      |
| 16. What have we learnt across PBAs about conditions and approaches needed to create systemic change? | At end across several sites |           |                                      |

### 3.4. Develop sub-questions for relevant KEQs

Transfer relevant (and rewritten) KEQs from above into this table; then break each of them down into sub-questions. For further guidance on how to write sub-questions, see Section 9.3, Table 4, of the framework. Next, link each sub-question to the method you will use to answer the question. Table 4 in Section 9.3 of the framework maps KEQs and sub-questions to sections of the **toolkit**, which has more detail on the related methods.

| Key evaluation question                 | Main method to be used to answer |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>First key evaluation question</i> |                                  |
| 1.1 <i>sub-question</i>                 |                                  |
| 1.2 <i>sub-question</i>                 |                                  |
| 1.3                                     |                                  |
|   |                                  |
|   |                                  |
|   |                                  |
| 2.                                      |                                  |
| 2.1                                     |                                  |
| 2.2                                     |                                  |
| 2.3                                     |                                  |
|   |                                  |



| Key evaluation question | Main method to be used to answer |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                         |                                  |
| <b>3.</b>               |                                  |
| 3.1                     |                                  |
| 3.2                     |                                  |
| 3.3                     |                                  |
|                         |                                  |
| <b>4.</b>               |                                  |
| 4.1.                    |                                  |
| 4.2                     |                                  |
| 4.3                     |                                  |
| 4.4                     |                                  |
| <b>5.</b>               |                                  |
| 5.1                     |                                  |
| 5.2                     |                                  |
| 5.3                     |                                  |
| 5.4                     |                                  |
|                         |                                  |





### 3.5. Develop your shared outcomes and key indicators for population level changes (Level 5 of the generic theory of change)

In PBAs we often have a small number of high level indicators to track population level changes. This table is for these population level indicators. For further guidance on what makes ‘good’ indicators, see Section 9.4 of the framework.

|    | Key shared population level outcome | Indicator | Parameters and disaggregation | Who will this be collected from? | When will it be collected? E.g. Baseline, midline, endline? | Sampling approach? |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. |                                     |           |                               |                                  |   |                    |
| 2. |                                     |           |                               |                                  |   |                    |
| 3. |                                     |           |                               |                                  |   |                    |
| 4. |                                     |           |                               |                                  |   |                    |
| 5. |                                     |           |                               |                                  |   |                    |



### 3.6. Select suitable data collection methods (see **toolkit** for ideas)

|    | Name of data collection method | Who will plan and oversee this? | Who collect evidence? | Who will this be collected from? | When will it be collected? | Sampling approach? |
|----|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. |                                |                                 |                       |                                  |                            |                    |
| 2. |                                |                                 |                       |                                  |                            |                    |
| 3. |                                |                                 |                       |                                  |                            |                    |
| 4. |                                |                                 |                       |                                  |                            |                    |
| 5. |                                |                                 |                       |                                  |                            |                    |



## 4. Plan for strategic learning and reporting

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### 4.1. Key mechanisms for data consolidation and strategic learning

How might we synthesise the MEL data and answer our key questions?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| How often and when will we compile the MEL data?       |  |
| Who will compile the data?                             |  |
| Who will make the judgments against the key questions? |  |
| Who will be involved?                                  |  |

### 4.2. Strategy to ensure findings get used for strategic learning



### 4.3. Consider the need additional for evaluation or research studies (may be commissioned)

| Timing for evaluation study | Internal or externally conducted? | Purpose of the evaluation study? | Who will use the findings? | Key evaluation questions for the study | What would be considered 'rigorous' evaluation? | Type of report required? | Who should be engaged in the process of evaluation? | Who will manage it? |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|---|---------------------|
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |
|                             |                                   |                                  |                            |  |   |                          |   |                     |



#### 4.4. Consider what reports may be needed

##### Effective reporting

| Who do we need to report for? | How often do they want this? And when? | What sort of final report do we need (length, tone, etc.) | Do we need a template? |
|-------------------------------|--|---|------------------------|
|                               |  |   |                        |
|                               |  |   |                        |
|                               |  |   |                        |

#### 4.5. Operational considerations

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Is the M&E framework implementable given the time and resources available? (If not, what are the critical bits? And what can we drop?) |  |
| Do we need a summary version of the MEL plan to share?   |  |
| What do we need to do first?   |  |
| What are the next steps after that?  |  |
| What additional capacity development do we need to implement it?   |  |

