

# HANDS UP MALLEE LEARNING CIRCLE REPORT

31 January 2024



**Clear Horizon**

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# INTRODUCTION

## About Hands up Mallee

Hands Up Mallee (HUM) is a place-based community-led collective impact\* initiative that has been operating in the Mildura LGA in the far northwest of Victoria since 2015. A group of local leaders began the HUM initiative when they recognised that we needed to work together differently to address social, health and wellbeing equity issues in the community.

HUM works in partnership with the community, local service providers, agencies and all three levels of government. The initiative takes a place-based approach to solutions for local issues centring on community voice and combining this with local data and current research to develop collective action for a better community for children, young people, and their families. HUM is committed to the community aspiration 'a connected community where families matter, and children thrive'.

### About Collective Impact

Collective Impact is a specific form of collaboration that brings people and organisations together who agree on doing the following five things to help solve a complex problem in their community:

1. Everyone agrees on a joint vision (= what they want the future to look like) and a plan for change.
2. Everyone focuses on the priorities that the group believes will create the biggest changes for the community. As part of this, each person and/or organisation supports the collaboration by doing what they do best.
3. Everyone communicates to others what they are doing, and the community is actively involved in the work and making decisions.
4. Everyone shares evidence (= numbers and stories) about their work and what they are learning.
5. The collaboration is supported by a backbone (= a local support) team that helps everyone to work well together, step out of their comfort zone, and commit to a different way of working (see the enablers for change on page 7 that explain the different ways of working that HUM is looking to change).

## About Progress Mapping and the Learning Circle

In August 2023, HUM commissioned Clear Horizon to conduct an independent assessment of how HUM is advancing its ways of working as a collective impact initiative for place-based systems change. This assessment is a requirement of HUM's funding arrangement with the Federal Government's Department of Social Services' Stronger Places Stronger People (SPSP) Program and takes the form of a Progress Mapping exercise and a Learning Circle.

## Progress Mapping

In September 2023, Clear Horizon facilitated six yarning sessions to map HUM's progress against the six SPSP enablers (see page 7 for details about the enablers). The following groups were engaged in this process:

- The HUM Backbone team (8 participants)
- The HUM Governance group (4 participants)
- The HUM Yarning group (6 participants).
- State and Federal Government (3 participants)
- Community (2 participants)
- Local Government and service partners (7 participants)

Additionally, two individuals, one government representative and one local service partner, provided input via email.

The information that was gathered during the yarns was analysed and captured in the Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report 2023 together with direct quotes from the participants. This report was distributed to all participants and discussed in more detail with both the HUM Yarning and HUM Governance groups in preparation for their participation in the Learning Circle.

## Learning Circle

The Learning Circle had three main goals:

1. Discuss the findings from the progress mapping yarns and report.
2. Explore ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working.
3. Decide on priority actions to advance HUM's collective impact practice over the next twelve months.

### *Timing and participants*

The event happened on Thursday, November 16, and was a half-day workshop with 27 participants. Representatives from different groups attended, including:

- The HUM Backbone team (8 participants)
- The HUM Governance group (5 participants)
- The HUM Yarning Group (1 participant)
- Community (2 participants)
- State and Federal Government (3 participants)
- Local Government and service partners (8 participants)

### *What happened?*

The event included an icebreaker for people to connect and get to know each other, two plenary sessions, and two rounds of world café conversations. Each world café round had three consecutive

conversations, with each group switching sessions every 20 minutes to share insights and suggestions for each enabler.

#### **Overview:**

- Icebreaker
- Plenary session one: Reflections on the progress mapping report findings
- World café conversations round one: Enablers one to three
  - Enabler 1. Systems Leadership
  - Enabler 2. Inclusive Community Engagement
  - Enabler 3. Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation and Learning
- World café conversations round two: Enablers four to six
  - Enabler 4. Use of Collective Power
  - Enabler 5. Investment and policy for purpose
  - Enabler 6. Leading and supporting effort for purpose
- Plenary session two: Choosing the HUM collective impact priorities for the next 12 months.

#### **Facilitators**

The HUM Learning Circle was co-facilitated by the HUM backbone team, Aunty Vickey Charles (Aunty in Residence, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation) and Froukje Jongsma (Principal Consultant, Clear Horizon).

## **Learning Circle report**

This report captures the main themes from the Learning Circle, along with the priorities for 2024. The raw data is available in Annex 1. The report begins with a brief overview of the six SPSP enablers. It then unfolds into six chapters, each dedicated to one enabler, outlining the key themes from the discussions. A reflection chapter shares insights on the Learning Circle process and offers recommendations for future Learning Circles. The last chapter outlines the priorities set for 2024.

## **Limitations / notes**

Clear Horizon compiled this report using notes from the Learning Circle, where Hands Up Mallee staff served as scribes during the world café conversations. The notes, offering brief dot points rather than detailed information, prompted Clear Horizon to apply its own understanding and interpretation of place-based systems change work during the sensemaking process to create meaningful content.

It is also worth noting that certain themes came up multiple times during conversations about different enablers, resulting in some content duplication.

Lastly, while priorities were identified, the limited time in the final plenary session dedicated to selecting the 2024 priorities didn't allow the Learning Circle participants to thoroughly delve into these points. Additionally, some priorities may have been missed due to the time constraints.

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# THE SIX ENABLERS FOR CHANGE

The *Stronger Places Stronger People* initiative outlines six enablers of change, which represent ways of working that, when successfully implemented, are anticipated to transform systems, and bring about positive community change.

Below is a brief overview of the six enablers along with a brief description:

- **Enabler 1. Systems Leadership:** How a systems approach combined with local leadership is working to improve outcomes across the community to shift disadvantage.
- **Enabler 2. Inclusive community engagement:** How community voices and leadership are valued and included and leading the drive to improve outcomes.
- **Enabler 3. Understanding, measurement, evaluation, and learning (UMEL):**
  - How we use data and stories to understand what is happening in the community and to inform what we need to work on together.
  - How a shared commitment to collaborative measurement, evaluation and learning in line with the needs of our community and the learning across all SPSP communities and partners is progressing.
- **Enabler 4. Use of collective power for community purpose:** How a genuine interest and practice to use power and authority differently is helping everyone to play their role in the community-led change agenda.
- **Enabler 5. Investment and policy for community purpose:** How a shared recognition and action is being taken across the system to help investment, policies, and accountabilities align with the community-led change agenda.
- **Enabler 6. Leading and Supporting efforts for change:**
  - How our governance and the resourcing of the work, such as having a backbone team and a focus on high-leverage activities (the activities that are expected to achieve the biggest changes for community), reflects the phase of collective impact we are in
  - How partners support local leaders and the backbone team to make change aligned to the community plan.

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## ENABLER 1. SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

Despite the efforts and hard work of local organisations, programs and services, many families and their children in the Mildura Local Government Area continue to face challenges. This is a clear sign that we need to do things differently. To shape a future where every child, young person, and family in our community can lead a good life, we understand we need to use a systems change approach. This way of working delves into the root causes that keep hard to solve community problems in place and aims to address the underlying issues rather than just treating their symptoms, the visible signs that something is wrong.

We do this by working together and prioritising action that helps change the way people, organisations, and governments think, do things, work with others, set the guiding rules, and share power and resources. Additionally, because every community is unique, it is important that systems change work is led by local people who understand the local area.

### Guiding questions

To guide our Enabler 1. Learning Circle conversations, we used the following questions:

1. How can HUM better engage government organisations, services, and their boards to increase their leadership in and support of systems change?
2. What would a locally led, cross-sector leadership group that uses their position and power to work together for systems change look like?
3. What other ideas do we have to improve our collective ways of working in relation to building systems leadership?

### Key themes

An overview of the key themes brought up by participants during the conversations as well as ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working against Enabler 1. can be found below.

### Funding / resource flows

- **Advocate for community input into funding decisions** - Funding decisions should be guided by community input and insights from local data, including both numbers and stories. This approach is expected to lead to a shift towards supporting initiatives that focus on prevention.
- **Advocate for flexible funding arrangements** - Ideally, funding should prioritise outcomes over specific activities and KPIs to allow organisations to align their service delivery to the HUM collaboration and to meet emerging community needs and aspirations.
- **Hold funders accountable for their funding decisions** - Funders could be more transparent and demonstrate accountability by sharing how much funding is coming into the community to improve certain outcomes, the ways in which this money is spent, as well as what outcomes they have or haven't achieved and why. Additionally, funding should only be awarded to organisations that provide culturally safe services and use the money to make the biggest possible impact.



## Power dynamics

- **Challenge power dynamics** - It's crucial for government and service provider staff, at all levels, to actively listen and incorporate community input. That's why HUM should continue to promote genuine community involvement and joint decision making.

## Changing mindsets

- **Support government and services to understand and apply systems change approaches** – Government and services sometimes focus too much on barriers and the effects of issues, thereby unintentionally reinforcing the systems that keep problems in place. To shift the system towards prevention, a few proposed ideas from the Learning Circle are:
  - **Prioritise community input** - For example by encouraging and supporting community members to join local boards to help build mutual trust and understanding. Diverse boards are expected to improve services and support HUM's community goals.
  - **Invite decision makers** - Urge senior decision-makers from Melbourne and Canberra to visit Mildura. This will allow them to see HUM's work and hear directly from the community about local challenges and solutions.
  - **Focus on getting senior decision makers on board** - The idea is that when senior decision-makers commit to HUM's way of working, their organisations and staff are likely to follow suit.

## Sustainability

- **Improve HUM's sustainability** - The HUM backbone team, along with HUM partners, should create plans for HUM's long-term sustainability. This involves making sure that the engagement with HUM and the knowledge gained are shared among different people within HUM partner organisations to expand this way of working across place. This will avoid dependence on one person and mitigate risks as individuals may change jobs and organisations. It is further essential to plan for a smooth succession process between community members and groups involved in HUM.

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## ENABLER 2. INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Mildura LGA is a diverse community made up of people from lots of different backgrounds including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. It's the local people who live in the area who understand it best. They see and experience the challenges firsthand and have the best ideas about how to improve their own and other people's lives in the community. So, when it comes to figuring out what needs to be done to address the problems, it should be the local leaders who should drive the work and make the decisions. While the government and other partners play a role, their primary responsibility is to support the community in making positive changes. This includes actively seeking input from community members, responding to their needs, and bringing research findings and local data (numbers and stories) to complement the community's expertise.

### Guiding questions

To guide our Enabler 2. Learning Circle conversations, we used the following questions:

1. How can HUM grow the understanding that community leadership is central to decision-making and leading local change?
2. What does inclusive community voice, leadership, and decision-making look like? What helps and what gets in the way?
3. How do we communicate our decisions and the outcomes of HUM's work clearly, openly and accessibly?
4. What other ideas do we have to improve our collective ways of working in relation to strengthening inclusive community engagement?

### Key themes

An overview of the key themes brought up by participants during the conversations as well as ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working against Enabler 2. can be found below.

#### Community voice

- **Engage lived experience** - Meaningful engagement is crucial for bringing the expertise from lived experience to inform decision-making. HUM partners should genuinely share power and demonstrate trust by listening to and acting on community needs. This reciprocity is expected to build trust in HUM and its partners, leading to increased community buy-in and participation. It is important to recognise that building mutual trust takes time and dedication.
- **Embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership** - HUM should continue to strengthen its engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and communities, recognising the crucial role their voices play in steering the collaborative work of HUM.

#### Leadership

- **Be courageous** - To find innovative solutions, HUM members should be open-minded, leave ego aside, and acknowledge that they may not have all the answers. This involves individuals and organisations stepping out of their comfort zones and collaborating to explore new approaches. To

encourage this, HUM partners should view failure as a learning opportunity and establish safe environments where people feel encouraged to experiment with new ideas. It also requires staying committed even when change is challenging.

- **Be accountable** - This means being open to getting strong feedback and directly responding to the community. All HUM partners including the backbone team, service partners and government need to share accountability with the community for outcomes. There need to be honest conversations about the best ways to meet the needs of the community. This is what will lead to a shift in outcomes.

## Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

- **Make things better by using a comprehensive MEL approach** - This involves collecting feedback and stories about what's working and what isn't. It also means creating opportunities to reflect and learn from the collaborative work, and then sharing those lessons with others, including leaders, other parts of the system and the community. To do this comprehensively, HUM needs to set aside enough time and partners need to see this as a valuable investment of their time essential to learning and shifting systems. Using data and results to advocate for community needs is an essential component of long-term systems change. An excellent example of this was how HUM handled its COVID-19 outreach responses, demonstrating how MEL is a worthy time investment.
- **Let more people know about what HUM is doing** - HUM should continue to explain and communicate its work in simple, consistent, and clear ways, showing how it makes good things happen and demonstrate what this work takes.

## Growth

- **Foster understanding and diverse engagement** - Welcome senior decision makers from outside Mildura whose work shapes local services to witness HUM's efforts firsthand to inspire them to support HUM's way of working. Also, encourage participation in HUM from individuals and local organisations who may not initially see a connection to the work, for example community members who are doing well.
- **Inspire young minds** - Introduce HUM's way of working to young people engaged in HUM activities, so it naturally becomes how they do things.

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## ENABLER 3. UNDERSTANDING, MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (UMEL)

Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (UMEL) is an important part of our work to make a difference in the community. It helps us unpack the problems we are trying to solve and figure out what's going well, what not and why. UMEL is part of our daily activities, where we track our collaborative work by collecting data (numbers + stories). This information helps us make sure we are heading in the right direction, understand how and why we are creating change (or not), and make wise decisions. We further use it to show our community that our work is making a difference.

### Guiding questions

To guide our Enabler 3. Learning Circle conversations, we used the following questions:

1. How can HUM build awareness and ownership of community data?
2. How can government data be integrated with community data and knowledge to understand and inform our collective work?
3. What other ideas do we have to improve our collective ways of working in relation to strengthening our UMEL work?

### Key themes

An overview of the key themes brought up by participants during the conversations as well as ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working against Enabler 3. can be found below.

### Capacity building

- **Build local data literacy** - HUM should use their unique position to help build data literacy capacity in individuals and organisational partners who seek it. Building data capacity across various systems locally will strengthen our approach for positive change. This includes building partners' understanding of what data is (numbers + STORIES!), why it is important, and how data should be used.

### Data access

- **Advocate for data access** - HUM has been experiencing challenges accessing government held, population level data to support decision making and measurement. It is important that HUM advocates for increased data access so that the collaboration can make informed decisions. This could be done through collective efforts either locally with HUM partners, and/or nationally together with other place-based initiatives in Australia.

### Data Sharing

- **Build readiness for data sharing** - HUM should start building the foundations and trust for data sharing. Starting with small steps, like identifying a few key questions for each HUM partner to

include in their data collection tools, would allow HUM to share results within the collaboration and build trust over time.

- **Develop data sharing agreements** - HUM should develop a data sharing agreement. This document needs to include information about why data sharing is important and what each partner responsibilities are. It should further explain the benefits for both the HUM collaboration and the partner sharing the data and spell out how this information can and cannot be used to prevent misuse.

## MEL coordinator

- **Have a central data collection point and neutral MEL coordinator** - To ensure clear and effective data management HUM should establish a central point where shared data can be brought together, made sense of, and stored. As part of this, it is recommended that a neutral coordinator is appointed, likely the HUM MEL team whose role will be to:
  - Gather information from the different HUM partners as well as other relevant data.
  - Work closely with HUM partners to avoid duplication (e.g. multiple organisations in community asking a parent the same kind of questions) and align data collection so that community respondents aren't overburdened.
  - Encourage HUM partners to use of participatory data collection tools to allow community members who don't speak English or experience literacy challenges to contribute their feedback and ideas.
  - Call out any instances where data is used differently than agreed upon collectively.
  - Make sense of shared data, place it into context, and prepare it for sharing with the collaboration and community. This includes providing timely updates and explanations for any negative shifts.
  - When data is shared among and within organisations, it is important that everyone, from the leaders and CEOs to the workers on the ground, receives the same information.

HUM partners should allocate resources to collectively support this work so that the responsibility doesn't just lay with the HUM backbone team.

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## ENABLER 4. USE OF COLLECTIVE POWER FOR PURPOSE

Traditional power structures, where some people and organisations have the power to make most of the decisions while other people have no, or very little control have led to ongoing community challenges locally, nationally, and internationally. That's why we need to change this. Community members and organisations should play a leading role in solving local problems, with the government and other funders providing support. The latter can come in the form of resources like funding, materials, and expertise to empower the community in finding solutions.

### Guiding questions

To guide our Enabler 4. Learning Circle conversations, we used the following questions to guide the conversation:

1. How do we get everybody together to build the collective power of community, government organisations and services for purpose?
2. What gets in the way? What steps can be taken now?
3. What other ideas do we have to improve our collective ways of working in relation to strengthening how we use collective power for purpose?

### Key themes

An overview of the key themes brought up by participants during the conversations as well as ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working against Enabler 4. can be found below.

### Shared decision making

- **Establish structures that distribute power** - To achieve shared decision-making, it's essential to co-design structures and processes that distribute power evenly. This involves:
  - The need to recognise existing inequalities and that those most affected by community challenges often have the least say and agree that this isn't right.
  - Showing respect for diverse perspectives, including from young people, people with diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
  - Creating safe and inclusive spaces, ensuring equal representation of different voices.
  - The need to practice deep listening.
  - Regularly questioning whether current practices serve the community or should be changed as part of a structured process.
- **Incorporate lived experience** - For example on interview panels and local boards.

### Funding / resource flows

- **Advocate for community involvement in funding decisions** - The community's perspectives should play a key role in shaping how funds are allocated to help make sure local services meet the unique needs of their recipients. This includes whether services should be delivered by local people or out of towners.

- **Advocate for practical funding approaches** - Current funding arrangements are often inflexible and don't fully support local needs. Instead, local services should have agreements in place that allow them to:
  - Spend meaningful time with clients and participants to foster trust and strong relationships. Nurturing these relationships and engaging with the community are crucial for effective service design and delivery.
  - Undertake proper community consultation to inform service design and delivery.
  - Provide flexible service delivery, outside of traditional hours if necessary.
  - Use surplus funds for testing and trials, opening up opportunities for community-driven initiatives.
- **Funding information should be transparent and accessible** - It would be helpful for community to know what funding comes into the Mildura LGA so that they can ask questions if crucial services or programs are missing and/or if they identify areas for improvement. HUM partners have a shared accountability to be transparent and support this to happen.
- **Explore options to attract corporate investment** - HUM should investigate how to attract corporate investment including from local clubs and what the pros and cons of this type of funding may be. In a case where a company would be interested to invest, HUM should do its due diligence. This would include understanding the business' intentions, ensuring they are happy to commit to HUM's way of working getting the community to endorse the company's involvement in HUM.

## Community diversity

- **Embrace community diversity** - To truly represent the community, reliance on all its different parts is essential, ensuring that everyone has a voice in matters affecting them. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people as well as people belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community and people with different abilities.
- **Address barriers that prevent community from diverse backgrounds to be involved** - Several barriers hinder inclusivity, ranging from linguistic limitations to a sense of not belonging or feeling accepted as part of the community. There are certain families who have lived in the Mildura LGA for generations who hold the power in specific contexts such as the local football and netball communities. This has led to gatekeeping and a lack of cohesion within these spaces. Opening and allowing new and diverse voices will ensure a collective power dynamic.
- **Foster the leadership of present and emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait leaders** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait voices should play a key role in driving HUM's work, and engagement should happen in a way that aligns with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's preferences and needs. Additionally, HUM needs to ensure that it doesn't put undue pressure on Elders who often already bear a heavy cultural load.

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## ENABLER 5. INVESTMENT AND POLICY FOR PURPOSE

The way things currently work is influenced by systems and includes things such as policies and how money is invested. The processes involved in being able to secure and spend funding are often highly bureaucratic and the limited length of lots of funding contracts makes it hard for organisations to work differently. To break the cycle of complex community problems, we need the system to work differently. Instead of top-down approaches, we need a focus on community-led change that truly reflects the needs of local people and their places.

### Guiding questions

To guide our Enabler 5. Learning Circle conversations, we used the following questions:

1. How can government and service leaders prioritise aligning policy and funding to our community's aspiration?
2. What is in the way of this now? What steps can be taken now?
3. What other ideas do we have to improve our collective ways of working to build investment and policy for purpose?

### Key themes

An overview of the key themes brought up by participants during the conversations as well as ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working against Enabler 5. can be found below.

#### Transparency

- **Make local funding more transparent** - To achieve this, it is crucial to understand what resources are flowing into the Mildura LGA and the deliverables associated with the resources. An initial step could involve mapping the funding that flows into the community alongside a review of the deliverables associated with the resources. The next step would be to share this information within the collaboration and with the broader community to increase accountability and transparency.
- **Advocate for flexible funding** - Currently, most funding is short-term and tied to specific outputs or KPIs rather than being focused on long-term outcomes. This approach hinders organisations from adjusting their service delivery to better meet the changing needs and aspirations of the community, especially when a different approach or a focus on prevention is required. The non-flexible funding model also poses challenges for local services to actively contribute to HUM and, it creates tension around accountability. It raises the question of whether services are primarily accountable to their funders or the community they serve, as priorities of both groups may differ. HUM partners should collaborate to advocate for more flexible funding that allows for better responsiveness to community needs and aspirations.

#### Community input

- **Advocate for community input into funding decisions and policy design** - Funding decisions and policy design should involve genuine community engagement with diverse voices to ensure that the community's needs and aspirations are considered and met. Additionally, engaging the community to share their insights and ideas and involving them as equal partners is expected to



strengthen local buy-in and lead to better choices about where to spend money which will benefit the community in the long run.

- **Use community expertise to make sense of local data** - Local data in the form of numbers should only be used if the story behind it is also understood. Community plays a vital role in making sense of this information and in identifying strategies to improve outcomes. That's why community insights should play a vital role in informing funding and policy decisions.
- **Elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders** - While the whole community should be involved in decision-making around funding and policies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and emerging leaders have a key role to play. They should not only be engaged in consultation processes but also be offered roles in government and services where they can directly shape processes and policies plus influence change to help close the gap.

## Measurement Evaluation and Learning

- **Encourage strong MEL practice** - To make sure investment decisions lead to better outcomes, evaluation needs to be part of the implementation process of initiatives right from the start. This goes for both policies and programs that drive and distribute funding as well as the local initiatives in the Mildura LGA that receive funding.
- **Support data sharing** - In Victoria, sharing data consistently is still a work in progress, mainly due to formal restrictions. To support HUM in making decisions based on solid evidence, a good starting point would be exploring government data that is already available to the public, like the information found on the Grants Hub database. Taking it a step further, it could be beneficial to examine South Australia's (SA) data-sharing policy, where sharing data with the community is a legal requirement. Understanding the steps taken in SA to reach this point could provide valuable insights for HUM. This information could then guide HUM in shaping their advocacy strategy to encourage more widespread data sharing in Victoria.

## Other

Other ideas that were shared to help achieve better investment and policy for purpose outcomes include the following:

- Start small and grow this way of working overtime.
- Harness the collective strength within the community, particularly at the grassroots level, to advocate for positive change.
- Encourage collaboration between the Federal and Victorian Governments, promoting connectivity between their systems.
- Invite government and agency leaders to participate in ChangeFest 2024 in Mildura.
- Set an example by sharing HUM's story and results to inspire and influence positive change.

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## ENABLER 6. LEADING AND SUPPORTING EFFORT FOR PURPOSE

For collective impact initiatives to collaboratively create long-lasting change, they need access to essential resources like money, materials, people, and time. It is important that they are well-organised and adopt effective strategies to facilitate their social change work. In this process, HUM partners, including government and local services must team up with the community and HUM backbone to make their shared community plan happen.

### Guiding questions

To guide our Enabler 6. Learning Circle conversations, we used the following questions to guide the conversation:

1. What do healthy, formal partnerships with government organisations and services look like?
2. What does accountability to community look like?
3. What other ideas do we have to improve our collective ways of working to lead and support effort for purpose?

### Key themes

An overview of the key themes brought up by participants during the conversations as well as ideas to improve HUM's collective ways of working against Enabler 6. can be found below.

### Collective impact

- **Deepening our practice of applying the Collective Impact approach** - HUM partners should continue to use and deepen their practice of the Collective Impact approach to drive outcomes. This includes:
  - Working together, sharing ideas and resources, and focusing on co-creating solutions that are designed to have the greatest impact on the community.
  - Being present, being responsible by following through on promises, sharing both power and results, even if they're not perfect.
  - Being open to difficult conversations and holding each other to account. This includes speaking out when services aren't doing well and/or another service in community may be better suited to deliver a particular program or service.
- **Create clarity** - Not everyone knows about the Collective Impact approach, and sometimes people don't fully understand the role of the backbone team. The HUM collaboration is made up of partners, backbone team members, and those involved in its governance. The backbone team's job is to act as a facilitator of collaborative efforts, with diverse partners. Being part of HUM means everyone has certain responsibilities, and these expectations should be clear from the beginning. This involves partners and the backbone team working together and each committing to help with its goals and joint activities. Ideas to achieve this include:

- Create a partnership agreement that explains what HUM is and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the HUM backbone team, governance groups, and partners.
- Talk to and share information with local boards.
- Develop training for new HUM members to help them understand how things work.

## Advocacy / accountability

- **Advocate for change** - A key role of HUM is to advocate for change when the way things currently work get in the way of achieving positive change. This includes advocating for flexible funding, data sharing and accountability. The latter includes:
  - Sharing HUM outcomes with the community and taking feedback on board.
  - Encouraging HUM partners to share their service delivery outcomes with the collaboration and wider community, not just their funders.

## Value

- **Show why HUM is valuable to partners** - As it will take time for partners to observe significant changes in the community, and since none of HUM's collaborative outcomes can be solely attributed to individual members (be it a person or organisation), it is crucial to highlight how HUM adds value and what is considered progress toward population-level change. The benefits of being a HUM member should be clearly outlined in a partnership agreement.

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## 2024 PRIORITIES

Out of all the themes and ideas that were discussed during the Learning Circle conversations, the following were identified as priorities and should inform HUM's annual action plan for 2024:

- **Continue to strengthen HUM's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their emerging leaders, and communities** - This can be achieved by:
  - Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and recognising the crucial role they play in steering the collaborative work of HUM.
  - Promoting the active roles Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can directly play in shaping processes and policies to help close the gap, for example, through ChangeFest 2024.
- **Embedding community decision making in systems and processes** - For example by enhancing the community's input into decision-making and their involvement in the design of culturally safe services such as Family Child Hub, unborn reports, youth cautioning, etc.
- **Continue to develop communication resources that explain HUM and its ways of working** - This is expected to help attract and onboard new partners from various sectors that make up the community, for example around things like movement building and attracting the corporate sector.
- **Undertake more extensive resource mapping** - This is expected to make local funding more transparent and increase accountability to the community.
- **Advocate for flexible Federal and State funding arrangements for HUM partners delivering services in Mildura LGA**
- **Progress data sharing** - Work with SPSP at the initiative level to gain improved access to relevant population data, and develop data sharing agreements locally (RSTO)
- **Create a working group to help shape approaches for Shared Decision-Making and co-designing Local Solutions:**
  - Develop partnership agreements that support a Collective Impact approach.
  - Strengthen the ways that HUM can demonstrate value to the community, partners, and investors. For example, through external evaluation.
  - HUM Governance members should meet with and present to local boards to help them understand the value of HUM, identify opportunities for alignment, and encourage them to become involved in collaborative approaches and efforts.