



# **Youth Cinema Project**

## **Evaluation Report**

**October 2024**



## **Acknowledgement to Country**

We acknowledge the Latji Latji as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we are. We also acknowledge their near neighbours the Barkindji.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging and to the ancient connection they hold with their Country.

We acknowledge there are also other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work in and contribute to the cultural heritage of the Mildura region.

## **About Hands Up Mallee**

Hands Up Mallee connects community, government and services to create change for children, young people and their families. We are a collective impact initiative based in the Mildura Local Government Area, on Latji Latji country in north-west Victoria. As a collective impact initiative, we bring together different groups to tackle complex social problems in new ways. Our work covers areas like health, education and family child services. Since 2015, we have partnered with communities, service providers and government to create ways for people to have a voice and agency in decision-making processes that impact them.

## **Contributor Acknowledgement**

Hands Up Mallee recognises the generosity of all partners and community members who share their time, words, insights, and support to work collaboratively and create change. Their contribution is essential to our work. The stories and information shared, and outcomes achieved in our journey together to create a connected community where families matter and children thrive, belong to them and the Northern Mallee.

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# Executive Summary

## Youth Cinema Project

The purpose of the Youth Cinema project was to bring together a small group of local young people and services to create an event/cinema experience for children and young people.

This was done through a facilitated co-design process, where youth and partners were supported to share their knowledge, ideas and expertise and design and deliver an event that supports youth participation and social connection with a strong focus on equity.

The Youth Cinema project approach was informed by learnings from previous youth co-design and community infrastructure pilot projects and aimed to test the opportunities to better support youth in the CBD area and with businesses and CBD partners.

## The Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide the background of the Youth Cinema Project.
- Summarise the process, activities, learnings and outcomes.
- Identify what's next for Hands Up Mallee's work.

## Key Findings and Outcomes from the Evaluation

- Youth-led co-design increases agency of youth, through an empowering experience, they grow confidence, feel supported and connected.
- Co-designing with youth enhances the way services and businesses work with youth, through new relationships, shared experience and mutual exchange of skill, expertise and knowledge.
- A shared vision helps to enable new partners (e.g. businesses) to come together to support youth and diversify the resources that are available to strengthen opportunities and outcomes for youth.

## **Learnings**

- Older youth and youth with existing connections can quickly and easily step into a co-design process.
- Established relationships with partners can be easily leveraged for new work through strong alignment and understanding of vision, outcomes and commitment to the ways of working.
- Peer to peer promotion of events is an effective and meaningful tool.
- Younger youth is seeking opportunities for social connection and participation in community.

## **What's Next**

Hands Up Mallee intends to continue to use the learnings from this project and other recent youth co-design initiatives to inform and elevate future work related to:

- Co-designing with youth.
- Partnered approaches to working with youth.
- Community infrastructure development and activation by youth, for youth.

# Introduction

## Background

HUM has clearly heard from young people and their families in the community that there are limited safe, accessible places for them to go to (with or without families).

Access to places and spaces (community infrastructure) for young people to go to and enjoy, and have a say about, enables other key protective factors to support their wellbeing and positive development.

Hands Up Mallee has been piloting different ways to better support children, young people and families with opportunities to participate, have a say and build social connections in community with a focus on access, equity and systems change. Co-design has been proven as a successful approach to do this and has had positive results in recent community infrastructure pilots in both Red Cliffs (pool & basketball court) and Merbein (pool & library) and Mildura (Homebase Hoops and Fun in the Park).

In 2023, HUM worked in collaboration with community, local traders, community service organisations and young people to support a community-led response to issues of youth crime in the CBD. This work generated great interest and support from local partners to work differently to support young people with a focus on prevention.

An opportunity to pilot the co-design and support for a youth only event to promote safe and supportive places for youth arose when the Wallis Cinema team expressed an interest in partnering with Mildura Rural City Council and Hands Up Mallee (HUM). Other pilot partners emerged, including City Heart Traders, HomeBase and Victoria Police.

# Purpose of the Report

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The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide the background of the Youth Cinema Project.
- To summarise the process, activities, learnings and outcomes.
- Identify what's next for Hands Up Mallee's work.

## Key Audiences

The report is designed to inform the Hands Up Mallee initiative, and Youth Cinema Project partners, including Victoria Police, HomeBase and City Heart Traders, and Stronger Places Stronger People as funders.

Secondary audiences include the local service providers not part of this pilot, interested community groups/partners, and the broader community.

## Methodology

The evaluation and report have been designed, developed and prepared by Hands Up Mallee Backbone.

See Appendix 3 for more details of the evaluation methodology.

# About the Project

## Project Purpose and Scope

The purpose and scope of the Youth Cinema Project was to:

- Bring together a small group of local young people, community groups and services. Through a facilitated co-design process to share their knowledge, ideas, and experiences to create and test an event/cinema experience for children and young people.
- Co-design with youth, events/experiences that support participation and social connection.
- Apply learnings from previous youth co-design community infrastructure pilot projects, explore and evaluate the opportunities for the CBD and businesses to support young people.

## Partners and their Contributions

Key Partners	Contributions
HomeBase	Youth engagement, co-facilitator in co-design, event promotion & registrations
Wallis Cinemas	Key resources (venue, low-cost tickets, donations), event promotion and event support
Youth Co-designers	Participation in co-design workshops, event promotion and event support
Victoria Police	Participation in co-design workshops, youth engagement support and event promotion
Mildura City Heart	Participation in co-design workshops and event support
Dhelk Dja Mallee Action Team	Funding support and donations
Secondary Partners	Contribution
Arts Mildura	Youth engagement and event volunteers
Mildura Rural City Council	Youth engagement and event volunteers



## **The Role of Hands Up Mallee**

- Youth outreach and engagement.
- Forming a collaborative partnership.
- Co-design lead and lead facilitator.
- Project/event management and communications lead.
- Youth remuneration.
- Evaluation lead.
- Supporting young people to feel safe to share their ideas and expertise.
- Securing funding for the pilot project.
- Modelling a different way of working to support key partner's learning through doing.

## **Guiding Principles**

- Informed by community voice, data and research.
- Equity and inclusion lens.
- Positive youth development and voice.
- Promote diversity of engagement and participation of young people.

# What We Did

## Project Timeline

When	What
January 2024	Initial engagement between Hands Up Mallee, Wallis Cinemas and Mildura Rural City Council
May – June	Partnership engagement and project scoping
June – July	Youth engagement and co-design group
July – August	Co-design workshops x 3
September	Youth event promotion (radio, social media, presentation at Homebase Hoops)  Cinema Event
October	Project debrief with co-design group

## Engaging Young People

The co-design group was made up of five young people (11-15) with the core group who participated in all workshops and the event being 15 years old. Some had been involved in youth-led design previously, others were starting with no prior experience outside of school programs. All the young people were keen to contribute to a project for their community.

What we did to engage and support young people in the cinema project:

- Attended Homebase Hoops to pitch the project to young people who are already engaged with the Hoops program and inviting them based on interest in project.
- Engaged with young people who don't always get the opportunity to participate.
- Adopted a relational approach with Victoria Police and harnessed their community connections to engage youth and their families.
- Engaged project partners who were trusted people to the youth co-designers.

- Created fun and engaging workshops.
- Held workshops at HomeBase Youth Hub.
- Transported youth to and from workshops/event.
- Remuneration for participation.

## How we did this:

- Used the connection to HomeBase Hoops and pre-existing rapport with players and staff.
- Delivered all the workshops at HomeBase Youth Hub, which created a safe, neutral meeting place where everyone felt comfortable.
- Offered transport home and pick up from school/home. Getting the young people to and from workshops/event was vital for sustained engagement.
- Participation for some of the youth co-designers was difficult, as external factors and confidence to participate was a barrier to commit to the project.
- Workshop design was informed by youth co-designers and their way of working/learning.
- The on-going commitment gave some of the young people a place to go after school, where they felt safe and heard.

*“Having somewhere to go otherwise would be running amok - but also creating an event for kids to go to stay out of trouble.”—Youth Co-designer.*

*“I wouldn’t have been able to be involved in this project without a ride home.”—Youth Co-designer.*



# Youth Cinema Event

## Designing and delivering the youth cinema event

It was important to the youth co-designers that the event wasn't "just a movie". The co-designers wanted the event to be a full and engaging experience and one that kids and youth would want to come to and get the chance to spend time with friends and family in the holidays. This influenced their decisions about things such as activities, food and goodie bags.

Target Audience
Young people aged between 10 – 17 Catering for the "middle ages" 10-13
Scope
Free event in the spring school holidays Youth Only (ages 10-17) Fully supervised by trained staff Led by Youth Cinema Project Crew
Vibe
Safe, fun, friendly and welcoming, inclusive and encouraging



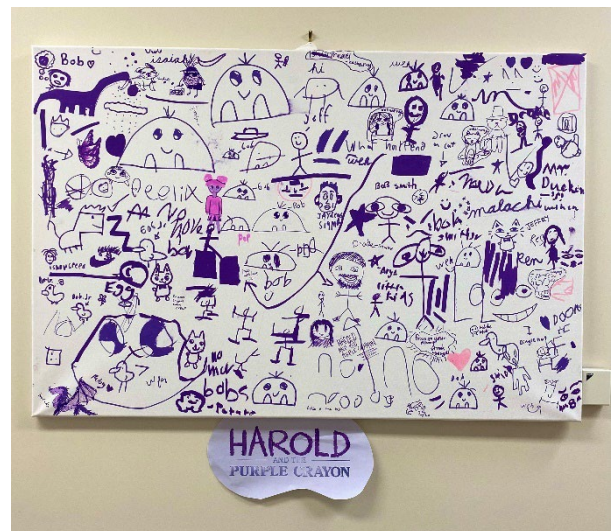
## Event Promotion

The event was promoted through:

- Social media promotion (Hands Up Mallee, Youth Engagement Services, HomeBase).
- Poster drops in Mildura and surrounding communities and to local services who deliver school holiday programming for youth.
- Youth co-designers promoted the event on a local youth radio program.
- HomeBase hosted the Eventbrite page to their 200+ followers.
- Youth co-designers presented the project and event at HomeBase Hoops.

## Event Results

- The event had 130 registrations with approximately 80 young people attending the event at Wallis Cinemas Mildura.
- The event ran in two parts: an hour of art activities in the cinema foyer, including a colouring in competition and a communal art piece inspired by the film before the movie screening.
- There was a goodie bag that included free fruit of their choice and juice boxes offered to the young people as they enjoyed the activities.
- Victoria Police partners supported the engagement of young people attending and helped to ensure they were having fun, felt safe and supported.
- Although there was some downtime before the movie began, the attendees were in high spirits enjoying the free popcorn and snacks.
- Acknowledgement of Country done by a youth co-designer and a brief rundown on cinema rules by the youth crew and supported by Victoria Police partner.
- For many young people, it was their first experience being at the cinema without a parent, which was exciting for them and the crowd was well-behaved.



# Evaluation Findings

## Impact

### Youth-led Co-Design Empowers Youth

Working with a group of older young people (15-year-olds) fast-tracked decision-making and they took on the responsibility of being mentors to younger youth very seriously.

The youth co-designers were incredibly insightful about the risks involved when working with younger people and curious about processes, such as risk assessments and project management.

The mentor role was taken on by the youth co-designers throughout the planning process, especially when considering the safety of young people coming to the cinema by themselves and making sure the movie that was chosen would be appropriate for the age group they were catering towards (10-13).

During the event, a younger sibling of one of the attendees was disappointed that he couldn't stay for the movie because he was too young and felt comfortable enough to share his ideas with one of the youth co-designers and crew, who listened and took down notes for future events.

*“Being able to influence and be role models to other kids made me feel proud.”–*

Youth Co-designer.

The growth in confidence was noted by the young people and partners involved in the project. Being able to jump in with a tight timeline to bring this event together was a credit to everyone involved who brought their different expertise to the group.

The co-design approach enabled the youth to have ownership over the event they were planning, from deciding exactly what food they wanted, and when, or how, they wanted the event to run.

The youth co-designers wanted to promote the event on local radio and with the encouragement and support of one of the project partners, they were able to go on local community radio program to talk about the project they had been working on and the upcoming event. The youth came away feeling proud of stepping out of their comfort zone, saying they felt *“supported and confident to do it”*.

Two of the youth co-designers announced the event at HomeBase Hoops in front of their peers and handed out the event flyers. They received a round of applause, and many young people signed up that night to come along to the event.

One of the youth co-designers included an Acknowledgement of Country prior to the movie screening during the planning process, and although nervous, they took on the responsibility to deliver it at the event with the support of the group. They came away feeling proud and thankful for that experience to speak to their peers and tell them about the project.

*“Expected them not to listen to our speech but ended up feeling really respected by everyone”*—Youth Co-designer.

*“You could see how proud he was to get up there and talk to the kids about the project.”*—Project Service Partner.

## Ripple Effects

As a result of the empowering co-design process supported by project partner, the following outcomes and opportunities arose for the youth beyond the original project intent and scope:

- Connections to services and programs.
- Employment and volunteer opportunities.
- Engagement in further leadership opportunities.
- New and different community relationships.

## Youth-led co-design enhances partners' ways of working with young people

When partner organisations engage in meaningful co-design and have a shared experience with youth, it is a positive experience which serves and supports novel approaches to working with young people. This was evidenced through service such as HomeBase taking up the opportunity to invite the co-designers to participate in programs and other leadership opportunities.

Forming relationships with young people through a co-design process builds connection and challenges perceptions through a shared experience. This approach strengthens community relationships between youth and services or businesses and supports their ability to communicate and engage in an ongoing manner.

*“It has given me the ability to speak directly to participants when we come across each other in the street.”—Project Business Partner.*

Similarly, a youth-led co-design process supports the confidence of local business to realise the role they can play to support local youth.

*“It makes me feel confident in our ability to support Mildura community.”—Project Business Partner.*



## Effectiveness

### Partnering with Local Services and Business to Support Youth

Bringing together new project partners was extremely valuable and supported the engagement of young people and giving them the opportunity to build new relationships with young people while having new experiences. A shared vision and commitment to supporting and partnering with young people, ability to share and contribute resources strengthened and enabled a partnership approach to the co-design work and project. Partnering with local businesses around youth co-design was relatively new to the HUM team and proved to be a great opportunity to test the approach commonly used with service partners to determine future opportunities and inform ways of working.

#### Wallis Cinemas

Wallis Cinemas is passionate about supporting youth-led change and approached this project with the intention to support a social connection between Mildura youth. Wallis Cinemas supported the youth co-design group to tour the cinema and supported their event planning process. This engagement provided the opportunity to meet the cinema manager, who encouraged one youth co-designer to submit a resume for casual work at the cinema.

*“We wanted to ensure we can build positive and meaningful relationships with local organisations in Mildura who have shared values and ambitions, to work collaboratively to ensure a positive impact.”—Project Business Partner.*

#### Mildura City Heart

Mildura City Heart partnered with and supported the youth co-designers in workshops and brought their event management expertise to the group. Volunteering and work experience opportunities in the Mildura CBD were offered to all the young

people involved in the project. The pilot project helped to build rapport and relationships between City Heart management and local young people.

## **HomeBase**

HomeBase played a key role in youth engagement and support throughout the project. This strengthened the connection between HomeBase and the young people participating in the project.

HomeBase did this by:

- Providing a safe and inviting environment for the co-design workshops.
- Showing up to workshops and the event in a way that made the youth co-designers feel comfortable to share ideas and concerns.
- Supporting youth co-designer with registrations during the event.
- Taking the opportunity to connect the young people to the HomeBase employment program.

## **Dhelk Dja**

Dhelk Dja supported the youth event by providing funding that covered some of the event costs and enabled the event to be free for young people. Dhelk Dja recognised the link between this project, HomeBase Hoops and they understood the process and intended outcomes. The funding support from Dhelk Dja removed financial barriers for families and ensured young people could attend a safe, fun event during the school holidays.

## **Victoria Police**

Having Victoria Police as a project partner and involved in the co-design process was extremely valuable for fostering existing relationships and supporting youth connection in a different environment.

This happened by:

- Leading a relational approach to engaging youth in co-design workshops.
- Supporting ongoing communication with youth and families.
- Encouraging youth to step up and have their voice heard.

- Supporting youth co-designers in their event roles and ensuring they knew they had back-up every step of the way.

### **Mildura Rural City Council (Youth Engagement Services) and Arts Mildura**

The Youth Engagement Services Team from MRCC and Arts Mildura supported the project by assisting with initial youth engagement. They also provided additional supervision on the event day and supported the youth co-designers in their event roles. Overall, the willingness to provide flexible support by the Youth Engagement Services and Arts Mildura was invaluable in terms of event success.

# Learnings

## About The Co-design Process

Working with older youth, meant that the co-design process was efficient as the young people were comfortable to make decisions and were eager to deliver the event.

The fact that the young people already knew each other or were familiar with each other meant that they found it easy to settle in together as a co-design group.

Partners realised great value in learning and working alongside youth, both for their own relationships in community with young people and being able to share their skills and expertise to support the event and design process.

## About Partnered Efforts to Support Youth

Sharing and contribution of various resources (relationships, time, skills, funding, venues) creates high value opportunities and enables engagement.

Established relationships between partners can be leveraged for new work and activated easily, this is enabled through strong alignment, trust and understanding of vision and approach.

## About What Works for Youth Events and Activities

Peer to peer engagement and promotion is an effective tool and builds confidence and connection for youth co-designers.

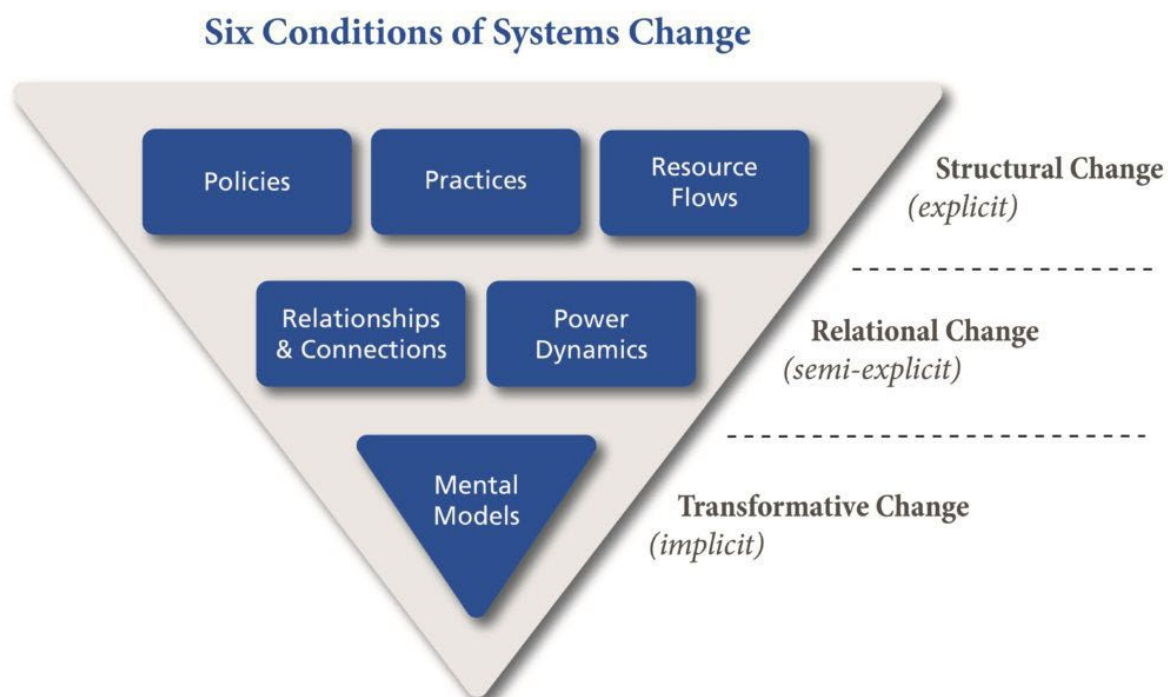
Events need to be scheduled well to ensure young people are engaged for the duration of the event.

The younger youth cohort appreciated the opportunity to engage in events, as are often outside age criteria for youth events and were well represented in event participant numbers. Many of those young people are new to 'youth only' events, so required some additional support to ensure they felt safe and comfortable. Older youth and staff played this role well.

# Early Signs of System Change

Hands Up Mallee employs a systems change approach to improve outcomes for children, young people and families focussing on prevention and early intervention.

As part of its approaches to evaluation, it looks for signs of systems change related to changes in practices, resource flows, policy, relationships and connections, power dynamics, and mindsets.



FSG : Water of Systems Change JOHN KANIA, MARK KRAMER, PETER SENGE June 2018

## Resources

This project demonstrated the value of and ways in which various resources across the system can be used together to support meaningful engagement of young people in co-design as well as create low cost/free and engaging events and activities.

## Relationships

Relationships with and between young people are strengthened through an empowering co-design process. New service and business relationships were created for young people through the co-design process.

## **Power Dynamics**

The agency of young people was increased through their experience of co-design. The young people were given the space and support to lead this work, which enabled them to learn and grow confidence and then seek out further opportunities (work, volunteering, leadership) for themselves and others (future events and activities for young people).

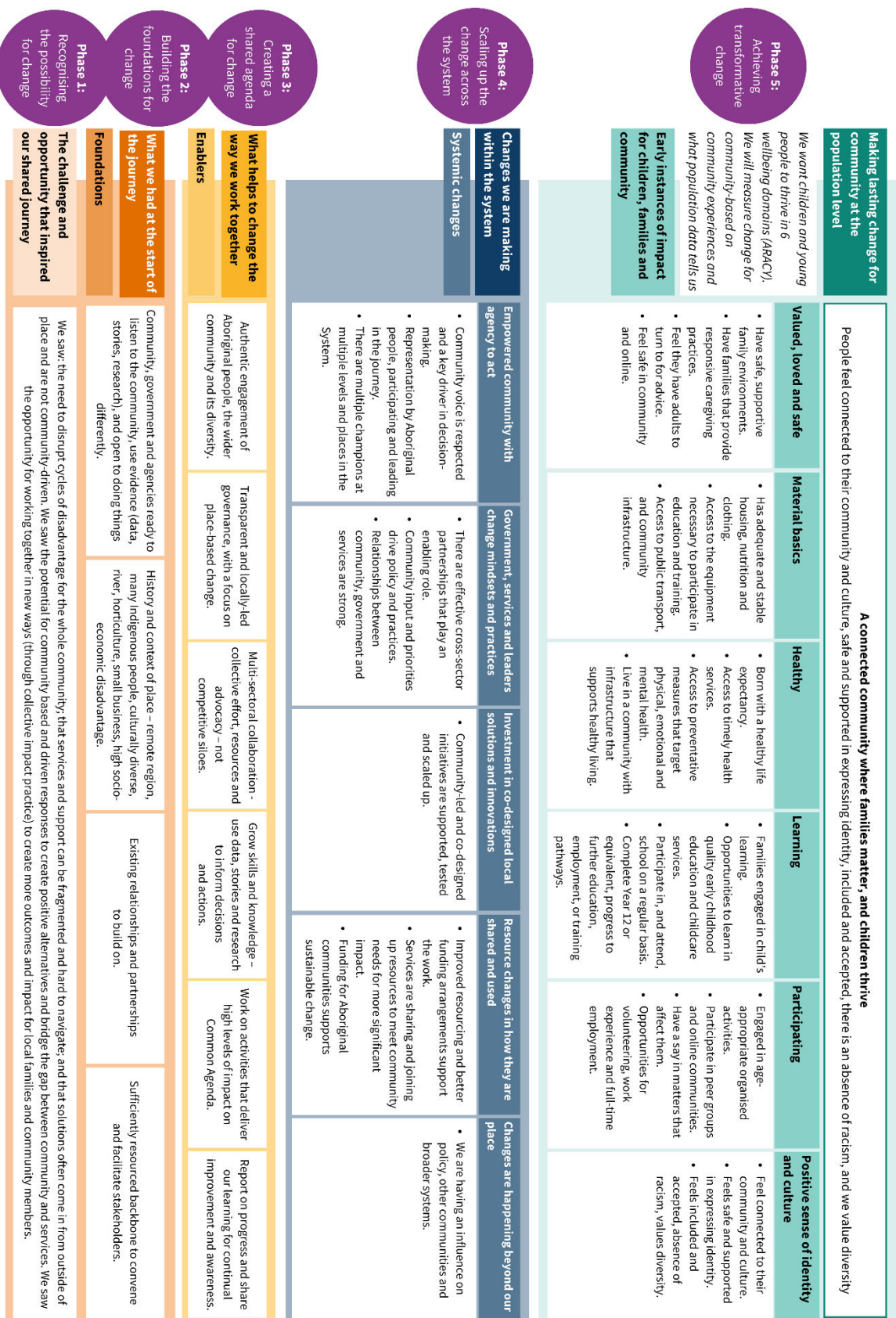
# Recommendations

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Continue to use the learnings from this project and other recent youth co-design pilots and initiatives to inform future work related to:

- Partnered approaches to working with youth.
- Community infrastructure development and activation by youth, for youth.
- Co-designing with youth.

# Appendix 1 – Hands Up Mallee Overarching Theory of Change





# Appendix 2 – Project Strategic Alignment

Project alignment with HUM overarching Theory of Change:

<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Authentic engagement of Aboriginal people, the wider community and it's diversity.</li><li>• Multi-sectoral collaboration, collective effort, resources &amp; advocacy- not competitive silos.</li><li>• Grow skills and knowledge – use data, stories and research to inform decisions &amp; actions.</li><li>• Report on progress &amp; share our learning for continual improvement &amp; awareness.</li></ul>
<b>Systemic Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empowered community with agency to act.</li><li>• Investment in co-designed local solutions and innovations.</li></ul>
<b>Early instances of impact for children, families &amp; community</b>	<b>Nest Outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Valued, Loved and Safe.</li><li>• Material Basics.</li><li>• Participating.</li><li>• Positive sense of identity and culture.</li></ul>

# Appendix 3 – Evaluation Methodology

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## Purpose

The purpose of evaluating this project was to:

- Demonstrate progress towards intended outcomes.
- Capture learnings to inform future action and improvement.

## Scope

The scope of the evaluation includes:

- The co-design process
- The co-designed youth event
- The experience of youth, partners and the HUM Backbone

## Key Evaluation Questions

The following high level KEQ have been selected from the HUM 9-18 Nested MEL Framework (link: <https://shorturl.at/0wlCK>). These questions guided the wording of reflection and interview questions for project partners, including youth co-designers.

### **KEQ1. Impact – To what extent is our collaborative work achieving impact?**

- What difference has HUM made for young people, their parents/carers, families and organisations due to our collaborative work?
- To what extent is our collaborative work achieving equity?

### **KEQ 2. Effectiveness – To what extent are we effective in the implementation of our collaborative approach?**

- How well are we working together?
- How well are we implementing our joint activities?

- What are people's experiences of HUM and the work, particularly the experiences of young people, their parents/carers/families, organisations and the community?

**KEQ 3. To what extent is our work led by community, particularly young people?**

- To what extent are young people's idea, aspirations and needs guiding our work?
- To what extent is our work guided by an equity and inclusion lens?

**KEQ 4. To what extent are our learnings and insights used to improve our collaborative work?**

- What are the key learnings from our collaborative work?

## **Theory of Change**

A Theory of Change outlines the outcomes that are being sought, as well as the guiding principles, opportunities, signs of early and intermediate change and how these are enabled.

The approach and evaluation of this project is guided by and informed by:

- Hands Up Mallee Overarching Theory of Change (Appendix 1)
- Hands Up Mallee 9-18 Nested MEL and Theory of Change (<https://shorturl.at/0wlCK>)
- Youth Cinema Project Theory of Change (Appendix 4)

## **Evaluation Tools**

- Reflection, activity and observation logs
- Counts and participation data
- Feedback, workshop reflections and observations
- Interviews

# Appendix 4 – Youth Cinema Project Theory of Change

