

A photograph of a person's hands holding a shallow wooden bowl. Inside the bowl, a small fire is burning, with bright orange and yellow flames visible. The bowl is surrounded by green foliage, including long, narrow leaves in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred, showing more greenery and a person's leg in a light-colored shirt.

HANDS UP MALLEE MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

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A circular logo with a white background and a dark grey border. Inside the circle, there is a stylized dark grey 'C' shape.

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Disclaimer

This document together with the three case studies has been produced using information supplied to Clear Horizon by Hands Up Mallee, along with grey and academic data sourced through a desktop review, which included a total of 257 documents/sources, 19 interviews with 21 HUM partners and HUM Backbone Team members, and 23 survey responses from HUM stakeholders. While we make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this report, any judgements as to suitability of the information for the client's purposes are the client's responsibility. Clear Horizon extends no warranties and assumes no responsibility as to the suitability of this information or for the consequences of its use.

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Acronyms

Table 1. Acronyms

Acronyms	Description
AEDC	Australian Early Years Development Census
AOCTVR	Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CERR	COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response
DSS	Department of Social Services
HUM	Hands Up Mallee
LGA	Local Government Area
MDAS	Mallee District Aboriginal Services
MRCC	Mildura Rural City Council
SCHS	Sunraysia Community Health Services
SMECC	Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
SPSP	<i>Stronger Places, Stronger People</i> initiative
ToC	Theory of Change
TACSI	The Australian Centre for Social Innovation
UMEL (or MEL)	Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (note that sometimes this may not include 'Understanding')

Definitions

An overview of key terms related to place-based systems change, frequently referenced throughout this report, along with their definitions, is available in Appendix 2.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Latji Latji people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we are. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging, and acknowledge the ancient and continuing connection they hold with their Country.

We also acknowledge their near neighbours, the Barkindji People, and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work in, and contribute to the cultural heritage of the Mildura region.

Acknowledgement of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative

Many people have contributed to this report. We extend our appreciation to all of the evaluation participants who shared their stories and feedback, as well as those from past evaluations that have been referenced in this report. Special thanks to the verification panellists for your time and constructive feedback.

We acknowledge the role of the local community, services and government in delivering the work of the HUM initiative– without your efforts, resources and commitment, there would be no HUM (and no report).

Finally, we would like to thank the dedicated efforts of the Hands Up Mallee Yarning Group and Collaborative Governance Group and acknowledge the significant contributions they make in so generously and courageously leading the change we want to see in our community.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About Hands Up Mallee

Hands Up Mallee (HUM) is a community-led collective impact initiative in the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA).

Local leaders formed HUM in 2015 when they recognised the need for a different way of working to address social, health and wellbeing issues in the community. HUM works in partnership with the community, local service providers, agencies, and all three levels of government, and is supported by a local Backbone Team. It uses a **place-based systems change** approach to co-design solutions for local issues by centring the community's voice and combining it with local data and current research to develop collective action for a better community for children, young people, and their families. Ultimately, the aim of HUM is to achieve the **Community Aspiration**: 'a connected community where families matter, and children thrive'.

About collective impact

HUM applies a place-based systems change approach known as **collective impact**, which is a specific form of collaboration that brings people and organisations together help solve a complex problem in their community using these five principles:

1. Everyone agrees on a joint vision 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 decision making.
4. Everyone shares evidence (numbers and stories) and insights about their work and what they are learning.
5. The collaboration is supported by a Backbone Team that helps everyone to work well together, step out of their comfort zone, and commit to a different way of working.

The role of the Backbone Team

The Backbone Team plays a fundamental role in driving change within a collective impact approach. It is made up of a core group of people whose **primary responsibilities** are to provide **strategic guidance** to the initiative, **mobilise resources** and **public support, model and advocate** for the initiative's desired **ways of working**, and offer **technical expertise** and **capacity building** to initiative members and the broader community. The Backbone Team is also responsible for **facilitating alignment**, both across different partners (**horizontal**) and within partners' organisations (**vertical**), so that all resources, activities and strategies are united in pursuit of the Community Aspiration.

To achieve this, a Backbone Team must have strong **adaptive leadership** skills to build long lasting cross-sector relationships and effectively navigate challenges. The Backbone Team must also create the enabling conditions for change to occur. This includes fostering **trust** among partners and within the collective impact initiative, ensuring a **shared understanding of values** and aims, and a **fit-for-purpose**

and transparent governance model that is community-led. These concepts are covered in greater detail in [Chapter 3](#).

HUM's enablers for change

HUM recognises that without the right conditions in place, systems change is unlikely to occur or be sustained, and population-level outcomes will not improve. These enabling conditions – or enablers for change – vary depending on a community's context and needs. HUM has identified six enablers for change that must be established for sustainable systems- and population-level change to occur in its community:

1. Authentic engagement of Aboriginal people, the wider community and its diversity
2. Transparent and locally led governance with a focus on place-based change
3. Multisector collaboration – collective effort, resources and advocacy – not competitive silos
4. Grow skills and knowledge and use data, stories and research to inform decisions and actions
5. Work on activities that deliver a high level of impact on the Community Aspiration
6. Report on progress and share our learnings for continual improvement and awareness

The enablers for change, as well as systems- and population-level outcomes, can be found in HUM's Journey of Change (Theory of Change) in [Chapter 1](#).

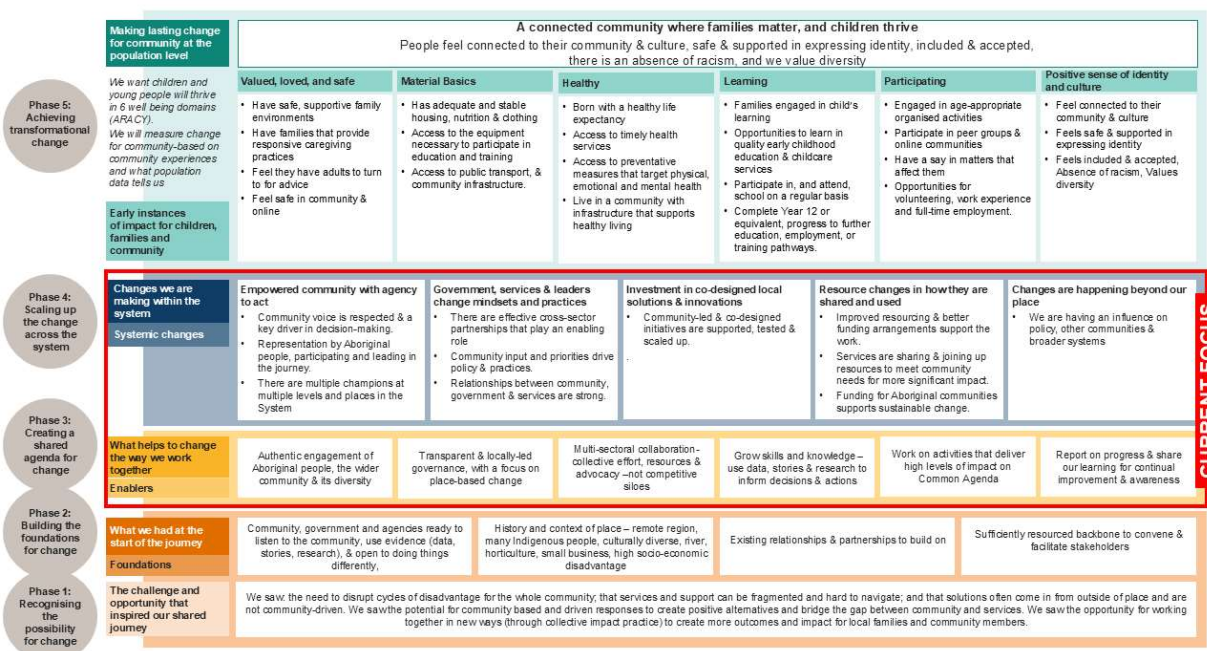
About this report

The purpose of this report is to validate and codify the roles of the HUM Backbone Team and the broader HUM collaboration in delivering place-based change using a collective impact approach. It is guided by the following key evaluation questions:

1. To what extent did HUM deliver its enabling outcomes (enablers of change)?
2. To what extent did HUM contribute to place-based change in the Mildura LGA?

The report investigates the extent to which the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration have implemented each of HUM's enablers of change and the systems-level outcomes that have been achieved as a direct result. It specifically looks at the enablers of change and systems-level outcomes as defined in the HUM Overarching Journey of Change (Figure 1) and ascertains the extent to which the initiative has delivered activities and outcomes against them. It also identifies the factors that have either facilitated or hindered the ability of the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration to act on these enablers. By answering the key evaluation questions, the report demonstrates the impact that the HUM Backbone Team and broader collaboration have had in creating systems change and improving outcomes for children, young people, and families in the Mildura LGA's community.

Figure 1. Hands Up Mallee Overarching Journey of Change



In addition to this report, three illustrative case studies have been developed to provide in-depth, context-specific examples of how the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration have created significant changes within HUM initiatives and the subsequent ripple effects that have emerged as a result. The three case studies apply a contribution analysis approach, have been verified by an expert panel, and can be found in the report annexes 1-3. More about the evaluation methodology can be found in [Chapter 2](#).

Key findings

The HUM Backbone Team is effectively delivering across all six of its enablers of change

Overall, this report finds that the HUM Backbone Team is successfully delivering its enablers of change. The evaluation provides strong evidence of the HUM Backbone Team's commitment to embodying its six enablers of change across all facets of its work, as discussed in [Chapters 4-9](#) of the report.

Authentic engagement of community

HUM listens deeply to and amplifies the community's voice. The HUM Backbone Team is on a continuous journey of community engagement, consistently undertaking activities across the community engagement spectrum to achieve specific goals. Due to its intentional and evidence-informed approach, particularly in the co-design and co-delivery of HUM initiatives, its Backbone Team is widely regarded as a leader and authority in community engagement. As a direct result of the HUM Backbone Team's authentic engagement, the community has become empowered to create, lead, and advocate for community-led change. Relationships between the HUM Backbone Team, the community, service providers, and the different levels of government have strengthened, leading to more successful initiatives that better address community needs and effectively navigate barriers to engagement.

Transparent and locally led governance

Collaborative governance that is inclusive of and led by community is essential to advancing community ownership. HUM has a unique fit for purpose governance model that was co-designed with the HUM Backbone Team, HUM partners, and community. HUM's collective governance model is activating new voices and creating ripples in other sectors' approaches to governance and First Nation's self-determination.

Multisector collaboration

Multisector collaboration not only makes community-led initiatives possible but also enables better outcomes. The HUM Backbone Team and HUM partners collectively invest their time, resources and advocacy efforts to activate initiatives that might otherwise struggle to secure funding. This collective approach ensures broad buy-in for their success, promotes greater accountability and alignment with the Community Aspiration, and inspires innovative solutions to address barriers to engagement. By working together towards a shared goal, HUM partners build strong relationships across sectors and learn new ways of working. These relationships and mindset shifts are key to adopting new approaches and practices and serve as the foundations for creating sustainable systems change.

Growing our skills and knowledge

HUM makes evidence-based decisions using local data, relevant research, and community expertise. HUM is guided by a Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework based on its Community Aspiration. HUM's overarching MEL framework, alongside nested and mini-MEL plans, ensures that all HUM activities and initiatives are underpinned by robust measurement, evaluation and learning. The HUM Backbone Team grows the skills and knowledge of the collective to effectively undertake place-based systems change work. As a result of these skills and efforts, the HUM Backbone Team has undertaken comprehensive internal and external evaluations, contributed to significant research, and received an award for the collective's commitment to outstanding collaboration in social impact measurement. They are widely recognised as a thought leader in the place-based change movement and are featured as a best practice example in multiple government and sector publications.

Activities that deliver high levels of impact on the Community Aspiration

HUM invests in strategies and actions that are expected to have the greatest possible impact on the community. The Community Aspiration serves as a strong foundation and guide to determine the work of the collaboration, adopting a three-legged stool approach that combines research, local data, and community voice to collectively guide decision-making with community and multisector partners. All of HUM's high leverage activities deliver direct impact towards the Community Aspiration, ensuring that the focus and scope of HUM's efforts remain aligned with the vision and approach of the collective.

Report on progress and share our learnings

By sharing learnings and committing to continual improvement and awareness, HUM is contributing to changes beyond the Mildura LGA. The HUM Backbone Team consistently shares its progress, learnings and ways of working with its diverse audiences and partners, including the local community, service providers, all levels of government, other place-based initiatives, and the global collective impact community. It reports on progress and shares HUM's learnings through various channels, including evaluation reports, newsletters, videos, contributions to literature, events, and conferences. These diverse ways of sharing ensure HUM's work is accessible for all audiences.

By delivering on the enablers of change, HUM is contributing to place-based change within systems

The evaluation has identified multiple instances of systems-level changes that resulted directly from the work undertaken by the HUM Backbone Team and the HUM partners. Some of these changes include shifts in mindsets and practices among individual stakeholders, which have the potential to create broader ripple effects across their sector and system. Others are examples of organisational-level changes that indicate stronger and more sustained systems-level change is on the horizon. Throughout this report and the three case studies, systems-level changes have been identified in conjunction with the enabling conditions that have activated them. Below are just a few examples:

Changes in health systems

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HUM Backbone Team delivered two initiatives across the Mildura LGA in partnership with HUM stakeholders including the local council, service providers, state government departments, Aboriginal and CALD Elders and community members:

- **COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR)** – This HUM initiative of 19+ partners focused on providing direct-to-community food relief support, including the delivery of essential medications and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to 3,354 isolated and at-risk community members.
- **Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR)** – This multisector collaboration by the HUM Backbone Team, Aboriginal and CALD leaders, and 18 HUM partner organisations delivered 38 pop up clinics that administered 1,294 COVID-19 vaccinations and 406 PCR tests to vulnerable populations within the Mildura LGA, including Aboriginal and CALD communities.

Both initiatives were successful not only in delivering essential healthcare services to hard-to-reach populations but also in changing the mindsets of many of its collaborators. The two initiatives utilised authentic community engagement and multisector collaboration to better understand the needs of the Mildura LGA's most vulnerable community members during an emergency and how to effectively address barriers to support. HUM partners have since adopted these ways of working and applied them in their own contexts, particularly in the delivery of other health services. Examples include:

- **The integration of Maternal and Child Health nurses at Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) sponsored Playgroups** to better coordinate service provision, allowing families in need easier access to health services for their children.
- **The development of the CP@CLINIC community paramedic model** by Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS) to deliver health prevention services to communities dealing with complex health concerns or with restricted access to mainstream health services.
- Creation of the **Health Equity Unit** by SCHS, designed to be responsive to community health needs and reduce inequities, such as by setting up pop-up vaccination clinics in accessible locations for community like family and youth hubs.

Each of these initiatives has recognised and acted on the need for a place-based approach to reach and support community members experiencing a high degree of vulnerability, a decision largely driven by the success of the models implemented in the CERR and AOCTVR initiatives. These are significant examples of early instances of systems change and have laid the groundwork for broader shifts across the Mildura LGA's health system.

Changes in youth services systems

HUM has achieved significant changes within the youth services system, primarily by authentically engaging young people in the initiatives it delivers. By collaborating with young people to design and deliver HUM initiatives, service providers and government have gained a deeper appreciation for and understanding of how to effectively engage and support young people. The following types of changes have occurred within the youth services system as a result of HUM:

- **Changes to how young people are engaged:** Seeing the success of youth co-design in initiatives like HomeBase Hoops and the Red Cliffs Pools Pilot, MRCC has adopted a similar approach when developing a grant application to build basketball courts in Red Cliffs. In response to increased youth crime HUM has undertaken small scale trials shared with sector partners and City Heart Traders to conduct mall walk-throughs to build relationships with youth and to encourage them to engage in prosocial activities
- **Changes in how resources are used:** An informal roundtable of Mildura youth service providers has begun convening to discuss and address the challenges facing young people in the community. While not all participating providers were involved with HomeBase Hoops, the roundtable has adopted many of the program's ways of working, particularly its use of multi-sector collaboration and authentic youth engagement. Providers have begun directly approaching young people to discuss issues and listen to their proposed solutions.
- **Changes to practices and policies:** MRCC has amended its youth worker job descriptions to include expectations of after-hours work, recognising the need to have services available for young people during evenings and weekends.

By changing how they engage young people, service providers are also improving their relationships with them. Providers at HomeBase Hoops have noted their ability to intervene earlier and more effectively with at-risk, likely preventing involvement in the justice system. By shifting mindsets, practices and relationships within the youth services sector, there is significant potential to divert more young people in the Mildura LGA from the justice system and improve outcomes for those already involved.

Changes in how government engages with community

MRCC is a long-term HUM partner. They have collaborated on many HUM initiatives, have representation on the HUM Collaborative Governance Group, and have responded to requests for support through HUM's advocacy efforts. As a result, there have been real, tangible changes within the local council, particularly in how it values and approaches community engagement. Examples include:

- **Red Cliffs Integrated Early Years Hub:** When the Red Cliffs co-design group proposed creating an integrated early years hub, MRCC saw an opportunity to collaborate with the community. Local parents the HUM Backbone Team and Council worked together to develop, submit and secure a state funding grant for \$6 million dollars to create the Red Cliffs Integrated Early Years Hub. The hub is currently under development with strong community involvement and is expected to significantly contribute to children's early development outcomes in Red Cliffs.
- **Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Residential Rehabilitation Facility:** Community members had identified the need for an AOD Residential Rehabilitation Facility in Mildura LGA. When the funding opportunity arose, members of the Northern Mallee AOD Alliance – including community members, MRCC and the HUM Backbone team – facilitated the procurement and development of a business case. Together, the alliance secured \$36 million in state funding to develop a 30 bed AOD residential

withdrawal and rehabilitation facility. Collaboration between government, providers and community was a key factor in this outcome.

Historically, local council was less likely to be able to reach the diversity of community and understand their needs. However, as a result of its involvement in HUM and facilitated support from the HUM Backbone Team, substantial changes in mindsets and practices are taking place in MRCC.

Critical factors influencing the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration's ability to achieve systems change

To achieve systems-level change, the right enabling conditions must be in place. The HUM Backbone Team and collaboration are focused on establishing these conditions; however, several factors play a critical role in influencing the impact and sustainability of HUM's work, as identified in [Chapter 10](#). Some have enhanced the impact of HUM, whereas others have hindered progress. Many of these factors are applicable to place-based systems change approaches more broadly, and the Backbone Teams that underpin them.

Factors that catalyse the impact of HUM

- **A shared desire to put community first** which has enabled deeper collaboration with community and a greater risk appetite from government and service providers for investing in innovative, community-led solutions.
- **Community, government and service providers who are open to doing things differently** in order to disrupt entrenched disadvantage.
- **Strong relationships and partnerships through authentic engagement with community** build the necessary foundations for collective understanding, trust and effort.
- **A deep understanding of community systems and their impact** contributes to identification of enablers for systems change.
- **A Backbone Team with strong, adaptive leadership, community engagement and MEL skills** provide essential preconditions.
- **Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs and joint approaches** ensures the transfer of skills and knowledge to community and partners.
- **Multi-year, flexible funding model** supports alignment to an over-arching strategy.
- **Operational autonomy that promotes accountability to community** which is crucial for building trust and support locally.

Factors that inhibit the impact of HUM

- **Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working**, including funding and policy constraints, resource allocation, accountability requirements, sufficient and suitable data and data sharing restrictions.

- **A lack of readiness to embrace change**, due to a lack of understanding of the proposed changes, a lack of confidence in their ability to implement them, or a desire to maintain the status quo.
- **Competition for funding**, which can discourage or prohibit collaboration and encourage silos.
- **Mindset shifts that only reach the individual level**, which are less sustainable than organisation level changes and more sensitive to the ebbs and flows of external systemic forces.
- **A lack of understanding of collective impact work and the role of the HUM Backbone Team**, contributing to a misalignment of anticipated outcomes and the expected timelines to achieve them.
- **Misalignment in our shared understanding of what is worth measuring**, with a focus on systems- and population-level outcomes that ignores the 'missing middle' and undervalues the achievements of Backbone Teams.

It is important to acknowledge these factors, as they provide critical context when assessing the progress achieved by HUM, the HUM Backbone Team, and, to a certain extent the place-based change movement as a whole. While Backbone Teams are responsible for unlocking factors that can amplify their impact and addressing barriers to their work, change across all three levels of government and philanthropy is also required to make that possible.

Considerations for the future of measuring and evaluating place-based approaches

Hands Up Mallee is in its fourth year of funding; while an established collective impact initiative, in many ways it is still in its early stages. It has been focused on first establishing the necessary enabling conditions in its community, as identified in its Journey of Change; if these are not successfully in place, sustainable systems- and population-level changes will not be possible. Backbone Teams play a crucial role in breaking down the barriers to collaboration, fostering community engagement, sharing insights, and promoting new ways of working. Without their efforts, the enabling conditions necessary for systems change will not materialise and the status quo will persist.

Evaluating place-based approaches can be difficult due to the inherent complexity of the issues they address. The connections between activities and outcomes are neither straightforward nor linear, making it difficult to attribute impact accurately. Additionally, the scale of change that place-based initiatives strive for is both substantial and long-term. Evaluations of place-based approaches and the role of Backbone Teams often use methods that may be considered less rigorous and utilise qualitative data to support findings, which are often seen as less compelling than percentages and monetary figures. Nonetheless, the prevailing focus of government in determining the success of these initiatives remains largely on quantitative, population-level outcomes, despite an understanding that such outcomes are hard to measure and may take a generation to materialise. This narrow perspective undervalues the results of the critical work undertaken by Backbone Teams and their collaboration partners, contributes to misconceptions about what should be expected from their role, and perpetuates misunderstandings about how place-based change truly occurs.

This report seeks to shift attention towards the enabling conditions that Backbone Teams work to create. These represent more appropriate and meaningful indicators of success, particularly given the current stage of the HUM Backbone Team. This evaluation has also sought to offer a high-confidence assessment of the outcomes achieved by HUM and its Backbone Team by using more rigorous approaches including contribution analysis, outcomes harvesting and Significant Instances of Policy and Systems Improvement (SIPSI) for the development of three case studies. However, it is important to note

that the time, resources and expertise required for such evaluations may exceed the capacity of many place-based initiatives. A more valuable approach would be to redefine success in alignment with the current stage of each initiative, as outlined in their Journey of Change.

Instead of focusing on population-level outcomes, there should be greater emphasis on understanding how Backbone Teams are advancing the enabling the conditions for systems change within their communities, particularly within the first 5-10 years of the initiative. Sustainable systems change cannot be achieved through top-down measures such as policy shifts alone. It is crucial that Backbone Teams are equipped and supported to undertake this critical work, and their role is properly valued and understood by all actors within the place-based system.



INTRODUCTION

This report contains the findings of the Hands Up Mallee (HUM) mid-term evaluation which Clear Horizon undertook between 16 January and 31 August 2024. An overview of the report's structure and its key content can be found below.

Report structure

- **[Chapter 1. About Hands Up Mallee:](#)** lays the groundwork for understanding HUM, the regional context it operates in, and the different types of changes HUM is looking to achieve.
- **[Chapter 2. About the evaluation:](#)** describes the approach and methodology underpinning the evaluation.
- **[Chapter 3. The role of the HUM Backbone Team:](#)** explores the functions of the HUM Backbone Team and the adaptive leadership skills it requires to effectively navigate challenges and build the enabling environment for change. It also describes the specific enablers of change the HUM Backbone Team is looking to embed across all its activities.
- **[Chapter 4. Authentic engagement of Aboriginal people, the wider community and its diversity:](#)** shows how HUM authentically engages its community across all of its work.
- **[Chapter 5. Transparent and locally led governance with a focus on place-based change:](#)** examines the governance structure of HUM, including the co-design process that led to its current form.
- **[Chapter 6. Multisector collaboration:](#)** discusses how the HUM Backbone Team facilitates collaboration across service providers, government and community.
- **[Chapter 7. Growing skills and knowledge and using data, stories and research to inform decisions and actions:](#)** outlines the many ways in which HUM leverages evidence to guide its decision making.
- **[Chapter 8. Working on activities that deliver high levels of impact on the Common Agenda:](#)** provides evidence for HUM's strategic undertaking of high leverage activities that align to the Community Aspiration.
- **[Chapter 9. Reporting on progress and share our learnings for continual improvement and awareness:](#)** demonstrates the rigorous reflection, learning and communication processes that HUM undertakes with community, the HUM Backbone Team and the broader place-based change movement.
- **[Chapter 10. Factors that catalyse and inhibit the impact of HUM:](#)** identifies key elements that have both enabled the HUM Backbone Team to have maximum impact in community as well as barriers that have restricted progress.
- **Conclusion**
- **List of references**

- **Appendix 1. HUM initiative descriptions and key outcomes:** A detailed mapping of HUM initiatives and how they align to the overarching Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework of HUM.
- **Appendix 2. Definitions:** A list of definitions for key concepts used throughout the report.

Annexes: The main report is supported by five annexes including three case studies, a brief report on the case study assessment outcomes made by a verification panel, and the contribution analysis verification rubric templates.

- **Annex 1.** Red Cliffs Project Case Study
- **Annex 2.** HomeBase Hoops Case Study
- **Annex 3.** Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response Case Study
- **Annex 4.** Verification Panel Outcomes Report
- **Annex 5.** Verification Panel Assessment Rubrics

1. ABOUT HANDS UP MALLEE

This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding HUM and the regional context it operates within, as well as the changes HUM is looking to achieve.

1.1. About HUM

HUM is a community-led collective impact initiative in the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA). Local leaders started HUM in 2015 when they realised the need for a different way of working to address social, health and wellbeing issues in the community.

HUM is a partnership involving the community, local service providers, agencies, and all three levels of government, supported by a local Backbone Team. The initiative uses a **place-based systems change** approach to co-design solutions for local issues, centring the community's voice and combining it 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 their **Community Aspiration** of '*a connected community where families matter, and children thrive*'.

Place-based refers to an approach that targets a specific location to build on local strengths or respond to a complex social problem.¹

Systems change refers to solving the underlying issues that drive complex problems, rather than focusing on one isolated issue or symptoms. This can be achieved by shifting the system's purpose along with mindsets, power dynamics, relationships/connections, resource flows, practices and policies.²

1.2. About collective impact

HUM applies a place-based systems change approach known as **collective impact**,³ which is a specific form of collaboration that brings people and organisations together who agree on doing the following five things to help solve complex problems in their community:

1. Everyone agrees on a joint vision 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 decision making.
4. Everyone shares evidence (numbers and stories) and insights about their work and what they are learning.
5. The collaboration is supported by a Backbone Team that helps everyone to work well together, step out of their comfort zone, and commit to a different way of working.

A detailed overview of the **role of the HUM Backbone Team** can be found in [Chapter 3](#).

¹ ANZSOG & Victoria State Government. (2023). Place-based *approaches*: A guide for the Victorian public service.

² Clear Horizon. (2023). UMEL Community Dictionary.

³ Clear Horizon. (2023). UMEL Community Dictionary.

1.3. About HUM's community context

HUM operates across the **Mildura LGA**, a regional city located in far north-west Victoria, home to 55,900 people.⁴ The city acts as a regional food and manufacturing hub, with key industries including farming, horticulture, tourism, manufacturing, and logistics.⁵ The Mildura LGA is notably diverse, featuring a large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community (4.6% compared to 1% for the rest of Victoria),⁶ and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups representing 79 different nationalities speaking 74 languages. This population includes migrants, refugees, and workers on temporary visas.⁷

Despite being a resourceful and resilient community, the Mildura LGA faces several complex social and economic challenges. It has some of the highest rates of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, and suicide in the state, alongside lower rates of income and educational attainment.⁸ Consequently, many people in the community experience entrenched disadvantage compared to the rest of Victoria.

1.4. Defining HUM

When the terms HUM, HUM Backbone Team, HUM partners, HUM initiative, HUM governance and HUM stakeholders are used in this report, they refer to the following:

- **HUM:** The overall collaboration, consisting of the HUM Backbone Team and all HUM partners. This may also be referred to as the **HUM collaboration**.
- **HUM Backbone Team:** The local independent team that supports the HUM collaboration and its partners in working towards achieving the enablers for change, systems changes, and outcomes for children, youth, and families, in line with HUM's Journey of Change.
- **HUM partners:** The individuals, groups and organisations that together with the HUM Backbone Team form HUM. This group includes community members and leaders, local service providers, not for profit organisations, all three levels of government, philanthropy, and business.

Some HUM partners and the Backbone Team are continuously involved in the HUM collaboration, while other organisations and individuals contribute to specific HUM initiatives that align with their purpose, activities, interests, and expertise.

- **Active partners:** are currently involved in one or more HUM initiatives and/or play a role in the HUM governance model.
- **Passive partners:** support HUM's vision for change, have contributed to one or multiple HUM initiatives in the past and/or previously played a role in the governance model but aren't currently involved in any HUM activities.
- **HUM stakeholders:** Any individuals or organisations involved in HUM. This term is used throughout the report to refer to multiple individuals or organisations, including both HUM partners and the Backbone Team or any of its members

⁴ Regional Development Victoria. (2024). Population Mildura LGA in 2020.

⁵ Mildura Rural City Council. (2021). REMPLAN.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

⁷ Mildura Rural City Council. (2024). Our Multicultural Community.

⁸ Mildura Rural City Council. (2019). Inquiry into Regional Australia submission.

- **HUM initiative:** A specific HUM strategy, intervention, program, or activity involving multiple HUM stakeholders. This may include the HUM Backbone Team and one or more HUM partners, or a group of HUM partners with light touch involvement from the Backbone Team.
- **HUM governance:** The structure that describes how the HUM collaboration works and makes decisions.

When reading this report or the accompanying case studies, it is important to note that contributions made by HUM to any of the outcomes that have been achieved are not solely claimed by the HUM Backbone Team but rather reflect the collective efforts of all HUM partners involved in achieving the particular outcome.

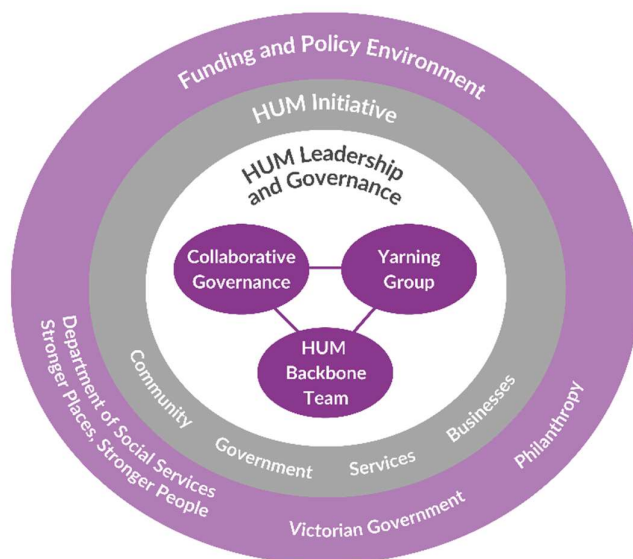
1.5. How HUM is funded

Since June 2020, HUM has been funded under the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiative. SPSP is a community-led, collective impact initiative, stewarded by the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments and ten communities across Australia. It seeks to disrupt disadvantage and create better futures for children and their families through locally tailored and evidence-driven solutions to local problems, in partnership with local people. In Mildura this is a funding partnership between three levels of government: the Department of Social Services, the Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industries and Regions, and local government, who provide in-kind support. Prior to 2020, HUM did not receive any dedicated funding; instead, it received in-kind support from Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) and used a small amount of re-purposed funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (as it was then known).

1.6. HUM governance model

A visual providing a key overview of how HUM is governed as well as descriptions of the different components that make up the HUM governance model can be found below. A detailed Chapter, conveying the work undertaken by HUM to build a transparent and locally led governance model with a focus on place-based change can be found in [Chapter 5](#).

Figure 2. HUM Governance Model



1.7. HUM Journey of Change

HUM is guided by its Journey of Change (Theory of Change), a strategic roadmap that clearly outlines the key steps HUM believes are essential for achieving its Community Aspiration. It illustrates the connections between HUM's ways of working and the expected outcomes along the way.

1.7.1. HUM Journey of Change narrative

In line with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)'s ***the Nest: Australia's Wellbeing Framework for Children and Young People aged 0 to 24 years***,⁹ HUM believes that children and young people thrive when they are valued, loved, and safe, have access to the material basics they need, are healthy, and have opportunities to learn. Further, for children and young people to thrive, they should participate in community life, have a say in decisions that affect them, and have a positive sense of identity and culture.

Experts recognise that no single program, organisation, or government department can solve complex social issues alone. HUM brings together community, services, different levels of government, and business on a Journey of Change to learn about local issues, find ways to address them together, and ensure actions taken are the right actions for HUM's unique community. The HUM Backbone Team is funded to help bring all these elements together and find ways to change the system that is holding the problems that are impacting the Mildura LGA's community in place.

HUM will know the system is changing when HUM partners see that the voice of community is driving changes in practices and policy, when Aboriginal people are at all decision-making tables, and partnerships between community, services, government, and business are changing ways of working and outcomes for children, young people, and families. Ultimately, HUM will see changes in outcomes across the whole community and notice that other communities, government, philanthropy, and service providers from across Australia are wanting to learn from this community.

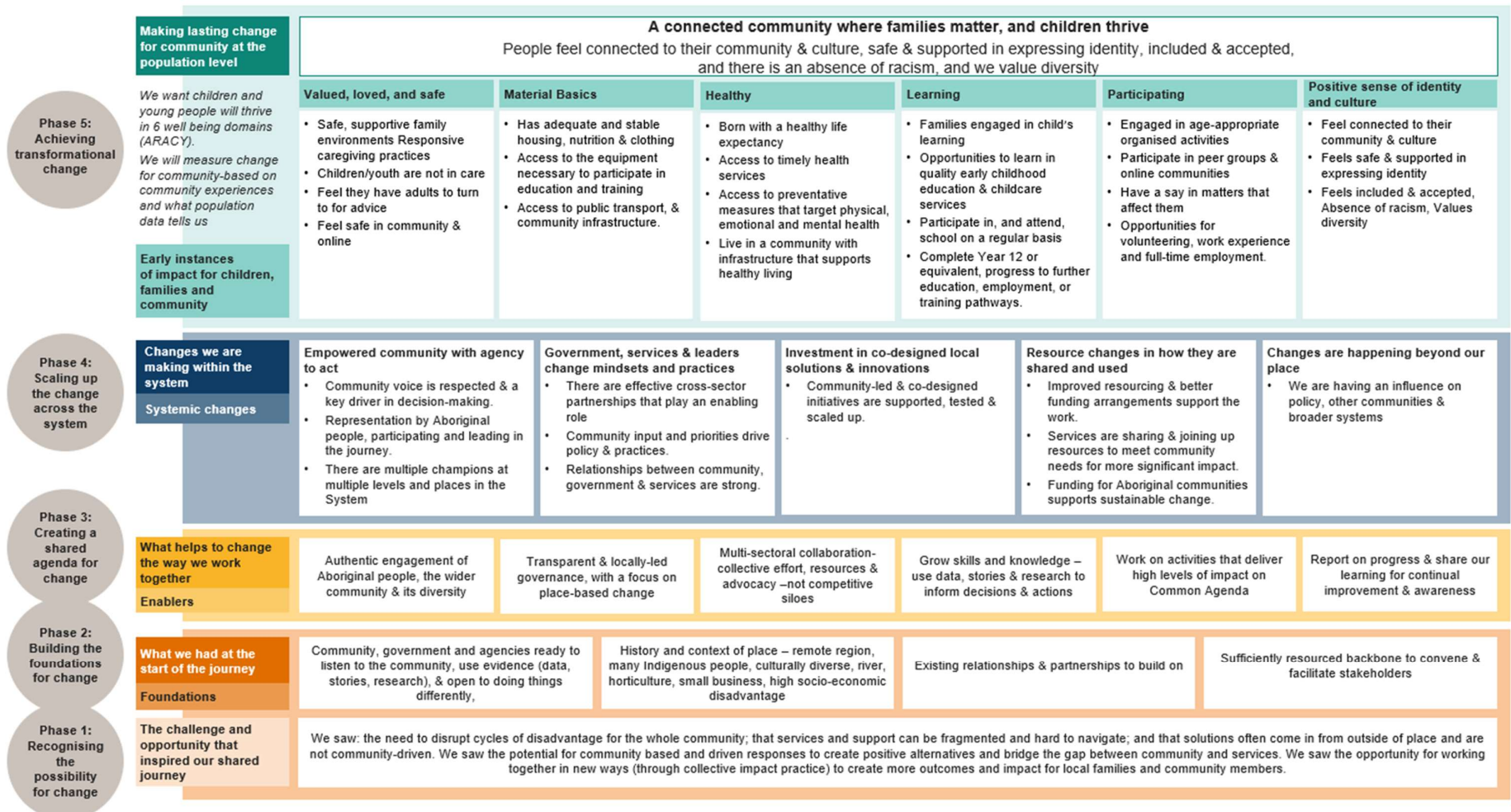
HUM believes that these changes will be achieved by strengthening the enabling conditions that support their collective impact practice for transformative change. This includes authentic and inclusive engagement with community and stakeholders, transparent and locally led governance, working together on a shared agenda across sectors and systems, and using data and community voice for decisions and learning.

A visual overview of HUM's Journey of Change can be found on the next page.

⁹ Goodhue, R., et al. (2021). What's in the Nest? Exploring Australia's Wellbeing Framework for Children and Young People.

1.7.2. HUM Journey of Change visual

Figure 3. HUM Journey of Change



1.8. HUM initiatives

As a collaboration working towards its Community Aspiration, HUM's current work is focused on creating the enabling conditions for change. To ensure resources are allocated effectively and have the greatest impact on achieving HUM's outcomes, as outlined in their overarching Journey of Change, HUM prioritises:

- **Tactical Projects** that build collaborative capacity, drive immediate impact and learnings, and create and help to maintain momentum.
- **High leverage activities** that are expected to have the biggest possible impact on the Community Aspiration.

A **complete overview of all collaborative activities and initiatives** undertaken by HUM between 2015 and 2024 can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Additionally, most initiatives are also used as **snapshots** and examples throughout the report to illustrate how HUM's collaborative work is helping to achieve either HUM's enablers of change and/or systemic outcomes. The **three case studies** developed as part of this evaluation – the Red Cliffs Project, HomeBase Hoops, and the Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) – also provide strong examples of high leverage initiatives undertaken by HUM.¹⁰

1.8.1. HUM applies an equity lens

Across all its collaboration initiatives, HUM has a strong **equity** focus.

Equity refers to the principle of creating the conditions for fair and just inclusion of all individuals based on their specific needs and circumstances.¹¹ Unlike equality, which means giving everyone the same resources or opportunities, equity recognizes that people start from different places and may require different kinds of support to achieve similar outcomes. It means identifying gaps in opportunities, outcomes, and representation, and taking targeted actions to address those gaps not just for individuals but systemically so that everyone can have a good life.¹²

In line with the place-based systems change literature, HUM operates on the assumption that solutions to complex challenges will only be effective and sustainable with the active and meaningful involvement of the community, particularly community members experiencing inequity.^{13 14 15} To help achieve this, HUM applies the following five key strategies:¹⁶

- Use local data and knowledge to guide actions.
- Focus on changing systems, not just improving programs and services.
- Share power.
- Listen to community and co-design solutions together.
- Foster collaborative leadership that reflects the community's diversity and upholds strong accountability.

¹⁰ Case studies can be found in Annexes 1-3 of the report.

¹¹ Glover. (2015). Equity Matters in Collective Impact.

¹² Kania, J., Williams, J., Schmitz, P., Brady, S., Kramer, M. & Splanksy, J. (2022). Centering Equity in Collective Impact

¹³ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). Collective Impact 3.0.

¹⁴ Auspos, P. & Cabaj, M. (2014). Complexity and Community Change: Managing Adaptively to Improve Effectiveness.

¹⁵ Nahar Lata et al. (2024) Advancing collaborative social outcomes through place-based solutions—aligning policy and funding systems.

¹⁶ Kania, J., Williams, J., Schmitz, P., Brady, S., Kramer, M. & Splanksy, J. (2022). Centering Equity in Collective Impact

2. ABOUT THE EVALUATION

This chapter describes the approach and methodology underpinning the evaluation.

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation was to validate and codify the roles the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration play in delivering place-based change using a collective impact approach. Specifically, the evaluation aimed to:

- identify the **strengths and challenges** the HUM structure poses regarding HUM's ability to contribute to place-based change.
- investigate the extent to which the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration have employed the **enablers of change** as highlighted in the overarching Journey of Change (this includes applying a community-led approach), as well as to what extent the implementation of these enablers has contributed to place-based change in the Mildura LGA.
- undertake **contribution analysis** to demonstrate the value of HUM's way of working as well as how change happens (how small initial changes influence larger change).
- develop three **comprehensive case studies** to demonstrate the importance of the Backbone Team and its independent way of working and the role of HUM partners in creating place-based change. These case studies are intended to highlight the changes in systems leadership that have happened because of HUM's work and demonstrate to governments and other funding partners the value of HUM's way of working.

2.2. Scope

2.2.1. In scope

- The ways of working and activities of HUM.
- How these ways of working and activities contributed to changes against different levels of HUM's Journey of Change as well as the significance of the changes.
- The strengths and challenges HUM's structure poses regarding its ability to contribute to place-based change.
- The roles different HUM stakeholders played in achieving the changes.
- Whether stakeholders and/or broader contextual factors outside of HUM contributed to achieving the changes that were achieved.
- If the contributions of HUM partners to the achieved outcomes would likely have occurred regardless of their involvement in HUM, and in the same way.

2.2.2. Out of scope

- Economic analysis.
- Social return on investment.

2.3. Audiences

The primary audience for this evaluation is all stakeholders who require or have a stake in the evaluation findings and/or who will use the information to make decisions. The secondary audience includes those

stakeholders who might read the report and/or have a broader interest, but for whose needs we did not specifically tailor the evaluation.

Table 2. HUM audiences and their information needs

Audiences	Information needs / reasons
Primary audience	
HUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credible evidence that demonstrates the value of HUM and its way of working that can be used for advocacy purposes with the aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> position HUM as an innovator that is shaping the national approach for place-based change in Australia, illustrate ways of partnering for impact through community-led place-based change, and help inform the decision making of government and philanthropy about future investments in HUM as well influence systems leadership and change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three levels of government Philanthropy Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credible evidence that demonstrates the value of HUM and its way of working to contribute to the national conversation about how place-based systems change happens.
Secondary audience	
Place-based initiatives across Australia and the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about HUM's way of working and impact. To use the evidence that demonstrates the impact of HUM's way of working and activities to help demonstrate the value of their own work.
Others interested in learning about place-based systems change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about HUM's way of working and impact.

2.4. Key evaluation questions

The evaluation was guided by two key evaluations questions (KEQs).

Table 3. Key evaluation questions

KEQ	Sub-KEQs	Covered in ...
KEQ 1. Enablers of change: To what extent did HUM deliver its enabling outcomes?	1.1 To what extent and in what ways did the HUM Backbone Team and collaboration employ the enablers for change as highlighted in the initiative's overarching Journey of Change.	Chapter 4 to 9
	1.2. What high leverage activities did HUM deliver?	Chapter 8
KEQ 2. Impact: To what extent did HUM contribute to place-based change in the Mildura LGA?	2.1 To what extent and how did HUM's way of working and activities contribute to systems changes and/or instances of impact for children, young people, and families.	Chapter 4 to 9 Case studies
	2.2 What was the significance of the changes that were achieved?	Chapter 4 to 9 Case studies
	2.3 What role did different HUM stakeholders play in achieving these changes?	Chapter 3 to 9 Case studies

KEQ	Sub-KEQs	Covered in ...
	2.4 What strengths and challenges did the HUM structure pose regarding HUM's ability to contribute to place-based change.	Chapter 10
	2.5 What other stakeholders outside of the HUM collaboration are likely to have played a role in achieving the changes?	Case studies

2.5. Methodology

The methodology was designed to:

- Determine the extent to which HUM employed its enablers for change.
- Assess how its ways of working and activities contributed to systems changes and changes for children, young people and families in the Mildura LGA.
- Identify the strengths and challenges the HUM structure poses regarding its ability to contribute to place-based change.

2.5.1. Data collection

Data collection occurred in two phases:

Phase 1: Initial Desktop Review and Outcomes Harvesting

Clear Horizon conducted an extensive review of **106 HUM data sources**, including progress reports, evaluations, newsletters, social media content, videos, meeting minutes, advocacy letters, frameworks, and strategic plans. Many of these documents contain feedback and insights from diverse HUM stakeholders, as well numerous quotes. The review aimed to identify and map the outcomes achieved by HUM against the levels of change highlighted in its Journey of Change, which encompasses enablers of change, systems changes, and changes for children, youth, and families. Additionally, the review sought to develop contribution hypotheses.

The results were shared with the HUM Backbone Team during a sensemaking workshop in March 2024 and used to inform the selection of three case studies. After internal deliberations, the HUM Backbone Team decided that the case studies should focus on investigating outcome chains e.g., starting with HUM initiatives and working upwards to outcomes. This approach was chosen because HUM is not yet at the stage of influencing population-level change, and it was deemed more valuable to visualise the outcome chains stemming from HUM's ways of working and activities, as they lead to a wide range of outcomes.

The three high-leverage initiatives chosen for the case studies are: the Red Cliffs Project, HomeBase Hoops, and AOCTVR.

Phase 2: Gathering Further Evidence

Clear Horizon conducted additional data collection to validate outcomes, develop outcome chains, and gather insights on the significance of the achieved outcomes. This process also gathered further evidence to demonstrate the value of HUM's ways of working and collaborative initiatives, as well as the extent of its contribution in cases where outcomes may have also been influenced by stakeholders outside of HUM. This involved:

- **Interviews:** 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 HUM stakeholders, including representatives from service providers, local government, the community, local business, and the HUM Backbone Team. Seven respondents provided insights for the Red Cliffs Project, six for HomeBase Hoops, and nine for the AOCTVR case studies. Additionally, 12 interviewees contributed insights into HUM's ways of working both with partners on HUM initiatives as well as within HUM's governance model.
- **A survey:** a self-report survey was distributed to 33 respondents, yielding a 70% response rate.
- **Grey and academic literature review:** 151 additional grey and academic literature sources were identified and reviewed to further strengthen the report and case studies. This included literature on place-based systems change and collective impact, as well as statistical and local context information from government and other websites. It also included additional evidence provided by HUM following the sensemaking workshops.

2.5.2. Data analysis

Qualitative data was analysed thematically and cross-referenced against quantitative data from the surveys and documents provided. Using an evidence table, the results from different datasets were synthesised and coded against the key evaluation questions. Data from the different datasets was triangulated to make the findings more robust.

To create the case studies, an applied inductive approach was used informed by a combination of approaches including Significant Instances of Systems and Policy Improvements (SIPSI),¹⁷ Outcomes Harvesting,¹⁸ and Most Significant Change.¹⁹ Determining the causal links between HUM initiatives, different types of outcomes, and ripple effects was based on establishing and evaluating contribution hypotheses in line with HUM's overarching Journey of Change and building evidence-informed case studies.

To assess the significance of HUM's outcomes, HUM's level of contribution to outcomes potentially influenced by other stakeholders, contextual factors, and/or the broader policy environment, as well as the strength of the supporting evidence, three rubrics were utilised. These rubrics were designed by Clear Horizon together with the HUM Backbone Team and were adapted from those used in the Logan Together Community, Maternal and Child Health Hubs' contribution analysis evaluation.²⁰ For more information, see Assessment of Significance, Contribution, and Strength of Evidence Rubrics in Annex 5.

Joint sensemaking

To ensure comprehensive coverage and accuracy of the evaluation findings, four sensemaking workshops were conducted with HUM stakeholders, to gather their feedback on the preliminary findings as well as identify potential inaccuracies, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. An overview of the focus for each workshop can be found below:

- **Workshop 1:** gathered feedback from the HUM Backbone Team on the evaluation's preliminary findings.
- **Workshop 2:** gathered feedback on the Red Cliffs project case study from HUM Backbone Team members and partners involved in this collaborative initiative.
- **Workshop 3:** gathered feedback on the HomeBase Hoops case study from HUM Backbone Team members and partners involved in this collaborative initiative.

¹⁷ Dart, J. (n.d.). Significant Instances of Policy and Policy Improvement (*SIPSI*).

¹⁸ Wilson-Grau, R., et al. (n.d.). *Outcomes Harvesting*.

¹⁹ Davies, R. & Dart, J. (2005). The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: *A guide to its use*.

²⁰ Dart, J. (2021). Contribution Analysis – Logan Together.

- **Workshop 4:** gathered feedback on the Active Outreach COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Response from HUM Backbone Team members and HUM partners involved in this collaborative initiative.

Verification panel

To validate the case study findings and provide final judgments on outcome significance, HUM's contribution, and evidence strength, a verification panel consisting of **four experts in place-based systems change (not affiliated with HUM)** was convened. This panel was made up of senior staff from Federal and State Government Departments involved in place-based work, a senior staff member from an organisation that applies a place-based approach covering multiple sites, and an independent expert.

This panel participated in two assessment rounds:

- **Round 1:** was used to identify opportunities to enhance the case studies. Insights from this session prompted the collection of additional evidence through further desktop review and follow-up conversations with interviewees and other key HUM stakeholders involved in the three case studies or ripple effects covered in the case studies.
- **Round 2:** was used to undertake independent assessment of the case studies against the three verification rubrics and provide final judgments.

A brief report including how the verification panel rated the three case studies can be found in Annex 4.

2.5.3. Limitations

Despite efforts to uphold the rigor of the evaluation process and its findings, certain limitations need acknowledgment:

Table 4. Evaluation limitations and mitigation strategies

#	Limitations	Mitigation strategy applied
1	While 19 HUM partners and Backbone Team members participated in interviews, providing valuable insights for the overarching evaluation, the sample sizes for the individual case studies were relatively small. Specifically, insights for the Red Cliffs Project were provided by seven people, six respondents contributed to HomeBase Hoops, and nine to the AOCTVR, with limited input from the community members these initiatives targeted.	The lower interview and survey sample sizes were due to HUM's intention to avoid over-consulting individuals who had previously been interviewed or surveyed about the same initiatives, thus preventing evaluation fatigue. To mitigate the sample size issue, we drew on the extensive HUM stakeholder insights and quotes available in the HUM documentation, especially the evaluation studies which included multiple reports by independent evaluators.
2	Although the survey response rate was high (70%), the sample size was limited. Only 33 HUM stakeholders were identified by the HUM Backbone Team to receive the survey request, of whom 23 participated.	
3	Because some of the case study initiatives' activities occurred some time ago, it was impossible to access all the data the evaluation team sought. This was primarily because key stakeholders involved in the case study activities had moved on to different workplaces. Additionally, some data hadn't been collected at the time the initiatives were implemented.	Some stakeholders who had moved on were tracked down to provide feedback on draft evaluation content that addressed work they had been involved in, to sense check the validity of the information provided.
4	While the evaluation approach applied is robust, there are methodological challenges and complexities in determining the causal links between HUM initiatives, different types of outcomes, and ripple effects. The rubrics in Annex 5 provide	To increase the robustness of the findings, verification was carried out through sensemaking workshops with key informants and triangulation

#	Limitations	Mitigation strategy applied
	transparency on how ratings and assessments were made. Although an assessment of alternative contributing factors and challenges to the hypothesis was conducted—systematically identifying and then ruling out or assessing the extent of contribution for alternative causal explanations of observed results—it is possible that not all plausible alternative factors of influence have been identified and tested through the analysis.	across informants from multiple perspectives and data types. This involved cross-checking the contribution and outcome claims identified and explored across multiple evidence sources to verify and determine an evidence rating. Additionally, an independent verification panel made up of place-based systems change experts was convened.

2.6. Referencing

External sources and previous HUM evaluations are referenced using footnotes throughout the report. A full list of references and sources is located at the end of the report.

The quotes in this report come from individuals interviewed or surveyed for this evaluation, as well as from previous HUM evaluation and progress mapping reports. These quotes represent the perspectives of **over 50 different individuals**, including community members of different ages and cultural backgrounds, service providers, government stakeholders, business owners, and members of the HUM Backbone Team, as well as representatives from the HUM Collaborative Governance Group, the Yarning Group, and Mallee Community Voices.

3. THE ROLE OF THE HUM BACKBONE TEAM



Collective impact initiatives are not projects, but rather focus on supporting and progressing place-based systems change. As a result, they don't have a clear start or finish, nor do they provide a linear path that can be followed to realise systems and population level changes. Therefore, they can't be 'managed' in the traditional sense of the word. Instead, they require a dedicated Backbone Team made up of strong adaptive leaders who possess the skills to effectively facilitate a transformational change process.²¹

This chapter explores the functions of the HUM Backbone Team and the adaptive leadership skills it requires to effectively navigate challenges and build a strong container for change. It also describes the enablers of change the HUM Backbone Team is looking to embed across all its activities.

3.1. HUM Backbone Team functions

In line with the collective impact literature and the experiences of HUM partners, the HUM Backbone Team performs six key functions:^{22 23 24 25}

HUM Backbone Team functions	Activities
Guides the vision, strategy and co-design process of HUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Builds a common understanding of the complex social issue(s) the collaboration is looking to solve as well as the local strengths that can be built on.• Serves as a thought leader and standard bearer of HUM.• Gets HUM partners to discuss and advocate for the common agenda.• Encourages HUM partners to work together and align their activities and organisational priorities to HUM's Community Aspiration and NEST Outcomes.

²¹ Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact.
²² Turner et al. (2012) Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2.
²³ Rodrigues, M. & Fisher, S. (2017). Collective impact. A literature review.
²⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.
²⁵ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). The water of systems change.

HUM Backbone Team functions	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures the Community Aspiration is updated as needed as strategy unfolds. Guides the overarching HUM co-design process. Leads by example. <p><i>"Because of HUM, we are working together [now] rather than in silos to achieve community goals." (Service provider)²⁶</i></p> <p><i>"Organisations in the community have [a] better understanding of each other and how working together can achieve outcomes for community." (Community member)²⁷</i></p> <p><i>"[Thanks to HUM] we use a much more collaborative approach to problem solving local issues for young people in our community, as well as co-design." (Service provider)²⁸</i></p> <p><i>"I understand the bigger picture better, I self-reflect on my interactions with community and the impact I can have. I change my roster to be flexible for when action is needed. My relationships with [HUM] partners and community members are far better having been to HUM sessions and [having] seen how kindness, empathy and understanding go much further than any other approach." (Government stakeholder)²⁹</i></p>
Advances new ways of working and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages HUM partners to employ ways of working that help shift mindsets, power dynamics, relationships/connections, resource flows, practices, and policies with the aim to progress systems change. Stays on top of changes to contextual factors in the Mildura LGA and policy developments that may impact HUM's work. Advocates for an aligned policy agenda. <p><i>"It is easier [now] to have conversations about resource flows, practices, relationships, power dynamics and mindsets than [it] was in the days before HUM. HUM helps to validate these ways of working." (Service provider)³⁰</i></p> <p><i>"HUM has an ongoing active and visible presence, [undertakes] advocacy in [the] community and deep advocacy on a national level, [and] speaks ... and calls out institutionalised and ineffective policy, practices and processes." (Business owner)³¹</i></p>
Mobilises resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilises resources to support HUM such as government and philanthropic funding and in-kind support. Advocates for changes to how HUM partners with inflexible funding arrangements can utilise their funding, shifting from fixed funding focused on specific deliverables to flexible funding aimed at realising outcomes aligned with HUM's Community Aspiration. Encourages funders to get other organisations they support in the Mildura LGA to align their activities with HUM.

²⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee* evaluation survey.

²⁷ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee* evaluation survey.

²⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee* evaluation survey.

²⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee* evaluation survey.

³⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee* evaluation survey.

³¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee* evaluation survey.

HUM Backbone Team functions	Activities
	<p><i>"It's on the Federal Government's agenda [now that] there is a broader piece of work in the community sector around the blueprint for reform around the way the government funds the sector ... that [includes] looking at how do we create some accountability back to the places where ... services are operating, how do we diversify the funding, how do we look at models ... that better meet the needs of community." (Government stakeholder)³²</i></p> <p><i>"We are in contact now with the Department of Justice in a different way to before. They are really keen to look at what they are funding and how that money is being used in community. That's a significant change." (HUM Backbone Team member)³³</i></p>
Builds public will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a sense of urgency and articulates a call to action. • Undertakes, supports and influences how HUM partners undertake authentic community engagement, community mobilisation and community advocacy. • Empowers community members to voice their opinions and advocate for their needs and aspirations. • Produces and manages the initiative's continuous communication by sharing its activities, learnings and impact through newsletters, reports, social media, presentations at conferences, etc. <p><i>"[The] HUM [Backbone Team] has a reputation for being the experts in town when it comes to community consultation, particularly with youth, and the go-to when we need to know what the community thinks. This doesn't necessarily mean asking HUM to do it, but HUM are the people that you might ask: how might I go about trying to understand community needs in that space?" (Service provider)³⁴</i></p> <p><i>"I've seen the community [members] who've worked with us now pushing other organisations to change their system to be inclusive." (HUM Backbone Team member)³⁵</i></p> <p><i>"Community members are empowered by the work and see themselves as agents for change." (Business owner)³⁶</i></p>
Supports aligned activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruits and convenes HUM partners. • Supports tactical projects and the co-design processes of high-leverage activities. • Coordinates and facilitates partners' continuous communication. • Encourages members to communicate and coordinate their efforts regularly and, when appropriate, independent of the HUM Backbone Team. • Seeks out opportunities for alignment with other efforts. • Encourages members to scale their collaborative work.

³² Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³³ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

HUM Backbone Team functions	Activities
	<p><i>"The HUM Backbone Team [performs the role of] middleman between community members, organisations and funding bodies." (Service provider)³⁷</i></p> <p><i>"The HUM Backbone Team are like a conduit kind of thing, making the left hand know what the right hands does and vice versa. They're really good at that kind of stuff." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)³⁸</i></p>
Builds capacity for undertaking place-based collaborative work incl. strong UMEL practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides technical assistance for building HUM partners capacity in the areas of understanding, measurement, evaluation and learning (UMEL), co-design, collaborative governance, etc. • Embeds strong UMEL, co-design and governance practices across HUM's work. • Collects, analyses, interprets, and reports data through a combination of sources including community voice, local data and research. • Supports HUM partners to make evidence-based decisions. • Develops and catalyses shared measurement practice. <p><i>"There is so much space given to ... sharing of expertise to help us reach a decision on things ... It's bringing in specialists from the Backbone Team ... that have their skill sets around data collection, or the interpretation of data, ... and so forth." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)³⁹</i></p> <p><i>"We're using [HUM's] work ... to look at what young people in the community are telling us they would like to see. That then guides what projects we explore and decide on as a team that we should be putting resources into." (Service provider)⁴⁰</i></p>

3.1.1. Alignment

As highlighted above, an important responsibility of the HUM Backbone Team is facilitating '**alignment**'. This includes aligning efforts, activities, resources, etc. across different cross-sector partners (**horizontal alignment**) and working with partner organisations to encourage and support them to align their efforts internally (**vertical alignment**). Having the support and the involvement of just one or a few staff members within an organisation will not be sufficient to create systems change; this is why embedding practice shifts across an organisation requires a diverse group of staff including decision makers such as CEOs and Directors to be engaged.⁴¹ Additionally, practice shifts should be officially recorded in organisational policies so that they become the new norm.

Horizontal alignment within HUM's work occurs across different domains to ensure that HUM partners are all working together towards the common agenda. This includes things such as having joint HUM collaboration principles, a collaborative governance model, undertaking collaborative initiatives and sharing resources. For instance, the Municipal Early Years Plan is aligned with the NEST outcomes, and

³⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁸ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁴⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴¹ The Forum for Youth Investment. (2014). *Collective Impact for Policy Makers: Working Together for Children and Youth*.

HUM adopts a partnership approach to deliver services outside of standard 9:00 to 5:00 hours, as well as through pop-up sites in targeted neighbourhoods, to better reach those who need the services most.

“As part of Connected Beginnings, we were going through the process of doing a MEL framework and at a similar time HUM were doing their MEL framework which we were involved in. So, we said, let’s not pay for something twice when we can share that information.” (Service provider)⁴²

“Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS) works closely with HUM to ensure program delivery meets the needs of the community.”⁴³

“We’ve shared funding and various other things ... [and also] did a data project together.” (Service provider)⁴⁴

While many respondents agree that HUM is doing a great job at horizontal alignment, a risk that not all HUM partners are vertically aligning their efforts to HUM was also recognised.

“Changing leadership in big local agencies [is an issue]. HUM builds a relationship, and then leadership changes and HUM has to start again to rebuild the relationships in order to have a lasting impact on how things might change.” (Business owner)⁴⁵

3.2. Adaptive leadership

When performing their roles, members of the HUM Backbone Team must balance the tension between advancing HUM by visibly taking the lead and doing the work others aren’t putting their hands up for versus remaining behind the scenes and fostering collective ownership for HUM. It is the Backbone Team’s responsibility to listen, observe what’s happening, interpret events, reframe situations as necessary, and cultivate collective ownership and accountability among HUM partners.⁴⁶

3.2.1. Key challenges

Key challenges collective impact Backbone Teams, including HUM’s, are required to navigate include:⁴⁷

- **Competition:** motives and agendas of HUM partners are diverse, and they are sometimes in unspoken competition for resources, authority, recognition, or power. Additionally, they may have competing values and interests that need to be maintained and looked after.

“Sometimes you have organisations whose objective is just to get as much funding as they possibly can, regardless of where it is coming from ... That might look great but is it actually doing a disservice to the community because [they] have taken on too much. It’s great for their bottom line but it is not great for the community.” (Service provider)⁴⁸

- **Varying levels of commitment:** not all HUM partners demonstrate equal levels of motivation and commitment. Getting partners to truly commit to the process is one of the biggest challenges faced

⁴² Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴³ Sunraysia Community Health Services. (2022). 2021/22 Annual Report.

⁴⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴⁵ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

⁴⁶ Centre for Social Impact. (2017). Course notes Collaboration for Social Impact.

⁴⁷ Aigner, S. & Skelton, L. (2013). The Australian Leadership Paradox: What it takes to lead in the lucky country.

⁴⁸ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

by collective impact Backbone Teams, but without true commitment, people tend to approach their contribution as *'business as usual'* which isn't enough to achieve systems and population changes.

"[There is] a reluctance of some local organisations to truly commit." (Community member)⁴⁹

- **Control:** the levels of power and control between different HUM partners are unequal. That's why the HUM Backbone Team needs to navigate the different types of power partners bring into the work:
 - **Social power:** represents what the dominant culture values. E.g., someone's race, cultural background, gender, sexuality, abilities, age, and socio-economic background.
 - **Positional power:** comes from the role a person holds. For example, their title, expertise, decision-making power, access to resources, and influence.
 - **Personal power:** is associated with the knowledge, lived experience, connections, networks, connection to purpose, etc. people bring to the table.

"Those kinds of traditional community structures have a lot of power in our small community and the way how a meeting operates also holds that power in place. You're allowed to talk, but you only have this amount of time and need to stick to the agenda. We're breaking into that group and challenging the old ways of doing things. HUM gave us that confidence" (Community member)⁵⁰

Those who are used to being in control often find it difficult to let go, while those with less power may try to hold tightly to the limited power they have, for example, by controlling information or access to certain people. Given these challenges and the negative impact they can have on a collaboration, it is important that Backbone Team members have the skills to *'broker the difference'*.

In line with the collective impact literature, the HUM Backbone Team has a strong understanding and is aware of how power and authority play out in their collaboration, and builds the conditions for genuine commitment and collaboration.⁵¹ As highlighted in the yarning circles held as part of HUM's annual progress mapping exercise with 32 HUM stakeholders representing six stakeholder groups, the HUM Backbone Team is actively contributing to shifts in power dynamics between organisational stakeholders and community members.⁵² They do this by progressing co-design as an approach for developing place-based solutions, supporting the advocacy efforts of community members (see [Chapter 4](#)), and embedding community stakeholders including Aboriginal people and youth into its collaborative governance model (see [Chapter 5](#)).

To broker the difference and get different stakeholders on the same page, the HUM Backbone Team also actively uses its own power, applies strong facilitation and diagnostic skills, asks strategic questions and continuously tests their assumptions to influence and progress change.⁵³

"HUM asks us lots of questions and listens to us. They get it and know what we are all about. They know that we are passionate and want to work with our community. They use their power to help us implement our ideas when we need support." (Yarning Group member)⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

⁵⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁵¹ Centre for Social Impact. (2017). Course notes Collaboration for Social Impact.

⁵² Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁵³ Centre for Social Impact. (2017). Course notes Collaboration for Social Impact.

⁵⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

“Two organisations jumped ship and now they are coming back because HUM is playing that role of helping them come back even though there are still tensions.” (HUM Collaborative Governance group member)⁵⁵

“Knowing that they [the HUM Backbone Team] were on board meant that it could happen. Your ideas are not going to fall on deaf ears. I knew that they could help present our ideas and it would be easier to get the funding.” (Community member)⁵⁶

3.3. Creating an enabling environment for change

Moreover, the HUM Backbone Team is effectively creating an ‘enabling environment for change’ (referred to in the collective impact literature as container for change):

“[A space where collective impact partners can] transform their understanding of the system they are trying to change, the relationships with others in the systems, and their intentions to act. The boundaries of this container are set so that the participants feel enough protection and safety, as well as enough pressure and friction, to be able to do their challenging work.”⁵⁷

The stronger HUM’s enabling environment or change, the bigger the chance of its sustainability.

3.3.1. Crucial elements of an enabling environment for change

Key elements that are crucial for achieving collective impact, fostered by the HUM Backbone Team among its partners to help establish a strong and supportive enabling environment for change, include trust, commitment to purpose, a shared understanding of common values, the ability to bring tension and conflict to the surface, and strong relationships - preferably systemic rather than personal. Additionally, a fit for purpose governance model with well-defined expectations among members, and a shared responsibility for delivering outcomes are essential. A supportive (physical) environment and clear time boundaries are also critical to effectively accomplishing the work.⁵⁸

3.4. Building the enablers for change

The HUM Backbone Team leverages its diverse functions and adaptive leadership skills to support the HUM collaboration in achieving its Community Aspiration. As outlined in the overarching Journey of Change, HUM aims to realise its aspiration by embedding six enablers of change across its activities and ways of working, aligned with the collective impact approach.^{59 60}

Enablers of change in place-based systems change work are the ways of working that a place-based initiative aims to establish and embed across its activities, Backbone Team and collaboration partners. Once in place, enablers of change (or enabling outcomes) are expected to lead to systemic transformations which in return will drive population-level impact within a specific geographic area. What enabling outcomes should look like will vary slightly between different communities to accommodate

⁵⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁵⁶ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁵⁷ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). *Collective Impact 3.0*.

⁵⁸ Centre for Social Impact. (2017). *Course notes Collaboration for Social Impact*.

⁵⁹ Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective Impact*.

⁶⁰ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). *Collective Impact 3.0*.

local contexts and needs. Progress against enablers of change is evaluated and tracked over time and is an important marker for success, especially in the initial years of place-based initiatives.⁶¹

3.5. HUM's enablers of changes

Chapters 4-9 each cover one of HUM's enabler of change:

- [Chapter 4](#). Authentic engagement of Aboriginal people, the wider community and its diversity
- [Chapter 5](#). Transparent and locally led governance with a focus on place-based change
- [Chapter 6](#). Multisector collaboration
- [Chapter 7](#). Grow skills and knowledge and use data, stories and research to inform decisions and actions
- [Chapter 8](#). Work on activities that deliver high levels of impact on the common agenda
- [Chapter 9](#). Report on progress and share our learnings for continual improvement and awareness

Each chapter provides:

- A brief overview of the **key findings**.
- A **description** that defines the enabler and sets it within the context of HUM.
- A summary of **HUM's approach** to advancing this enabler, including descriptions and evidence, supported by examples of specific HUM activities.
- The **key results** that were achieved because of progressing this enabler including contributions to **systems changes**.
- A set of bullet points outlining the **key factors that facilitated and hindered** HUM's approach to advancing this enabler.



⁶¹ Dart, J. (2018) Place-based Evaluation Framework: A national guide for evaluation of place-based approaches.



4. AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, THE WIDER COMMUNITY AND ITS DIVERSITY

Key findings

- HUM listens deeply to and elevates community voice through authentic engagement with community, including co-design and co-delivery of initiatives and advocacy for community voice to be valued and acted on.
- HUM uses an intentional approach to community engagement and has invested significant time and resources in developing methods, tools and principals for community engagement that prioritise the safety and agency of community.
- Authentic engagement empowers community, strengthens relationships and contributes to more successful initiatives.

The following section focuses on authentic engagement of community members in HUM initiatives. To learn about how community members are engaged specifically in the HUM governance model, see [Chapter 5](#). To learn about how HUM informs the community about its activities and the progress of its work, see [Chapter 9](#).

4.1. What is authentic community engagement?

Community engagement is a fundamental element in achieving collective impact.^{62 63 64 65 66} While some believe it simply involves asking people what they need and adjusting services accordingly, successful collective impact initiatives go beyond this approach by meaningfully engaging the community in undertaking the collaborative work.

“If we do not actively engage community members in creating change, it leads to them being the objects of change (having things done to them) rather than them being the subjects of change (where they are the ones doing something).”⁶⁷

Authentic community engagement means involving communities from the very beginning, not merely consulting them after priorities and plans have already been established. It involves recognising community members as experts through their ‘lived experience’, engaging them in decision-making, and fostering mutual respect between the community and other cross-sector stakeholders.^{68 69 70 71} It is about seeking to disrupt and reform the system by addressing unequal power dynamics through the structural

⁶² Brady, S & Splansky, J. (2016) Collective Impact Principles of Practice: *putting collective impact into action*.

⁶³ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). Collective Impact 3.0.

⁶⁴ Harwood, R. (2015). Putting community in collective impact.

⁶⁵ Raderstrong, J. & Boyea-Robinson, T. (2016). The why and how of working with communities through collective impact.

⁶⁶ Wolfe, T. (2016) Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets It Wrong.

⁶⁷ Stuart, G. (2019). *A strengths-based approach to collective impact*.

⁶⁸ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). Collective Impact 3.0.

⁶⁹ Stuart, G. (2019). *A strengths-based approach to collective impact*.

⁷⁰ Farrell, L. & Falkenburger, E. (2023). *Authentic Community Engagement: Tools, Examples, and Guiding Questions*.

⁷¹ Treadance, D. & Gaddy, M. (2024). *Unlocking authentic community power: rethinking public service engagement for real impact*.

engagement of stakeholders that have lower levels of power and by serving as a catalyst for program, service, practice, and policy changes.^{72 73} This in turn is expected to lead to better outcomes for the community.^{74 75}

“Community engagement has a strong rationale and accumulating evidence of efficacy, and the potential to be a key strategy for improving outcomes for Australian children and their families.”⁷⁶

Collective impact work should be grounded in an equity and inclusion lens to ensure there is a shared understanding of complex problems that truly reflect the lived experience of the people who are affected, and no one is left behind. For this reason, as part of undertaking authentic community engagement those most affected by an issue should be involved in the efforts to create change.^{77 78 79} This is easier said than done. Due to negative prior experiences, community members may distrust services and be reluctant or unwilling to participate in organisationally led engagement efforts.⁸⁰ Therefore, key priorities for Backbone Teams should be building trust between the community and cross-sector stakeholders and creating safe spaces for meaningful participation.

4.1.1. Community engagement continuum

Community engagement can be considered on a spectrum. On the left side of the spectrum, minimal community engagement means that at the very least community is informed of work that is being undertaken. On the right side of the spectrum, community are the owners and leaders of their own initiatives and decision-making processes.



⁷² Abd Elrahman and Feldman. (2018). *A Path Towards Authentic Community Engagement*.

⁷³ Schiavo, R. (2021). *What is true community engagement and why it matters (now more than ever)*.

⁷⁴ De Weger, E., Van Vooren, N., Luijckx, K., Bann, C. & Drewes, H. (2018). *Achieving successful community engagement: a rapid realist review*.

⁷⁵ Cheuy, S. (2018). *Trust: An Essential Ingredient in Authentic Community Engagement*.

⁷⁶ Moore, T., McDonal, M., McHugh-Dillon, H. & West, S. (2016). *Community engagement: A key strategy for improving outcomes for Australian families*.


⁷⁷ Brady, S. & Juster, J. (2016). *Collective impact principles of practice: putting collective impact into action*.

⁷⁸ Duncan, D. (2016). *The Components of Effective Collective Impact*.

⁷⁹ Wolf, T. (2016). *Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets It Wrong*.

⁸⁰ Cheuy, S. (2018). *Trust: An Essential Ingredient in Authentic Community Engagement*.

Table 5. Community engagement continuum⁸¹

	Community is informed	Community is consulted	Community is actively involved	Community co-leads the work	Community ownership
Goal	To inform the community about the collaborative work that is happening, how people can get involved, and demonstrate the impact of the work	To gather input and feedback from the community incl. people with lived experience regarding the collaboration's aspirations, goals, priorities, etc. This often includes one-off engagement activities.	To involve the community in the collaborative work incl. people with lived experience for a sustained period. Community helps deliver the work as volunteers and informs decisions to help ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Representatives from the Backbone Team, partner organisations and community incl. people with lived experience work together as peers, co-design and co-implement solutions, and make shared decisions.	Community incl. people with lived experience lead the work and involve representatives from the Backbone Team and partner organisations on their own terms. Community makes the decisions.
Message	We will keep you informed	We care what you think	You are making us think and act differently	Your leadership and expertise are critical	You decide what will happen
Examples	Newsletters Social media Public reports	Surveys Community conversations	Community helps run activities A community advisory body	Co-design initiatives Community is part of the governance group that makes the decisions.	Community-led initiatives
					
Limited community engagement Reinforces existing power dynamics Closer to business as usual More incremental solutions Less community capability			Authentic community engagement Shifts power dynamics Further from business as usual More radical solutions More community capability		

⁸¹ This continuum has been adapted from the following sources: International Association for Public Participation (n.d). *Core values, ethics, spectrum – the 3 pillars of public participation*, Rowlett, I. (2015). *Five Principles for Community Engagement in Collective Impact*, Gonzalez, R. (2021). *The spectrum of community engagement to ownership*.

Each step along the continuum has a purpose in collective impact work. Utilising lower levels of engagement is appropriate to keep people abreast of what's happening, and consultation can be highly effective when seeking input from a broad range of individuals. For example, when determining a collaboration's Community Aspiration. It is also important to recognise that not everyone has the time or desire to co-lead or lead efforts. Some individuals prefer to participate in activities or stay informed about progress, or be consulted, while others may choose to engage more deeply at different times, aligning their contributions with their availability, purpose, needs, interests, and expertise.⁸²

However, to achieve systems transformation, collective impact initiatives should strive towards progressing to the highest levels of engagement on the continuum. Authentic community engagement is crucial, as it unleashes the potential to develop and implement innovative and sustainable solutions that address the root causes of complex community challenges and achieve equity.⁸³

What HUM means by authentic community engagement...

HUM defines community voice as '*local, lived understandings of what children and families in our community need to thrive*'. Local people with lived experience understand the region best; they see the challenges firsthand and have the most insightful ideas on how to improve their community and build on existing strengths. So, when it comes to figuring out what needs to be done to address equity issues, HUM believes local community members need to be involved in driving the work and making decisions. HUM is dedicated to making this happen by equipping community members with the skills, resources, and platforms necessary to identify, advocate for, and lead the changes they believe are best for children, youth and families in Mildura.

The following section provides examples of how the HUM Backbone Team engages with community and the outcomes each type of activity achieved. Each community engagement activity undertaken contributes towards the Community Aspiration and helps strengthen and broaden the Backbone Team's collective impact work.

4.2. How HUM authentically engages community

Summary of findings

HUM authentically engages community by listening deeply to community voice, co-designing and co-delivering community-led initiatives, and advocating for community voices and leadership.

4.2.1. HUM listens deeply to community voice

There is consensus across HUM stakeholders that HUM, and the HUM Backbone Team specifically, genuinely listens to community voice.^{84 85 86 87 88} To illustrate:

⁸² International Association for Public Participation (n.d.). *Core values, ethics, spectrum – the 3 pillars of public participation*

⁸³ Gonzalez, R. (2021). *The spectrum of community engagement to ownership*.

⁸⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

⁸⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

⁸⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *HomeBase Hoops Evaluation Report*.

⁸⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁸⁸ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

"The strongest thing for me about what HUM is doing, and why I think it is so important, is this voice through from community." (Community member)⁸⁹

"There is really strong evidence from the way that the Backbone Team are working that it's the voice of community that is driving this in Mildura." (Government stakeholder)⁹⁰

"HUM has made a difference in engaging vulnerable peoples who are wary of agencies as well as giving voice to marginalised community." (Community member)⁹¹

"[The Most Significant Change that happened as a result of HUM's work is] the ability for community to have a voice, making members feel valued and that they can contribute to their own community's future direction and development" (Service provider)⁹²

"Community feels heard and that their opinions and ideas matter." (Community member)⁹³

The HUM Backbone Team tests its understanding of current community challenges and strengths through regular engagement with community members. This happens through **in-depth co-design initiatives** such as the [Red Cliffs Project](#), formal **community consultation** events, such as the Community Conversations, Project Y, targeted Coffee and Chats, youth-led peer to peer consultation, and Discovery Sessions that HUM has undertaken to identify community needs and aspirations.



The HUM Backbone Team is on a **continuous journey of community engagement**; it has undertaken activities across the spectrum appropriate for their purpose and level of community engagement required at that time. HUM established its foundations through critical community consultation activities, which involved collecting input from a wide range of stakeholders. Currently co-design is the preferred approach of the HUM Backbone Team; this is due in part to the stage the initiative is in, and because the HUM Backbone Team has learned that this approach gives them the most meaningful information to best help shape their approaches. HUM community engagement initiatives may also include activities

⁸⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁹⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁹¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

⁹² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

⁹³ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

across the spectrum, such as which sees the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community consulted, actively involved and co-leading decisions depending on the need and context.

The HUM Backbone Team also ensures that it is hearing from a diverse group of voices. It has created specific community engagement initiatives with groups that historically have not had an equal opportunity to express their needs, particularly Aboriginal and CALD community members and children and young people.⁹⁴ For instance:

"[The Yarning Group] lets us get our voice out there and talk to everybody and get a level of understanding among everyone in the room. So, it's not just youth talking to youth or Elders talking to Elders. You get that clear understanding throughout the whole room about what's going on because we are the youth, and we know what's going on with the younger generation today." (Community member)⁹⁵

"I went to a [HUM] event ... and there was one woman in particular who really caught my eye. English clearly was her second language. She had a young baby with her, and I was listening to her ... talk about the community, ...her friendships, [and] the way her daughter behaves and feels in community now just from being engaged in [the Red Cliffs Project]." (Government stakeholder)⁹⁶

"I can say that what HUM did was all youth-led, it was about collaborating with the youth, using their perspective. We asked them, "What do you want to see", because it wasn't about what we wanted, it was what they wanted. They said what they wanted and then they did it. They did the flyers and then they handed them out in schools, and they encouraged the kids to come. So, it was really hearing their voices." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)⁹⁷

"We completed a project on the children's voices for what they wanted for the community. This project gave us an insight into what children see for their community and places they like to visit and play. This information has built the scaffolding for decisions in building or maintaining community spaces." (Government stakeholder)⁹⁸

Snapshot: Voices of Children project⁹⁹

Undertaken in 2019 in collaboration with the MRCC Early Years Planning Team, the HUM Backbone Team facilitated the Voices of Children project. A collaborative community consultation approach with partners such as kindergartens, schools, and Mallee Family Care and Mallee Minors Play Groups, the project heard from **450 Mallee children aged 3 to 8 years** old about what they like about their community, what they wish was different, and what they wanted for their future. Ultimately, the project led to the development of **'The Voices of Mallee Children's Storybook'**,¹⁰⁰ **'Listening: A Parent and Carer's Guide to hearing the Voices of Children'**,¹⁰¹ **a data snapshot**,¹⁰² and a series of deep

⁹⁴ Examples include Project Y, the Red Cliffs Project, the Yarning Group, and the Voices of Children project.

⁹⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁹⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁹⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁹⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

⁹⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). *About the Voices of Children project*.

¹⁰⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). *The Voices of Mallee Children Storybook*.

¹⁰¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). *Listening: A parent and carer's guide to hearing the voices of children*.

¹⁰² Hands Up Mallee. (2019). *The Voices of Mallee Children: Findings Snapshot*.

dives¹⁰³ covering topics such as where Mallee children like to go, what they like to do, and what they'd like to be when they're older.

This work has not only informed HUM's understanding of Mallee children and their needs, but it has also contributed to priority-setting for 3- to 8-year-olds. As a **direct result** of this work, both the **MRCC Municipal Early Years Plan 2020-2025** and the broader Community Aspiration vision are aligned to the ARACY NEST Outcomes.¹⁰⁴ Both the Voices of Children and Community Voices¹⁰⁵ projects are used as evidence to inform strategies for addressing each focus area.

"The Municipal Early Years Plan has been developed to align with the collective impact work being undertaken by Hands Up Mallee. It commits to the same vision, focuses on the two first age groups – pre-conception to 8 years of age and places children and families firmly at the centre of its principles, priorities, strategies and goals."¹⁰⁶



4.2.2. HUM co-designs and co-delivers initiatives with community

Once a Community Aspiration was formed, the HUM Backbone Team was prepared to start undertaking deeper community engagement activities to inform and guide HUM's initiatives. The HUM Backbone Team's role shifted to supporting its partners and community members to co-design, deliver, and lead their own solutions. Looking at [HUM's activities](#), this evaluation found that **all HUM initiatives either involve genuine involvement of community and/or are co-led by community members**. This is a fundamental way of working that HUM has embedded into its approach for both community-facing initiatives and internal organisational development. For example, the HUM Backbone Team requires authentic engagement of Aboriginal people, the wider community and its diversity as one of its six enabling conditions for collaboration, that collaborators recognise community as "contextual experts", and that co-design principles are adhered to across each HUM initiative.¹⁰⁷ The HUM Backbone Team also encourages community members to lead across the various aspects of community engagement, co-design and delivery of HUM initiatives.

"The main important thing that I've seen Hands Up Mallee do is having our Aboriginal community involved and having them have a say and listen to what they have to say, because not many organisations for an Aboriginal person will listen and will do those things, will go ahead and acknowledge what that person said and do something about it. That's number one important thing that I really love about the Hands Up Mallee." (Red Cliffs Project team - parent)¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). *The Voices of Mallee Children: Deep Dives*.

¹⁰⁴ Mildura Rural City Council. (2020). *Municipal Early Years Plan 2020-2025*.

¹⁰⁵ Community Voices was a community consultation event undertaken by the HUM Backbone Team in the initiatives earlies phases (2016-2017). Over 1600 voices were heard from, and findings were used to inform the Community Aspiration. For more information, see [Appendix 1](#).

¹⁰⁶ Mildura Rural City Council. (2020). *Municipal Early Years Plan 2020-2025*.

¹⁰⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Conditions of Collaboration with HUM*.

¹⁰⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*.

This approach enables community members to assume leadership roles where they are not traditionally asked or enabled to do so by partnering with them from the very beginning or before an initiative has been created. Examples of this can be seen in initiatives such as the [Red Cliffs Pool Pilot](#), [HomeBase Hoops](#), and [Fun in the Park](#); in each one, the HUM Backbone Team partnered with community at the start of the initiative's design process so that community would have input into the structure and delivery. These co-design approaches help community gain more experience and confidence in designing and leading initiatives and work towards greater community ownership over locally designed programs.

Snapshot: Red Cliffs Pool Pilot

Through the HUM youth-led peer to peer consultations and the Red Cliffs Project, it was identified that there was little for children and young people to do in the Red Cliffs Community and that it was difficult to access activities in Mildura due to limited transport. Historically the Red Cliffs Pool was a very popular place for families to meet, but in recent times the entrance fees had become prohibitive for many.

HUM advocated to MRCC for a pilot at the Red Cliffs pool. During the summer school holidays in January 2023, the pilot offered free access for children and young people to the pool. A range of fun and engaging activities and free snacks were included to encourage participation by families who had previously not attend the pool.

A group of youth leaders, with support from the HUM Backbone Team, MRCC, Aligned Leisure and an Aboriginal Elder, collaboratively co-designed and delivered the pilot. Planning meetings were held afterschool so that young people could join; they were kept short and informal, and included snacks. The youth promoted the pilot program through their social media channels and helped run the pilot events by running games and activities for other young people, handing out food, and assisting lifeguards by keeping an eye on the kids in the water.

As a result of their participation in the project, youth leaders reported feeling empowered by the opportunity to develop and showcase their leadership skills and responsibility. They expressed pride in their achievements, found working with the community to be a valuable life lesson, and built meaningful friendships through their involvement. Those who asked HUM for a letter of support for their CV's went on to gain part-time employment.

The pilot was nominated for the Parks and Leisure Australia Regional Awards of Excellence and won the category for Community Based Initiatives 2024.

More information about the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot can be found in the [evaluation report](#).¹⁰⁹



¹⁰⁹ Hands Up Malle. (2023). *Red Cliffs Pool Pilot Evaluation*.

4.2.3. HUM advocates for community voices to be engaged, heard and included in decision making

HUM also seeks opportunities to **advocate for and enable community ownership**. The Backbone Team consistently advocates for community members' voices to be included, listened to and valued, and leads by example. This advocacy helps lay the foundations for greater community ownership over future decisions and initiatives.

In AOCTVR, for example, the HUM Backbone Team gave preference to the advice of local Aboriginal and CALD community leaders in deciding how, where and when clinics should be run for their community. They also deferred to local Elders' and CALD leaders' knowledge as to how Aboriginal and CALD residents could best be engaged to access the services.¹¹⁰

"They didn't talk over us. I had that respect because they literally just sat there and listened. I would say ... I reckon ... if we do it this way, we can ... pull it together and they [did it]."
(Community member)¹¹¹

"Each community leader ... relayed their own internal messages in the appropriate way that it would get out to their communities ... We know how to deal with members or our community ... We know the first stepping stone of protocol." (Community member)¹¹²

Following this initiative, the HUM Backbone Team and HUM partners publicly promoted the key role Aboriginal and CALD community leaders played in AOCTVR's success, to raise awareness of the expert knowledge contributed by these community leaders and the critical role community voice played in the success of the initiative.¹¹³

"Being guided by [local Aboriginal Elder] Aunty Jemmes, she was absolutely the person we need to be listening to. Do we normally work like that? No. Should we be working like that? Yes." (HUM Backbone Team member)¹¹⁴

"The amount of work that community leaders did during that Covid period ... They are the ones who really got the word out there [and] who basically got people to come ... and unless they did some very specific work interpreting [or] being a bicultural worker at one of the Covid clinics, they wouldn't have been paid." (Service provider)¹¹⁵

The HUM Backbone Team and HUM collaboration also engage with community by supporting **community advocacy efforts** for new initiatives such as the [Red Cliffs Integrated Early Years Hub and the AOD withdrawal and rehabilitation facility](#). They do this by:

- **Establishing and maintaining links between stakeholders for collaborative working groups**, such as the Northern Mallee Local Drug and Alcohol Alliance. This group, which is comprised of health and social service providers, police, local government and Aboriginal Elders, was responsible

¹¹⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

¹¹¹ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

¹¹² Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

¹¹³ Hands Up Mallee. (2022, 22 June). *Working together we can do it*.

¹¹⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2022, 22 June). *Working together we can do it*.

¹¹⁵ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

for identifying the need and developing a successful business case for the AOD withdrawal and rehabilitation facility. Their advocacy and expert guidance resulted in a \$36 million funding announcement from the Victorian State Government in 2022.

- **Providing organisational and governance support** such as coordinating planning meetings and taking minutes.
- **Leveraging relationships and networks** to enable community members' access to key decision makers, including local and State Government representatives and leaders of service providers.
- **Providing technical advice and support**, including data gathering and analysis, guidance on processes, and drafting key documents for grant applications.¹¹⁶
- **Contributing their voice to that of community**, such as writing letters to state and federal representatives to advocate for policies and funding that will directly impact community.^{117 118 119}

HUM stakeholders shared the following about HUM's provision of advocacy support regarding the AOD withdrawal and rehabilitation facility:

"Having the HUM Backbone Team involved changed a lot because they had to listen to the Aboriginal voice and come back to us. They gave support behind the scenes. They pushed it forward." (Community member)¹²⁰

"As a non-Aboriginal organisation, HUM staff are using their (white) privilege to help Aboriginal people because government and services are more likely to listen to the whitefellas. For example, with the [AOD facility]. Without HUM, we probably would still be out there yelling and trying to get what we've got now." (Community member)¹²¹

Snapshot: Red Cliffs Integrated Early Years Hub

Families involved in the Red Cliffs Project identified five big ideas to improve developmental outcomes for young children in their community. One of these was the need for a central space for family and child services in Red Cliffs. It became clear that this idea was too ambitious to test within the scope of the co-design project. Instead, the HUM Backbone Team assisted the families in advocating for support from MRCC, using data and stories to support their case. This collaboration led to the Council drafting a proposal - with community input and informed by local data – and submitting a grant application to State Government.

Together, community and local Council secured a \$6 million in state funding for an Integrated Early Years Hub. The hub, currently under development with strong community involvement, will include Maternal and Child Health services, visiting specialist services spaces, a toy library, and community spaces alongside a significant kindergarten extension.¹²² The Red Cliffs Integrated Early Years Hub is expected to significantly contribute to children's early development outcomes in the future, and is a powerful example of what authentic community engagement can achieve.

¹¹⁶ Northern Mallee Community Partnership. (2019). *Alcohol and Other Drug Rehabilitation Proposal*

¹¹⁷ McCracken, J. (2022, 12 December). *Letter written on behalf of the Northern Mallee AOD Alliance to the Director of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division of the Victoria Department of Health.*

¹¹⁸ McCracken, J. (2023, 6 February). *Letter written on behalf of the Northern Mallee AOD Alliance to the Victorian Minister for Mental Health*

¹¹⁹ McCracken, J. (2022, 7 November). *Letter written on behalf of SPSP Backbone Teams to the Minister of Social Services, advocating for continued investment in funding for community-led, place-based change initiatives and expanding the SPSP program.*

¹²⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report.*

¹²¹ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report.*

¹²² Funding secured for Red Cliffs Early Years Integrated Centre. 2023, 26 June). *National Tribune.*

For more information about the Red Cliffs Integrated Early Years Hub, see the case study in Annex 1.



4.3. HUM's approach to authentic community engagement

Summary of findings

The HUM Backbone Team's approach to authentic community engagement includes going directly to community, prioritising community needs, developing and using appropriate tools, methods and resources for the communities they're engaging with, and appropriately remunerating community member expertise.

When it comes to community engagement, the HUM Backbone Team have garnered the respect of their peer organisations, fellow collaborators and community. They are considered a reliable source of information for other organisations looking to undertake community engagement activities. **When the HUM Backbone Team undertakes community engagement, the goal is always to make community members feel heard and empowered.**

"The HUM Backbone Team has a reputation for being the experts in town when it comes to community consultation, particularly with youth, and the go-to when we need to know what the community thinks. This doesn't necessarily mean asking HUM to do it, but HUM are the people that you might ask: how might I go about trying to understand community needs in that space?" (Service provider)¹²³

"The role that the [HUM] backbone plays of empowering youth, to help them drive their own change, to be the ones that make their own choices. It is less about service coordination and how the system works [and more] about those kids taking their own power and feeling that power and being supported to do that by the actions of the Backbone Team." (Government stakeholder)¹²⁴

¹²³ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

¹²⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

“HUM has invested significantly in developing the internal capacity and resources required for delivering authentic community engagement activities across the spectrum, particularly ones that promote community co-design, leadership and ownership.”¹²⁵ As a result, HUM is able to provide safe and trusted processes and environments that support meaningful participation for community members including through active outreach.”¹²⁶

“[The Red Cliffs Project co-design approach] could also be turned into a policy of how to create a safe space ..., oh if every service could do this, it was community written, so powerful, [it] could be such an amazing policy.” ... You’re not going to have community questioning policy because it’s written from voice of community. I’ve seen pushback when policies are written by people in offices, and they have no understanding of what’s going on.” (Service provider)¹²⁷

4.3.1. HUM goes directly to community

Part of HUM’s success in its approach to community engagement is its willingness to go to community, rather than expect that community will come to them. This flipped narrative can be seen across both co-design projects and community-led initiatives, in particular during the two HUM emergency initiatives during the COVID pandemic.

Snapshot: COVID Emergency Relief Response (CERR)

Food insecurity has been a long-standing issue in the Mallee due to high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage. When the COVID pandemic arrived in March 2020, it became clear that the state-sponsored food assistance programs were not going to meet the unique needs of regional and rural communities, including Mildura.¹²⁸ Many community members could not reach food relief support due to isolation requirements, risk of COVID exposure, or lack of transport; this also contributed to growing social isolation amongst community members. Parts of community already experiencing vulnerability, such as Aboriginal and immigrant communities, were disproportionately affected by both the food insecurity and lack of access to existing support services.

Together, the HUM Backbone Team and MRCC assembled **10 leading organisations to pool their expertise and resources** to create a central food hub and develop an emergency food relief response for their community (CERR). The HUM Backbone Team leveraged their existing relationships with Elders and other community leaders to determine the best times, locations and methods for distributing relief packages, and to partner with organisations that could contribute transport resources. As a result, community members had access to their essential food and medical supplies and were able to see a friendly face and have a chat at the same time, all from the safety of their home.

CERR highlights HUM’s willingness to centre community needs and adjust their approach to ensure that community is authentically engaged by its services. For more information about the CERR initiative, see the [CERR – Mildura LGA Evaluation and Learning Report](#). For more information about the AOCTVR initiative, see the AOCTVR case study in Annex 3.

¹²⁵ Since 2020, HUM has invested \$196,290 in MEL training and coaching, including co-design methodologies. Funding for this was provided through SPSP funding allocation and grant funding through Paul Ramsay Foundation. This training and coaching has been delivered in collaboration with TACSI and Clear Horizon.

¹²⁶ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

¹²⁷ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

¹²⁸ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

"We had the food; we'd go at a certain time in the morning, and we had like 30 boxes of food... and we'll stack it all up and run it all around to the people. Because these families, a lot of them didn't have cars. There was no public transport working at that particular time because of all the kind of thing. And they were stuck... We'd done this to help our community. We didn't want to lose any of our people and that's why we jumped on board." (Community member volunteering for CERR)¹²⁹

"I went down to meet the people at the Food Shed and quickly built a relationship with them. I collected 10 food parcels each Friday to distribute. They quickly got used to my routine and had the parcels ready for me, which was fantastic, and they always included fresh food too." (Service provider participating in CERR)¹³⁰

"Where there was no system for food relief parcels to go out in a systematic way, calling upon partners to contact schools and develop a rostered ordering and delivery system to reach out to families whom they already have the relationship with and then make onward referrals. This was something our community had never done before. As a result, we issued 1471 parcels through schools and strengthened relationships between schools and families and schools and SCHS, SMECC, MRCC and the school breakfast programs." (Service provider participating in CERR)¹³¹

Early signs of systems change: Service providers are changing their approach and going to community

As a direct result of their involvement with AOCTVR, some HUM partners have carried forward new approaches to engaging with community when delivering services.

- **The integration of Maternal and Child Health nurses at MRCC-sponsored Playgroups.** Inspired by their experience of delivering AOCTVR and Fun in the Parks in collaboration with other providers and HUM, coordinators of MRCC Playgroups identified the opportunity to coordinate service provision with MCH nurses so that families in need could more easily access health services for their children.

"I started running a supported playgroup at a community house ... and we've started to bring Maternal Child Health along there. So that if people need something, they don't have to go and book an appointment, they can just pop in. So that was quite a big shift that probably wouldn't have happened prior to [AOCTVR and Fun in the Park]" (Government stakeholder)¹³²

- **Development of the CP@CLINIC community paramedic model.** Lessons learned from SCHS's experience with the mobile testing and vaccination clinic approach used in AOCTVR helped inform its development of a place-based mobile paramedic clinic for the Mildura LGA community.¹³³ The aim is to deliver health prevention services to communities dealing with complex health concerns or who have restricted access to mainstream health services. Clinics are held four days a week, each day in a different location; in addition to providing consultation services, they are also able to make referrals to other health and social services.

¹²⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹³⁰ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

¹³¹ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

¹³² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹³³ The model is based on a version developed at McMaster University Canada. Source: CP@Clinic. (n.d.). *CP@Clinic*.

“Community paramedics might go to the Merbein Caravan Park [where] residents live [with] high needs [and] high health complexities ... [with whom] they've built trust. They are [also] going out to Red Cliffs resource centre, where we vaccinated [as part of AOCTVR] and they're getting great numbers through ... They're seeing people who may not have seen a health professional for a very long time but are then getting referred ... and their health issues are being addressed.” (Government stakeholder)¹³⁴

SCHS secured \$1.4 million (AUD) in funding across four years through the Commonwealth's Innovative Models of Care Program to implement the CP@CLINIC model.¹³⁵ The CP@CLINIC model has been highly successful at reaching communities that otherwise would not have received the health support they need, both in terms of health services delivered and referrals for social support services. For more information, see the AOCTVR case study in Annex 3.

4.3.2. HUM prioritises community needs

Community members highly value HUM's approach to community engagement. They recognise the intention and effort that the HUM Backbone Team place in designing their community engagement activities and appreciate how they take steps to ensure that everyone feels safe, welcomed, and included. **Considerations are made for potential barriers to engagement and are addressed to enable equal participation.** This can include provision of transportation, childcare, flexible locations, and food and beverages. For Aboriginal and CALD communities, additional cultural and language needs are anticipated and accommodated, such as the inclusion of Aboriginal staff members at community engagement events or offering translation services at the AOCTVR pop-up clinics.¹³⁶

“HUM did a really good job in making sure they had different people in the team and picking a time and place that suits, bringing snacks, trying to make sure that everyone had what they needed. And they had different ways of helping everyone to communicate and give input, they made it comfortable for everyone no matter what their needs or background (e.g., they enabled written, verbal and anonymous contributions). They did a really good job including everyone.” (Community member)¹³⁷

“I think people sometimes might overthink what a safe space is – that has made that [Red Cliffs Project] what it is. ... I liked the whole non-formal approach that has been taken as a whole ... it has just been co-designed really well.” (Service provider)¹³⁸

“[The project was] culturally inclusive ... - so diverse, I think that is huge ... [it provided] a safe space for everyone. When people feel safe and heard they feel ok [and] not judged and [they] can say what is really needed – that has really helped the project come to where it is at now. It's proven to me [that] if you make that safe space when it is community based in any environment, that is when it will grow to something amazing.” (Community member)¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹³⁵ McMaster University. (2024, 1 April). *CP@clinic program expands reach in Australia with new funding*.

¹³⁶ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

¹³⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

¹³⁸ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

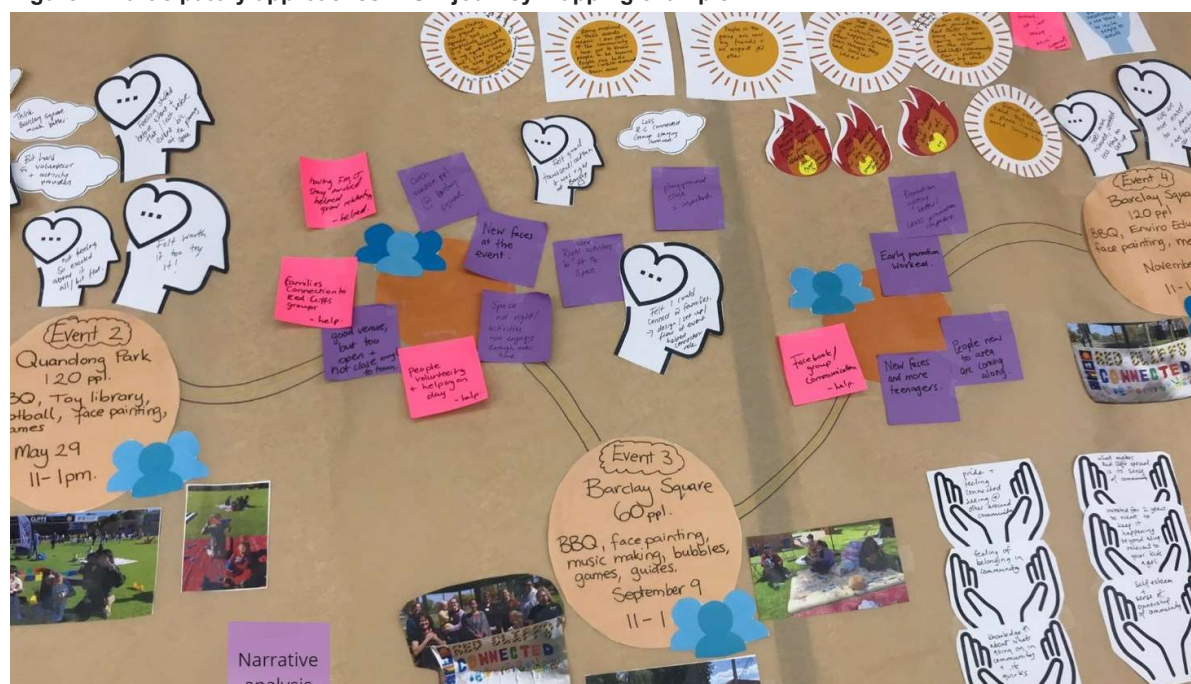
¹³⁹ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

4.3.3. Appropriate resources are developed for community to enable participation

The HUM Backbone Team employs **creative, interactive and participatory methods and tools when engaging with community**. This is to ensure that all community members can meaningfully participate and contribute to the activities, using language and communication methods that feel comfortable and familiar. For example, as part of the Community Conversations initiative the HUM Backbone Team **developed a toolkit of resources** to ensure the quality and consistency of the community engagement activities and promote transparency of the methods used.¹⁴⁰ This included an **Easy English guide**¹⁴¹ which uses visual aids and simple language to explain to participants how sessions will be run, how their data will be used, and other relevant information for obtaining informed consent. Being publicly available, other organisation are able to use these tools to strengthen their own approach to community engagement.

Other participatory data collection methods that are frequently used by the HUM Backbone Team include journey mapping, role playing, yarning circles and visual and creative methods such as drawing, art, photography, etc. Participants are able to contribute and provide feedback in written, oral or story format. **Using methods that are inclusive and flexible allows for participants to share their experiences in their own words**; this is essential to authentic community engagement and demonstrates the value that HUM places in community voice.

Figure 4. Participatory approaches: HUM journey mapping example



4.3.4. Community member expertise is valued

Just as with any expert, the HUM Backbone Team **recognises community members' expertise as an asset and values it accordingly**. Being a community expert and providing that expertise for HUM requires the sacrifice of time and resources, including time with family, transportation costs, and other expenses. Therefore, the HUM Backbone Team provides compensation and support for community

¹⁴⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (2017). *Community Conversations Kit*.

¹⁴¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). *Community Conversations toolkit – Easy English Conversations Kit*.

members who contribute to HUM initiatives. This support encompasses various forms such as honoraria, vouchers, catering during meetings, and childcare services. The specific support provided varies depending on factors such as the level of involvement and whether the engagement is ongoing or a one-off project. To illustrate:

“If you’re going to call on community expertise, and they’re the only ones in the room not being paid, that doesn’t seem fair to us. So, [HUM] shaped up a policy and process for that to work [in the Red Cliffs project] and that then has informed the other work, where we ask community to work with us”. (HUM Backbone Team member)¹⁴²

“You do get paid, so I went ok, that was a motivator. Given the time we had to put in, that helped to keep the group consistent. People would have dropped off if it was just volunteering, I heard from other community members. Getting paid certainly motivated me to take something extra on.” (Community member)¹⁴³

4.4. What does authentic engagement achieve?

Summary findings:

As a result of the HUM Backbone Team’s authentic engagement with community:

- HUM initiatives are better at appropriately addressing the needs of community and maximising their impact.
- Community members have greater trust in the HUM Backbone Team and the purpose of HUM.
- Community members have strengthened their self-confidence and skills in leadership and advocacy.

4.4.1. Authentic engagement ensures that initiatives appropriately address community needs and can have maximum impact

Across multiple HUM initiatives, participants have cited the value of having community input in the program’s design and/or delivery. Including community voice in program design and delivery considerations ensures that the program will be able to address the needs of community by **being better informed of both community needs and potential barriers to engagement**.^{144,145} For example, in the Fun in the Park initiative, the evaluation found that taking into account community insights about their needs gained during AOCTVR were essential in the initiative’s success.¹⁴⁶ This included things such as where the community events should be located, what type of food should be served, and the inclusion of free or low-cost activities for children and families. While these may seem like small details, they are key in addressing potential barriers to engagement and ensuring that all of community is able to participate and benefit from the initiative.

“Involving community members early and in roles where they lead design and development increases community ownership, engagement and empowerment. Incorporating community led co-

¹⁴² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁴³ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

¹⁴⁴ Schiavo, R. (2021). *What is true community engagement and why it matters (now more than ever)*.

¹⁴⁵ Moore, T., McDonal, M., McHugh-Dillon, H. & West, S. (2016). *Community engagement: A key strategy for improving outcomes for Australian families*.

¹⁴⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

design in future events, trials and pilots ensures greater impact can be achieved for the community.”¹⁴⁷

4.4.2. Authentic engagement builds trust with community

As a result of this consistent level of expertise, care and intentionality when engaging with community, many community members place a significant amount of trust in HUM and its goals. The HUM Backbone Team is able to hold strong relationships with community members and leaders, such that when they request community members' input, participation or leadership, they are happy and willing to provide it.

“Hands Up Mallee, that’s the good thing, is that they’ve got rapport with community, with kids, with agencies, and with people within the community. So, they can drop a dime, make a phone call, and they can get people on board quickly.” (Service provider)¹⁴⁸

“It was the trust that was built, I think, not only with our group, but with the facilitators, like Catherine and Fiona, who were just gems. It was respect and I remember Fiona always saying, ‘Oh, you’re the experts.’” (Red Cliffs Project team - parent)¹⁴⁹

This embedded way of working also **enables HUM partners and collaborators to work and connect with community in new ways**. This creates opportunities for relationship building between service providers and community during a HUM initiative; in some cases, these relationships then continue on beyond the initiative's scope. In HomeBase Hoops, service providers including police and Youth Justice staff have been able to connect with young people in a relaxed, friendly environment by designing and delivering the HomeBase Hoops program together. Service providers have commented on how the relationships they have built with young people at HomeBase Hoops has helped them to better engage with other young people in community. Young people are also more likely to reach out and speak to youth service providers when they already know and trust the provider.



“There were people that were volunteering that were a part of different agencies, they became familiar with the kids. The kids became familiar with them. If they did need them outside of that program, they were aware and they could call upon that support if they needed to.” (Service provider from HomeBase Hoops)¹⁵⁰

“I think it does definitely help with that collaboration because young people can recognise you ... you’re from HomeBase Hoops or from school holiday program or from something else or in the community. And they’re quite happy to share, happy that they’re in a safe place and that I’ll listen, or people will listen to their voice because youth don’t get heard a great deal so they feel confident

¹⁴⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

¹⁴⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁴⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024) *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁵⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

and safe that they can actually give their opinion and feedback and stuff like that.” (Service provider from HomeBase Hoops)¹⁵¹

4.4.3. Community participants strengthen their self-confidence, leadership and advocacy skills

Community members who are engaged in HUM initiatives **are often empowered by the experience**. Through this co-design approach, community participants develop new skills in engaging with community and designing and delivering initiatives, increase their self-confidence, and learn more about the systems around them and their role in creating change. This can be seen in the Red Cliffs Project, where some families decided to join their local governance group to significantly update the Red Cliffs Community Plan following their experience in the co-design initiative.¹⁵² They attributed this confidence gained through their time on the Red Cliffs Project and the sense of empowerment following the securement of \$6 million in funding to create the Integrated Early Years Hub.

“When this first started, I felt like none of us could talk in front of each other, but my confidence has built up. My voice was that shaky, I was trembling and everything, but now I am more confident.” (Community member)¹⁵³

“There is a noticeably increased confidence and awareness of their own skills and expertise and confidence to use those for the good of community in Red Cliffs... It was really a privilege to observe this kind of building of community within a project.” (Red Cliffs Project team – HUM Backbone Team member)¹⁵⁴

““They (families from the Red Cliffs Project) then played an integral role in developing the next Red Cliffs plan. The Red Cliffs small town plan is now being held as one of the best bloody plans in the history of these small-town plans.” (Government stakeholder)¹⁵⁵

Examples of increased confidence and leadership skills can be found in HUM's co-design work with youth and in their Collaborative Governance model as well.

“It’s their ideas, they’re implementing it, they’re contacting people. They are presenting back to Council about what were positives, but then also coming back to HUM at a later date and saying, “Hey, I want to get a job. Can you write me a reference?” So, I think this is a sign of it’s very much about the capacity building in the community, the skills and the confidence and the experiences that people have through being involved and that HUM is very clear about its role as a facilitator or a gatherer.” (HUM Backbone Team, reflecting on youth leaders of HomeBase Hoops)¹⁵⁶

“Last week I was hearing someone who has come onto the [HUM Collaborative Governance Group] talking about how she’s grown in herself, in that experience of leading, coming into that community group and then finding some leadership in that as well.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁵² This group is called the Red Cliffs Focus Group

¹⁵³ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

¹⁵⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁵⁵ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁵⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁵⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

Community members also develop a **deeper understanding of their community** and can apply this knowledge to create **innovative solutions that account for the local context**. This agency means that community members are invested in projects from the outset, are equipped with the knowledge they need to advocate for the project and are more committed to delivering it in their community.

"I have learnt about the bigger picture at the end: we started off small now I can see the bigger picture. I've learnt it's not an overnight decision, but now I can start to see where we want to end up. ... I can hear and see everyone's point of view; everyone's input and ideas make this happen." (Community member)¹⁵⁸

"[The Red Cliffs project] has highlighted to me that community led projects are the way to create change within communities. The passion the community has brought to the project is inspiring. It creates a real insight to the needs and wants of community at a grassroots level. In the beginning the group sessions were led by services while everyone was still grasping the concept of the project. When attending group sessions now it is evident that the community takes the lead and voices their thoughts on what the families of Red Cliffs would benefit from most. Personally, this project so far has been such an inspiring story of creating change." (Service provider)¹⁵⁹

"The role that the HUM Backbone Team plays of empowering youth, to help them drive their own change, to be the ones that make their own choices ... It's about those kids taking their own power and feeling that power and being supported to do that by the actions of the HUM Backbone Team." (Government stakeholder)¹⁶⁰

*"Where communities share accountability for identifying, designing, implementing and monitoring services and investment, as well as holding service providers and governments accountable, they are in turn accountable to the community and are stepping into greater shared decision-making roles."*¹⁶¹

Early signs of systems change

Community voice is respected and a key driver in decision making in Mildura

There are early signs of a systems shifts within **service providers and government** in how community voice – particularly Aboriginal Elders and youth - is seen and valued. This is an indication of a movement along the [community engagement continuum](#), from community being informed to genuine community engagement. The HUM Backbone Team has played an important role in this shift, by undertaking authentic community engagement across its initiatives and learning work. HUM partners are able to see what authentic engagement looks like, understand the value it brings to community and to an initiative, and learn the steps required for it to be successfully undertaken with community.

As a result, there are many examples of community voice being respected and driving decisions within HUM initiatives.¹⁶² More importantly, there are **instances of community driving work beyond HUM-delivered initiatives**, such as Red Cliffs families advocating for and working with local Council to secure funding for the Integrated Early Years Hub. Moreover, community now has an expectation that they will

¹⁵⁸ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

¹⁵⁹ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

¹⁶⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

¹⁶¹ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact. (2022). *Disrupting Disadvantage: Early evidence of the impact of community-led change*.

¹⁶² Examples include CERR and AOCTVR, the Red Cliffs Project, HomeBase Hoops, the Red Cliffs Pools Pilot.

be consulted and involved in decisions that will affect them, **a shift which the HUM Backbone Team has directly contributed to** through its regular community engagement activities and reporting back to community.

"I do think that our community is used to now being asked. They've got an expectation they will be asked on things much broader than those two things that we're talking about. There's still a lot of legacy in place... And I can't say that every area of local government works the same, but there is this strong push and expectation around true and genuine engagement and taking that information to inform decisions and to inform what we do next." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)¹⁶³

"Community members are empowered by the work and see themselves as agents for change. Locally based solutions to continuing issues have been demonstrated to be powerful and effective." (Business owner)¹⁶⁴

Government, services and leaders are changing their community engagement mindsets and practices

As authentic community engagement is embedded in their ways of working, any partner on a HUM initiative will have the opportunity to learn and participate in best practices of community engagement. Service providers and government in particular have benefitted from being an active participant in community engagements across the spectrum, but especially those geared towards community co-design and community ownership. **There is strong evidence that HUM partners are applying these types of community engagement activities throughout their work.** Furthermore, by modelling authentic community engagement to non-HUM collaborators, **HUM partners are helping to generate influence in how the sector understands, values and practices community engagement.**

"We're also using the work that's been done by HUM, to look at what young people in the community are telling us they would like to see. That then guides what projects we explore [as a service] and decide on as a team that we should be putting resources into." (Service provider)¹⁶⁵

"I understand the bigger picture better, I definitely self-reflect on my interactions with community and the impact I can have. I change my roster to be flexible for when action is needed. My relationships with community partners and members are far better having been to HUM sessions and seen how kindness, empathy and understanding go much further than any other approach." (Government stakeholder)¹⁶⁶

"After that workshop, the mayor has been advocating really hard for basketball courts down on the riverfront. He took that on after he'd been in that session with the young people. And after that session, he pushed really hard for the Red Cliffs pool to be free for young people because of what he'd heard in those sessions. He took that back to Council and pushed really hard for that." (Backbone Team member)¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews.*

¹⁶⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey.*

¹⁶⁵ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews.*

¹⁶⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews.*

¹⁶⁷ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews.*

4.5. What factors catalyse or inhibit the impact of HUM’s work to achieve authentic community engagement?

Catalysts of HUM’s impact	Inhibitors of HUM’s impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A shared desire to put community first• Strong relationships and partnerships – particularly with Council and community leaders• A deep understanding of community systems and their impact• A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership, community engagement and MEL skills• Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs• Multi-year flexible funding model• Operation autonomy that promotes accountability to community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working, specifically<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding and policy constraints• Resource allocation (especially time and staff)• Sufficient and suitable data• Data sharing restrictions• Competition for funding• Mindset shifts that only reach the individual level• Misalignment in our shared understanding of what is worth measuring

Detailed descriptions of the catalysts and inhibitors of HUM’s impact can be found in [Chapter 10](#).



5. TRANSPARENT AND LOCALLY LED GOVERNANCE



Key findings

- Collaborative governance that is inclusive of and led by community is essential to advancing community ownership.
- HUM has a unique fit for purpose governance model that was co-designed with HUM partners and community.
- HUM's collective governance model is activating new voices and creating ripples in other sectors' approach to governance and First Nation's self-determination.

5.1. What is transparent and locally led governance?

To help collective impact initiatives move from talk to action, Backbone Teams are encouraged to assist their initiatives in identifying, developing, and implementing a fit for purpose **collaborative governance model**. By design, collaborative governance groups should be transparent to and led by community, as community members play an integral role in the model. First and foremost, it should be designed in collaboration with community and partners, as it will help those in the collaboration have clarity about their roles, responsibilities, and the expectations of their engagement.¹⁶⁸

It is crucial that community is also embedded in the collaborative governance model as this will advance **community ownership**. The complex social challenges that collective impact initiatives aim to solve require broad engagement strategies and involvement. When the community believes that a complex issue can be influenced and changed, they are likely to join in, leading to more innovative solutions beyond the capacity of organisational partners (services and government). Community ownership also plays a vital role in shifting power dynamics, leveraging resources, and influencing policy change. Therefore, effective collective impact initiatives should build community ownership from the outset.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Weaver, L. (2015). Governance and Collective Impact.

¹⁶⁹ Weaver, L. (2013). Puzzling the Governance of Collective Impact.

What HUM means by transparent and locally led governance ...

Local leaders, including those directly affected by the issues, guide HUM to ensure the collaboration's efforts reflect and address the community's unique aspirations and needs. To support this HUM listens to community voice and applies decision-making processes that are transparent; this enables community to understand and influence how decisions are made regarding their people and place.

5.2. HUM's approach to transparent and locally led governance

Summary findings

HUM has a unique fit for purpose governance model that was co-designed with HUM partners and community. HUM's Collaborative Governance model plays a key role in identifying HUM's strategic priorities as well as providing guidance and advice as to how HUM strategies and initiatives should be implemented and supported.¹⁷⁰ The governance model consists of six components, three of which are partly or fully composed of community members – the HUM Collaborative Governance Group, the Yarning Group and Mallee Community Voices.¹⁷¹

5.2.1. HUM has established its transparent, locally led governance through co-design with community

In HUM's early days the collaboration had a governance structure made up by ten CEOs of local organisations. However, in 2019 HUM partners engaged Social Ventures Australia to conduct a review of the existing governance model. The findings indicated the need for significant re-modelling to include community representation and decision-making that would be effective for HUM.

"We picked up pretty quickly that this was not the right way to do it, and then once again with Jane's leadership, she just kept exploring different ways for governance." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, Service provider)¹⁷²

In late 2021, HUM engaged the Australian Centre for Social Impact to facilitate the co-design process of their collaborative governance model. Between January and June 2022, nine HUM stakeholders, including representatives from the HUM Backbone Team, local government, services, and community members, worked with TACSI to develop the purpose and form of HUM's **collaborative governance model**. This included defining the values, principles, and practices that underpin it, together, and outlining how HUM should meaningfully support the leadership of Aboriginal people, youth, and community.¹⁷³ The approach has since been tested and adapted into HUM's current governance model.

"[There] has been a foundation building period for the governance structure, and they're at that stage now where they're ready to go into their full throttle work. They've had a ... period of being grounded in the work with the support of an external facilitator. It runs with two chairs, an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal chair. They've done their values, their principles, their ways of being,

¹⁷⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *HUM Collective Governance Group Introduction*.

¹⁷¹ The three HUM governance groups that contain community members are: 1) Mallee Community Voices, 2) Collaborative Governance Group, and 3) the Yarning Group. The remaining three components are the HUM Backbone Team, the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning team, and the Agency and Government Enabling Group (in development).

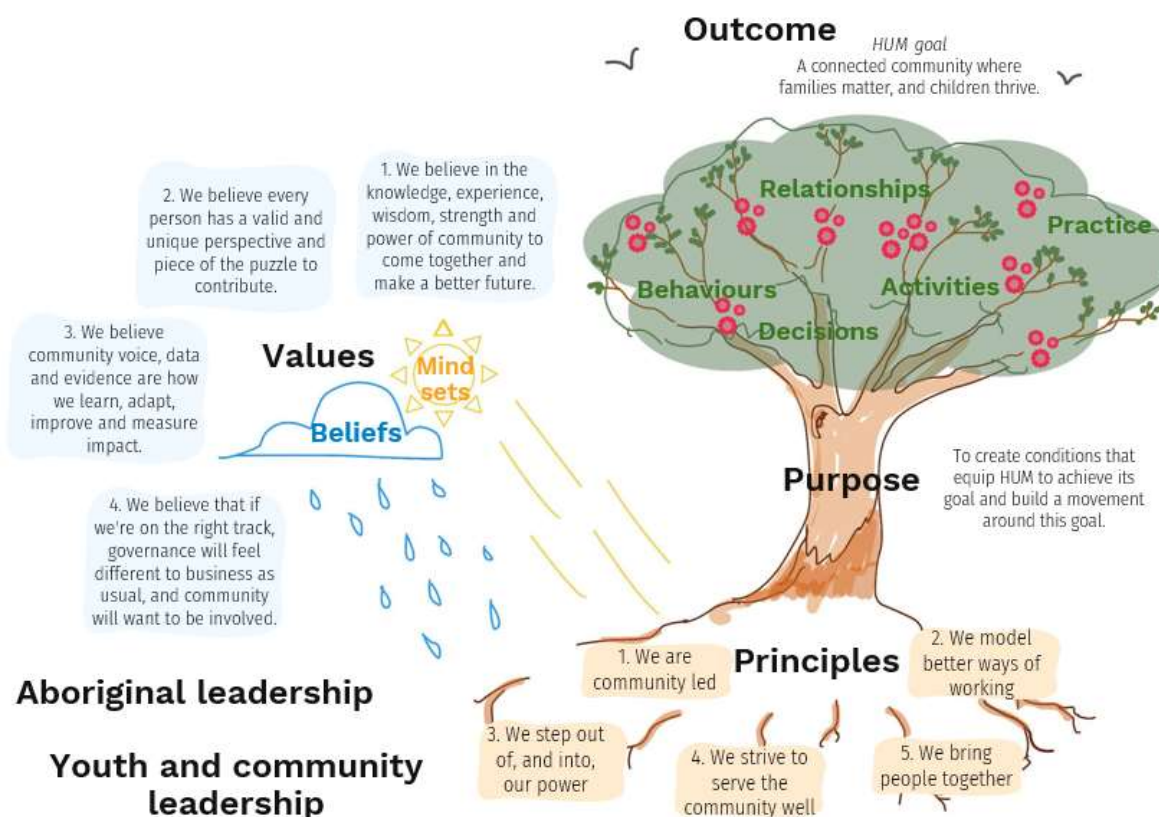
¹⁷² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁷³ The Australian Centre for Social Impact. (2022). *Collaborative Governance for Hands Up Mallee*

their cultural principles and the last ... meeting we looked at how they fit in our theory of change, and we put the key evaluation questions out there, with your governance lenses on it, what does that mean for evaluating the role of governance [in HUM's] work?" (Backbone Team member)¹⁷⁴

A visual including the values, principles, and purpose can be found below.

Figure 5. HUM collaborative governance



The beliefs underpinning the HUM governance model

The beliefs that underpin the HUM's governance model include:¹⁷⁵

- The collective knowledge, experience, wisdom, strength, and power of the community are essential in creating a better future.
- Every person's unique perspective is a valuable piece of the puzzle in driving meaningful change for our community.
- Community voice, data, and evidence guide us in learning, adapting, improving, and measuring our impact.
- When we are on the right track, governance will feel different from business as usual, and the community will be eager to work together for equity.

¹⁷⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁷⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Be part of community creating change: Hands Up Mallee Collective Governance Group*.

"It's very much about asking people what they need and listening. It's not that we have an answer, or we know what even should be addressed. I really value that [HUM] initiatives are born out of this consultation, this deliberate and regular meeting together, and then feeding [that] back up into HUM." (Collaborative Governance Group member, Community member)

5.2.2. HUM's Collaborative Governance Group

The Collaborative Governance group works to ensure the work of the HUM Collective advances the Community Aspiration. The Collaborative Governance group includes up to 12 members, including an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal co-chair.

The CGG is made up of all different people from all different walks of life. We are not all from the same part of community. I don't work or live in the same parts of community as others in the group. CGG is about giving people equal rights to have a say. Then it is a group decision, not a single person's decision. That's what the CGG is all about – collective decision making, not just one voice.

-Patsy Doolan

To form HUM's Collaborative Governance group, three members of the original Governance co-design group, alongside a facilitator from Regenerative Communities designed a recruitment process in December 2022 to attract new members. Applicants were invited to participate in a Yarning Circle including a series of facilitated activities and questions aimed at fostering discussion that would show how potential new members engaged in a group, and what motivated them to apply. Topics included shared values, lived experience, and community concerns.¹⁷⁶ An applicant who participated in the recruitment process shared the following about their experience:

"As a person, and an engaged community member, I felt very welcomed and safe in participating. This is a bit of a different governance group. This whole process is seeing more of the humanity in each of the participants. I've been able to sit there in the moment and listen to each individual person that's offered their thoughts or experiences, and there's a lot more empathy." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)¹⁷⁷

New members were selected after discussing the strengths of each applicant, how they worked with others, and their diverse perspectives and lived experiences. This was followed by a full day kick-off workshop and monthly meetings dedicated to relationship building and capacity development focused on getting to know and understand each other, HUM, the community and HUM's ways of working. HUM Collaborative Governance Group members have reflected on the importance of the slow, considered process of the governance design, which they believe will lead to better outcomes.:

"It's really taken six months to feel that I have an understanding of what I've joined. But it's been a very awesome process, right from the yarning circle the whole way through. Like, I've never felt inadequate, I've never felt that I didn't have a right to, to speak up or that I didn't have something to add. It would be good to know our tenure. It's almost like once we get to the end of the first year,

¹⁷⁶ Regenerative Communities. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Collaborative Governance Group Journey Map Report*.

¹⁷⁷ Regenerative Communities. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Collaborative Governance Group Journey Map Report*.

that's when our time should start, because this process is just sort of building up to the next stage.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)¹⁷⁸

“It's been a process of these monthly meetings of, I don't know, very centring ourselves, making each of the members very present in the governance group. And then we just listen... and a lot of what we've been doing, it's been looking at how we structure ourselves in a way that – building towards having co-Chairs, building towards ways that – it's only been a very recent thing.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, Service provider)¹⁷⁹

“You would come together and before the session even started, it was just around having time to clear your mind, and then it was just in a very relaxed community type environment, which just generates much greater intrinsic and organic and true conversations. So, they're really heading in the right direction for the way they're setting up that new governance structure.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, local government)¹⁸⁰

Activities are undertaken to ensure that Aboriginal members in particular have a voice and leadership in the group, and that there is deep Aboriginal cultural awareness and knowledge held by all members. For example, the group has an Aboriginal Co-Chair who is responsible for holding cultural authority within the group. As part of its co-design process, the Collaborative Governance Group participated in an overnight trip on Country to Mungo National Park, so that members could learn about the rich history and culture of the lands on which they live and work.¹⁸¹ These intentional approaches to cultural learning have deepened the connections and respect held across the HUM Collaborative Governance Group members and provide a vital lens to understanding the group's work and the community they serve.

“[The Mungo visit] had quite an impact on non-Aboriginal people. They learnt a lot out there, and are hungry for more, and feel a lot more confident in just asking. Whereas before they wouldn't have asked, they would have – it would have worried them whether they'd upset anybody, or stand on somebody's toes, or offend somebody with their own ignorance.” (Backbone Team member)¹⁸²

“The co-chair design of having an Aboriginal person and a non-Aboriginal person as [HUM] chairs, I think it's taking it to that next level. It's really showing commitment that ... Aboriginal representation on the governance group is ... really important. It's about bringing people along as much as you can on that journey. So that deepening of cultural awareness.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, Service provider)¹⁸³

5.2.3. Mallee Community Voices and the Yarning Group

Mallee Community Voices and the Yarning Group are two additional sources of strategic guidance for HUM. Both groups include community members, leaders, and youth, and the latter is fully made up of Aboriginal people.¹⁸⁴ The **Mallee Community Voices group** which evolved from the Community leaders Table convened quarterly until 2024 to share their knowledge, lived experience, connections, ideas and

¹⁷⁸ Regenerative Communities. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Collaborative Governance Group Journey Map Report*.

¹⁷⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁸⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

¹⁸¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *On Country Participant Reflections*.

¹⁸² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*.

¹⁸³ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*.

¹⁸⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *The Yarning Group Participant Agreement*

skills to strengthen the collective efforts of HUM.¹⁸⁵ It was important support during the period of transition towards a fit for purpose Governance Group and the establishment of the Yarning Group.

“So, I think that’s a great thing that ... all our decisions, [are] coming from the community voices. And ensuring that it’s lead that way and especially ensuring that it’s culturally appropriate. That we’ve got our Elders on the Board ... We’re all able to speak freely and ... we’re making decisions as a team.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, speaking about the Mallee Community Voices and Yarning Group)¹⁸⁶

HUM acts on community voice. In response to previous Progress Mapping and Learning Circle feedback, HUM worked with community members to develop an Aboriginal Reference Group.¹⁸⁷ This group highlighted the need for HUM to have deeper and more authentic engagement with Aboriginal people and suggested that a local Aboriginal person be a part of the HUM Backbone Team. HUM worked with the Aboriginal Reference Group to develop the job description and recruit for an Aboriginal Social Impact Lead. Since early 2022, this person has played a vital role in the HUM Backbone Team and is responsible for facilitating the transition of the Aboriginal Reference Group to the Yarning Group, leading engagement activities, and deepening relationships with local Aboriginal community. By listening to and acting on community feedback regarding its own Backbone Team’s structure, HUM further reinforces its deep commitment to embedding the voice of Aboriginal people across the initiative.

The Yarning Group is made up of eight Aboriginal people, including two young people. This group¹⁸⁸:

- Centres the voice of Aboriginal people in the HUM collaboration.
- Provides cultural guidance to HUM initiatives such as the Red Cliffs Project, AOCTVR, CERR and the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot, and the ‘On Country’ cultural learning for the Collaborative Governance Group
- Leads decision-making in key areas for action and how HUM engages with Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal members of the Yarning Group shared the following about their experiences:

“HUM asks us lots of questions and listens to us. They get it and know what we are all about. They know that we are passionate and want to work with our community. They use their power to help us implement our ideas when we need support.” (Yarning Group member)¹⁸⁹

“It lets us get our voice out there and talk to everybody and get a level of understanding among everyone in the room. So, it’s not just youth talking to youth or Elders talking to Elders. You get that clear understanding throughout the whole room about what’s going on because we are the youth, and we know what’s going on with the younger generation today.” (Yarning Group member)¹⁹⁰

While the HUM Collaborative Governance model is still growing and evolving, it is prioritising transparent governance. It is achieving this through authentic engagement of community through each phase of

¹⁸⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Mallee Community Voices group*.

¹⁸⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*.

¹⁸⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Support and Action Plan 2021-22 Reflective report*.

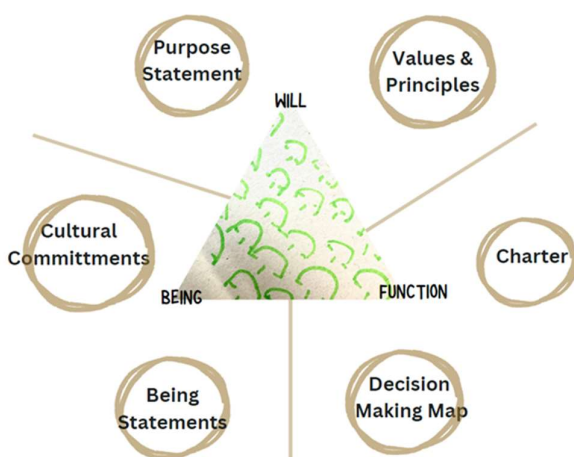
¹⁸⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *The Yarning Group Participant Agreement*.

¹⁸⁹ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

¹⁹⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

development and ensuring that community participation and leadership is enshrined in its governance design and processes.

5.3. What does HUM's transparent and locally led governance achieve?



Summary findings

While the new model is still in its early stages, there is evidence that the HUM Collaborative Governance model is contributing to the authentic engagement of community in the governance of HUM, and that there is a growing respect for Aboriginal culture and ways of working.

Broad community involvement in governance and decision-making leads to better outcomes for all of community.¹⁹¹ By bringing together sector representatives, local government, and community members, collaborative governance ensures that there is a shared understanding of local issues and proposed solutions.¹⁹² Community involvement in particular increases the governance group's accountability and legitimacy with community, as members trust that their local representatives have deep knowledge and lived experience of the strengths of and challenges faced by their community, and that they will act in the community's best interest.¹⁹³ It also offers valuable capacity-building opportunities to community members, becoming stronger advocate for their community's interest.¹⁹⁴ Governance group members improve their knowledge of how the different systems within their community operate and interact; this can activate more efficient and innovative resource sharing and build mutual respect for each other and a greater commitment towards a shared Community Aspiration.¹⁹⁵

While the HUM Collaborative Governance model is still in its early days, there are some emerging outcomes which indicate that the governance group is on the right track.

¹⁹¹ QCOSS. (2019). *Place-Based Guide Toolkit: Features of place-based approaches*.

¹⁹² QCOSS. (2019). *Place-Based Guide Toolkit: Features of place-based approaches*.

¹⁹³ Rijal, S. (2023). The Importance of Community Involvement in Public Management Planning and Decision-Making Processes.

¹⁹⁴ Rijal, S. (2023). The Importance of Community Involvement in Public Management Planning and Decision-Making Processes.

¹⁹⁵ Rijal, S. (2023). The Importance of Community Involvement in Public Management Planning and Decision-Making Processes.

5.3.1. Community is authentically represented and engaged in the governance of HUM

HUM's governance change project has provided a new governance model that prioritises participation and leadership of Aboriginal people.¹⁹⁶ This not only elevates the voices of Aboriginal people who are directly involved with the governance model, but it also provides community as a whole with a model of governance that they can see themselves reflected in. This strengthens HUM's trust and credibility with community, which is a critical step in shifting community's trust of local government and service providers.¹⁹⁷ The HUM governance model also empowers community to become active members in future decision-making processes regarding the design and delivery of community solutions.

"The work that has gone into reimagining the governance structure in the last couple of years has really laid the groundwork for the next steps and has created a greater sense of agency in the community. It has expanded that network of people who see themselves as in this work and who take responsibility for it, engage and want to be a part of that change. It's not your business owners, ... your service providers, [or] your heads of agencies, its actually your community who are sitting and engaging with that governance and making those decisions with the community." (Government stakeholder)¹⁹⁸

"I think there's a potential for these voices to be activated, if you like. There's always been some form of that, I guess, with parents and friends or parents' committees, but maybe this is...opening up people's perceptions of whose voices might be heard and who feels that their voice might be able to effect change." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, Community member)¹⁹⁹

"The structure Hands Up Mallee were creating, was [that] it would be governed by the people that were really impacted by [the issues], and [who are] part of the community, knowing that then the right decisions would be made." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, Service provider)²⁰⁰

5.3.2. Shared understanding of and respect for Aboriginal culture and ways of working is growing

Relationship building across community is a key determinant of systems change readiness,²⁰¹ and is essential to successful collaborative governance.²⁰² The process for redefining HUM's collaborative governance model has been grounded in relationship building and creating shared values across the group by bringing together both First Nations and Western ways of thinking, feeling and doing the work.²⁰³ Many of HUM's Collaborative Governance Group members have cited the benefits of this approach, and the group's non-Indigenous members in particular have discussed the greater

¹⁹⁶ Through having an Aboriginal Co-Chair of the Governance Group, regular grounding exercises and cultural learning opportunities, and two community-facing groups (Community Voices and Yarning Group).

¹⁹⁷ Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Ahmed, S. M., Anise, A., Azzahir, A., Baker, K. E., Cupito, A., Eder, M., Everette, T. D., Erwin, K., Felzien, M., Freeman, E., Gibbs, D., Greene-Moton, E., Hernández-Cancio, S., Hwang, A., Jones, F., Jones, G., Jones, M., Khodyakov, D., Michener, J. L., ... Zaldivar, R. (2022). Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement: A Conceptual Model to Advance Health Equity through Transformed Systems for Health: Organizing Committee for Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement in Health & Health Care Programs & Policies.

¹⁹⁸ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

¹⁹⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁰⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁰¹ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

²⁰² Weaver L. (2024). *Collaboration: The Act of Building Trust*.

²⁰³ TACSI. (2023). *Collaborative Governance for Hands Up Mallee (presentation)*.

appreciation they now hold for knowledge, values and culture of their Aboriginal colleagues and local community.

“Having a cultural priority, just in a very practical way, means that more people are understanding an indigenous way of being, and seeing, and interacting, and operating, which I just think, in a big picture sense, is just so vital.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)²⁰⁴

“We’re all very different people from different backgrounds and different perspectives. And there is a mutual respect of opinion and difference and lived experience that informs our decisions.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)²⁰⁵

“It was a totally new way of getting to know a group of people. [...] The generosity and courtesy that everybody showed each other allowed for that deep connection to be made straight away.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)²⁰⁶

This change within the Collaborative Governance Group is the first step in creating a shift in power dynamic between community, government and service providers, as Collaborative Governance Group members are positioned to influence other leaders and sectors.

Early Signs of Systems Change: Community leaders are adopting new ways of working and governance models

By bringing together leaders and representatives from across community, the HUM collective governance model is a vehicle for widely disseminating new approaches to governance. Collaborative Governance Group members are able to gain firsthand knowledge of a new ways of working and frameworks for a more equitable and inclusive approach to governance. Some members have learned the importance of deep engagement with community and data first, to establish a strong understanding of the issues before proposing solutions. Other members have reflected and acted on their ability to advocate for and empower Aboriginal and other community members in their own work and decision making. Members of HUM’s collaborative governance group are applying their learnings and experiences to their work in other sectors, creating ripples that will contribute to the broader systems-level changes required for Aboriginal representation and self-determination.

“[A State Government Department], for example, they stipulate the very first point, it’s First Nations first. And that’s to every organisation that they fund across the state. And it sounds great, but when you actually begin to think about it and start trying to implement it, it is taking a whole of organisational change, particularly in a town like Mildura, to start moving in that direction. So, the learnings I’m taking from HUM, are translating across beautifully to this organisation, and the direction that we’re beginning to head in.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)²⁰⁷

“A young [Aboriginal] person ... sits on the Mildura City Youth Council now. So, an Aboriginal young person sits there as a member and hearing those kinds of voices and everything. So having the Aboriginal youth force come to Council.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁰⁵ HUM Collaborative Governance Group (2023). *Journey Map Report 2023*

²⁰⁶ HUM Collaborative Governance Group (2023). *Journey Map Report 2023*

²⁰⁷ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁰⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

“So even that approach [of] slowing down, getting a real feel for the picture and what we’re trying to achieve has made me take some of that into Council. So, it’s not about steam rolling ahead and often we feel like we have to get runs on the boards very quickly. But the outcomes are so much better when we really assess the situation.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member, local government)²⁰⁹

Governance of HUM initiatives

Beyond its own governance, HUM extends its commitment to collaborative governance to all of its initiatives. Collaborative governance of HUM initiatives offers benefits similar to those of collaborative governance of the broader HUM collaboration: empowered community members, greater accountability and legitimacy with community, deeper knowledge and the strengths of and challenges faced by community and the various systems at play, and better initiative outcomes as a result.

In AOCTVR, local Elders formed an integral part of the leadership group responsible for the initiative’s strategy, particularly regarding where COVID-19 vaccination and testing clinics should be held, for how long, and best practices for engaging community. Elders advocated for their communities’ needs, shared their deep knowledge and lived experience with other AOCTVR collaborators, and spoke with community members directly to inform them about the clinics, answer any questions, and be a source of social and emotional support. Without the significant contributions made by the Elders, AOCTVR would likely have had far less success in delivering essential health services to communities most in need.

“...because they had the Elders involved who got a lot of the people there who probably wouldn’t have been reached before, because they went to the people...it did make a huge difference.” (Service provider, AOCTVR collaborator).²¹⁰

For more information, see the AOCTVR case study in Annex 3.

5.4. What factors catalyse or inhibit the impact of HUM’s work to achieve local and transparent governance?

Catalysts of HUM’s impact	Inhibitors of HUM’s impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared desire to put community first • Strong relationships and partnerships • A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership, community engagement and MEL skills • Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs – specifically co-design support with TACSI • Multi-year, flexible funding model • Operation autonomy that promotes accountability to community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindset shifts that only reach the individual level • Lack of readiness to embrace change

Detailed descriptions of the catalysts and inhibitors of HUM’s impact can be found in [Chapter 10](#).

²⁰⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²¹⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

6. MULTISECTOR COLLABORATION



Key findings

- The HUM collaboration is made up of a diverse group of individuals and organisations across all sectors of Mildura.
- HUM initiatives are successful because they bring together many organisations, local leaders, and community members to work towards shared goals. By jointly contributing effort, resourcing and advocacy to HUM initiatives, HUM partners are enabling community-led initiatives that may otherwise not be possible and ensuring that they are delivered in a way that meets community needs and addresses barriers to engagement.
- HUM partners build strong relationships across sectors and are able to learn new ways of working. These relationships and mindset shifts are key to adopting new approaches and practices and are the foundations for creating sustainable systems change.

6.1. What is multisector collaboration?

Multisector collaboration is a fundamental part of collective impact work. Multisector collaboration unites a wide range of community members, leaders and sectors under the Community Aspiration and enables the sharing of resources to create alignment and delivery of high-leverage activities that would otherwise be impossible or inefficient through individual actors.²¹¹ 'Resources' can mean human or financial capital and in-kind support, but also expertise, assessment and appetite for risk, time and most importantly lived experience. Multisector collaboration allows actors to play to their strengths; each person or organisation has their specific role to play in collective impact work so that collaborative efforts complement rather than compete with each other.²¹²

To be successful, multisector collaborations should be centred around community so that the collaboration is designing with (rather than for) community. It also requires that collaboration partners are aligned in their interests and there is a shared understanding of the Community Aspiration which the

²¹¹ Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective Impact*.

²¹² Weaver, L. (2024). Collaborative Leadership and Governance Series | Engaging across sectors.

collaboration is working to achieve, as well as each collaborator's role in the collaboration.²¹³ Finally, partners should have the internal capacity, structures, culture and leadership necessary to participate in a multisector collaboration.²¹⁴ Not all partners may be ready to engage in multisector collaboration or may be limited in their capacity to contribute. Stakeholder mapping to identify strengths and limitations can help a collective impact collaboration to address potential barriers early on, and there should be a focus on creating relationships and building trust so that all partners are willing to learn, grow and change together.²¹⁵

What HUM means by multisector collaboration ...

Multisector collaboration within HUM embodies a shared responsibility for community wellbeing extending beyond just service providers and government to include each part of the Mildura LGA community. For meaningful and lasting change to occur, it's essential community not only have a seat at the table, but also to have a voice in the conversation and a hand in the decisions being made. HUM is committed to making this happen, by bringing multi-sector stakeholders together to listen to community, understand the challenges they face, and to co-design and deliver initiatives with community that genuinely meet their needs.

6.2. How HUM facilitates multisector collaboration

Summary of findings

Mobilising resources, advocacy and collaborative efforts from a broad, cross-sector stakeholder base is one of the principal roles of the HUM Backbone Team. HUM is dedicated to embedding multisector collaboration across all of its work, both internal and external. Four examples are provided that demonstrate HUM's commitment to all dimensions of multisector collaboration.

6.2.1. Multisector collaboration in HUM structure

The HUM collaboration involves a diverse range of collaborative partners. However, partners' role, breadth and depth of involvement with HUM can vary by initiative and over time. Some partners and the Backbone Team are continuously involved in the HUM collaboration, while other organisations and individuals contribute to specific HUM initiatives that align with their purpose, activities, interests, and expertise. The HUM collaboration includes Aboriginal and CALD leaders, young people and community members; health, education and social service providers and not-for profit organisations; business owners, government representatives and local councillors and MPs from local, state, and Federal Government.

Multisector collaboration is a key feature of the HUM Collaborative Governance model, particularly within the Collaborative Governance Group which has representation from Aboriginal Elders, service providers, an arts organisation, local Council, and the HUM Backbone Team. Multisector collaboration has also supported the development of the HUM's MEL Framework, which involved 24 people across community,

²¹³ Gold, A. (2018, 16 April). 4 questions to ask & answer when engaging in cross-sector collaboration.

²¹⁴ Bialek, R. & Moran, J.W. (2020). *Cross-Sector Collaboration for Improving the Health of Communities: You Can't Do It Alone*.

²¹⁵ Bialek, R. & Moran, J.W. (2020). *Cross-Sector Collaboration for Improving the Health of Communities: You Can't Do It Alone*.

services and government working together to develop the HUM Journey of Change, key evaluation questions and measures.²¹⁶

6.2.2. Multisector collaboration in HUM initiatives

All HUM initiatives are underpinned by a multisectoral team of individuals and organisations. It is the collective effort, resources, and advocacy that HUM partners contribute which makes HUM initiatives viable and successful.

Below are four snapshots of HUM facilitating and leveraging collective effort, resourcing, and advocacy in its community-led work including during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Snapshot: Collective resourcing

HomeBase Hoops²¹⁷

First starting in 2019, HomeBase Hoops is a late-night basketball program for youth aged 10-18 in Mildura. It offers young people a safe space to socialise, play sport and have a meal. To deliver the program, the HUM Backbone Team assembled a diverse group of 14 actors all involved with the youth sector, including Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS), Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS), Youth Justice, Victoria Police, and more. With a limited budget, many resourcing challenges were identified early on. However, HUM's collaborative approach meant that each HUM partner involved was expected to contribute to the program in ways that played to their strengths and leveraged their available resources. For example:

- Organisations created flexible work arrangements so that their paid staff could help run the program.
- Schools host the basketball games in their sports venues for no cost.
- SCHS, MDAS and Christie Centre provide free transportation home for participants.
- Local Council ran a 'Boots for Hoops' shoe drive to collect basketball shoes for participants.

These contributions from collaborators allow the programs' financial budget to be allocated to removing other barriers to engagement such as purchasing uniforms and meals for participants, rather than rely on registration fees to cover those costs. As a result, the HomeBase Hoops program has reached over 400 young people in Mildura, many of whom are at elevated risk of involvement with the justice system or are already involved in the Youth Justice system.

Young people report having increased self-confidence and leadership skills as a result of their involvement with the program and collaborating service providers are changing the ways they approach youth engagement. The HomeBase Hoops program and its achievements would not be possible without the collaborative resourcing facilitated by the HUM Backbone Team.

²¹⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (2021, 24 November). Measuring change together.

²¹⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *HomeBase Hoops Evaluation Report*.

Snapshot: Collective responses during the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR)²¹⁸

CERR brought 18 HUM partners together to prototype and deliver an approach to distribute food parcels, activity packs, social and financial support, and medicines. By pooling their resources (knowledge, staffing, and assets), CERR partners were able to assist 3,354 residents in need between March and December 2020. This support included the provision of 899 food parcels, 171 activity packs, and 194 cross-agency referrals. For more information, see the [CERR Snapshot](#) and the [CERR evaluation report](#).

Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR)²¹⁹

In October 2021, HUM partners, along with the HUM Backbone Team launched AOCTVR to help close the vaccination gap in specific areas of the Mildura LGA that had low vaccination rates. Between October 9th and November 20th, 2021, AOCTVR organised 38 pop-up clinics, administering 1,294 COVID-19 vaccinations and 406 PCR tests. AOCTVR effectively reached under-vaccinated groups by utilising a community-led approach drawing on the knowledge and connections of local Aboriginal and CALD leaders, bringing vaccination clinics directly to the people, and offering a holistic service experience meeting the unique needs of AOCTVR's target cohorts. A total of 20 HUM partners including the HUM Backbone Team, community and health services, and local and State Government teams together with community leaders delivered AOCTVR. For more information see the AOCTVR case study in Annex 3.

Snapshot: Collective effort

Fun in the Park²²⁰

Building on the success and lessons learned from the AOCTVR, the Fun in the Park pilot aimed to further test the active outreach approach to meaningfully engage with and support the community.

Buxton Sobee Park, Hornsey Park and Flamingo Park were chosen as sites due to their success as AOCTVR locations. Many residents near these parks, particularly those living in public housing, face barriers to accessing services and affordable activities for their children. Between 14 March and 23 May 2022, Fun in the Park organised seven free community events featuring music, games, art, sports activities, and BBQs. Each event had a strong emphasis on equity, ensuring activities were accessible to all and designed in a way so that they would be easy to replicate at home for low or no cost. Attendance varied between 10 to 80 children and caregivers per Fun in the Park event.

The Fun in the Park pilot was a collaborative effort involving six HUM partners: the HUM Backbone Team, SCHS, Sunraysia Arts and Learning, and Mallee District Aboriginal Services, with funding from MRCC and support from the Mildura Lions Club.

Through their joint participation Fun in the Park partners improved their relationships with the community and each other resulting in strengthened trust. Collaboration partners also learned new things and have changed their thinking about what children and families want and need. For instance:

²¹⁸ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

²¹⁹ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

²²⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

"I have learnt that community was right. Families and children want these things in community ...I have learnt that community is hungry for things to do that are easy, accessible and that this is quite easy to make happen." (Service provider)²²¹

"It was a real eye-opener, coming from my previous role. I thought I knew community, but I knew stuff all." (Service provider)²²²

"I'm thinking differently about how to connect with community." (Service provider)²²³

These new insights are informing and changing the organisational practices and service delivery of the Fun in the Park partners. For example, Council Early Years Services conduct pop-ups for Maternal Child Health, kindergarten enrolment and CALD Best Start.²²⁴ The insights are also informing how community can be further engaged in HUM initiatives.

The Fun in the Park model was tested in Merbein the following year, which helped inform the Merbein Free Pool Access Pilot. For more information about Fun in the Parks, see the initiative [evaluation](#).

Snapshot: Collective advocacy

Northern Mallee AOD Alliance

Since 2018, the HUM Backbone Team has played a leading role in bringing an AOD Residential Rehabilitation Facility to Mildura LGA. The HUM Backbone Team is a member of the Northern Mallee AOD Alliance, along with MRCC, SCHS, MDAS, Victoria Police, Murray Primary Health Network, Odyssey House, Aboriginal Elders and Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). When the funding opportunity arose, the Northern Mallee AOD Alliance facilitated the procurement and development of the business case. They gathered evidence from community and secondary data sources that would create the foundations of their plan, wrote letters to representatives across all levels of government, and provided the essential communications and governance support to the coalition. As a result of this collective advocacy, in May 2022 the State Government announced a \$36 million dollar project to develop a 30 bed AOD residential withdrawal and rehabilitation facility in the Mildura LGA.

Community members involved in the advocacy work shared the following:

"We desperately needed a detox centre for our people, so we decided to do something about it. We said it's for the whole community including black and white [people] because I know very well that if we just said it was for Aboriginal people we wouldn't get it. We included the whole lot because there are non-Aboriginal people whose kids have committed suicide and [who] have had the same problems as our kids. So that's why we fought for this, and we got it. We advocated for it by going to the papers, ... the government departments here and the people that are supposed to stand up for us in government. And now we've got \$36 million." (Community member).²²⁵

"Hands Up Mallee's been really integral, we've worked with them, and [they] helped us, especially having those contacts in [government]." (Community member)²²⁶

²²¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

²²² Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

²²³ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

²²⁴ Mildura Rural City Council. (n.d.). *Early Years Outreach Service*.

²²⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²²⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

6.3. HUM's approach to multisector collaboration



Summary of findings

To promote effective multisector collaboration, the HUM Backbone Team ensures that all HUM initiatives are aligned to the Community Aspiration. The HUM Backbone Team also invests in establishing and nurturing cross-sector partnerships and fosters a learning culture that enables innovation and a willingness to embrace change.

6.3.1. All HUM initiatives are underpinned by the Community Aspiration

All HUM initiatives are informed and guided by the HUM [Journey of Change](#). Having a single common agenda across all projects supports multisector collaborators to better understand and align their work and resources to a shared set of values. It encourages community, government and providers to work together despite differences in perspectives or approaches because of a mutual trust that they are working towards the same goal.

“Community members who participated in [the 2022 Progress Mapping exercise] preferred the language of shared values, recognising that they did not feel they were totally aligned with the agenda of any agency, but strongly shared the values of HUM: promoting community self-determination and improvement of conditions and outcomes for people in the community.”²²⁷

“Working with HomeBase Hoops provides a different perspective and we can offer different perspectives because we work in different service areas, I suppose, but all with the common goal in mind to give young people the opportunities.” (Government stakeholder)²²⁸

6.3.2. HUM invests in building and maintaining relationships

In its goal to create an enabling environment for change, HUM focuses on establishing long-lasting and transformative relationships with community and across sectors. The HUM Backbone Team's ability to hold and manage multiple relationships has been cited as one of their most significant strengths,

²²⁷ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²²⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

speaking particularly to the capability of the team's leadership to maintain relationships in spite of conflicting priorities, limited resources, and historical conflicts between collaborating organisations and individuals.^{229,230} Those relationships are critical to the success of HUM, and require significant resourcing, time and personal investment to last.

"This work's all about relationships, good relationships, trusting relationships. I don't know how it would have worked had we come in cold together, but because we'd already all been working together... then we just cleared the path and just started to work together. That can only happen when you've got good relationships." (Service provider, reflecting on AOCTVR collaboration)²³¹

"We went to ChangeFest and I was like, [The] Hands Up Mallee [Backbone Team] have done what they always do very well, which is diplomatically leading everyone, but they actually need to be sometimes flying their own flag to say, if it wasn't for us, and if it wasn't for this relationship, this would never have happened." (Service provider)²³²

"To find out how big, like as widespread [The HUM Backbone Team] could have the reach because they used to attend our meetings, and then in that meeting they might be in contact with someone from Mallee Family Care or MDAS or the hospital or whatever. So, they made them connections, they can go and then deliver there and having that kind of footprint across community." (Community member)²³³

However, many of these relationships are held person-to-person, rather than between HUM partners at an organisational level, making them sensitive to changes in personnel, management or policies. There is a need for strong, formalised partnerships between the HUM Backbone Team and collaborating partners to ensure long-term commitment of resource sharing across sectors.²³⁴

"Because [The] Hands Up Mallee [Backbone Team] have got the reputation, because they've got a good leader, and a leader that's got contacts, and has got a really good rapport with a lot of people, she just got on the phone and made some phone calls, people were happy to help...but without the contacts, it's just not going to happen." (Service provider)²³⁵

"Formalising partnerships and working in collaboration with special organisations in Mildura. I think that's probably a really good move to do that and to have something like an MOU about how will work together and what everyone needs do and the benefits that come from that partnership." (Governance)²³⁶

²²⁹ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²³⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²³¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

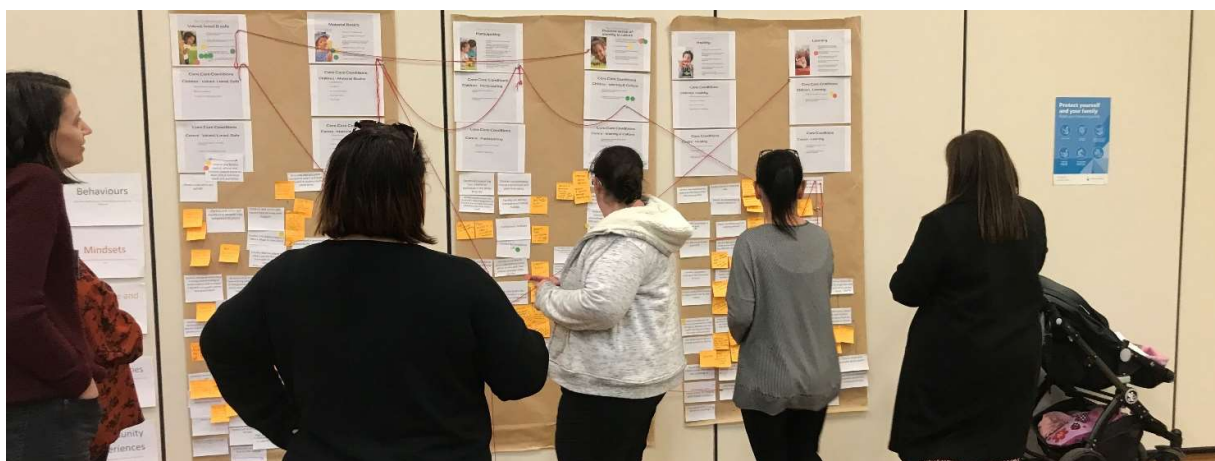
²³² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²³³ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²³⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²³⁵ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²³⁶ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.



6.3.3. HUM's learning culture supports multisector collaborators to experiment with new ways of working

The HUM Backbone Team consciously creates the conditions for collaboration, learning and change within the multisector partnerships that deliver HUM initiatives. Evaluation, learning and reflection activities are an integral part of each HUM initiative, and directly involve HUM partners.²³⁷ Collaborators have the space, time and support to deeply reflect on and learn from their experiences on each HUM initiative. These processes help to sustain changes in perspectives and mindsets which can later on translate to changes in practices and policies within individuals, organisations and eventually whole systems.²³⁸ They also provide a rigorous evidence base for demonstrating the effectiveness of HUM's collaborative approach to co-design and delivery of initiatives, which strengthens the confidence they have in the collaborations' ability to deliver a successful program. HUM partners are more inclined to try new approaches to collaboration, resource sharing and service delivery because there is a lower risk of failure.²³⁹ This safe learning environment helps in part to encourage multisector partners to fully engage with HUM's ways of working.

"Building a sense of everyone learning together: families, services and [the HUM Backbone Team] all acknowledged that they were learning together and were encouraged to embrace 'being in the grey'. This mindset was highlighted as really critical to supporting the co-design process, and key to the testing and trying of ideas." (Key learnings from Red Cliffs Project on what a safe space means)²⁴⁰

"Catherine, was like, 'I really need you to see this,' and I was like, 'Okay.' I was looking, looking, looking. There was a comment about me directly, being a positive attributor of the program. It's really nice to know that kids are taking away something so specific as a certain person that is involved in the program. For us, we're like, yes, let's do this thing for the kids, let's make sure it runs for them, let's make sure they have a good night." (Service provider, reflecting on reading the HomeBase Hoops evaluation)²⁴¹

"Forming a [Fun in the Parks] pilot partnership with established partners and resources enabled the pilot partnership team to successfully deliver the pilot. The established trust and collaboration

²³⁷ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee MEL Framework*.

²³⁸ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

²³⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Evaluation Report*.

²⁴⁰ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

²⁴¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

history between partners created a safe learning environment and the support to be adaptive and flexible to meet the community's needs.” (Key learnings from Fun in the Parks evaluation)²⁴²

6.4. What does multisector collaboration achieve?

Summary of findings

As a result of multisector collaboration, HUM has been able to facilitate several community-based initiatives that otherwise would likely not have found the necessary resources and support. Multisector collaboration contributes to better program outcomes and creates opportunities for relationship building across sectors and trying new ways of working. These shifts in relationships and mindsets are critical conditions for systems change.



6.4.1. Multisector collaboration enables community-led change initiatives

By taking a collaborative approach, the HUM Collaboration has helped to facilitate several [community-led initiatives](#). These initiatives would likely not have been possible without the collective resourcing and advocacy that underpin them. This is in part due to system constraints that prohibit one single collaborator from funding an entire initiative; often these initiatives have originated from community, are not mandated, and may be complex in their delivery design to account for potential barriers to engagement (rather than, for example, an external program that a single organisation is funded to deliver).²⁴³ Therefore, for a community-led initiative to be established and be successful, it requires innovative resourcing solutions and a strong base of multiple actors advocating for its need. HomeBase

²⁴² Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Evaluation Report*.

²⁴³ For example, HomeBase Hoops receives funding for the physical materials required to run the program, but the human capital and resources to address barriers to engagement (such as transport and venue hire fees) are in-kind contributions made by collaboration partners. Without this additional resource collaboration, HomeBase Hoops would not be able to reach as many young people, particularly those who could benefit the most. Source: HomeBase Hoops Community Action Plan.

and HomeBase Hoops, Fun in the Parks, Red Cliffs Pools pilot, CERR and AOCTVR are all examples of HUM initiatives that harnessed the power of multisector collaboration to deliver programs with positive impacts for community.

“What makes this successful is a group of people working together, none of this is ever because of one person, and it’s a group of passionate people with all their different skills and their expertise that they bring together to make it happen.” (Service provider, discussing HomeBase Hoops’ success)²⁴⁴

6.4.2. Community-led initiatives are stronger because of multisector collaboration

Multisector collaboration has been identified as a key enabler of successful outcomes across multiple HUM initiatives.²⁴⁵ This is particularly evident in the two emergency responses, which required significant coordination of activities, staff and resources across the Mildura LGA. The successful coordination of so many critical elements was dependent on the collaboration of HUM partners across community, government and service providers. Without effective communication, trusting relationships, and a shared vision, these initiatives would likely have not achieved the outcomes they did.

“Trust and relationships made innovating and learning possible and was key to relational community engagement and delivery of food packages. Most participants stated that it was the existing trust and relationships (established before the emergency response) that was the main enabling factor for CERR effectiveness and success.”²⁴⁶

“It was nearly the best experience I’ve ever had ... For 16 years I was with Council and my whole work is around working with partners and in that community engagement and development space. [The AOCTVR] ... was a very unique relationship ... It just worked. Everyone played their role; everyone was essential in the delivery of how we delivered it and the outcomes that we got.” (Interviewee, reflecting on AOCTVR collaboration)²⁴⁷

“Services [that participated in the Red Cliffs Pools pilot] felt that there was good collaboration between the various stakeholders, and joining the event served as a great opportunity to work with young people and families and collaborate with Hands Up Mallee. They noted that everyone involved had a clear vision of what their roles were, which contributed to the occasion being very successful.”²⁴⁸

“HomeBase, and HomeBase Hoops, and [the] Family and Child Hub [...] that was true collective impact, true collaboration, true understanding that the only way you get change is by being able to work together and not thinking that you know how to do everything.” (Service provider)²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁴⁵ Multisector collaboration has specifically been identified in the CERR, AOCTVR and Red Cliffs Pools Pilot evaluations. It has also been identified in interviews with HomeBase Hoops stakeholders.

²⁴⁶ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

²⁴⁷ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing & Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

²⁴⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Red Cliffs Pools Pilot Evaluation*.

²⁴⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

6.4.3. Multisector collaboration strengthens relationships between sectors and with community

Through their experiences of co-designing, planning and delivering initiatives together, multisector collaboration strengthens relationships between the HUM partners involved. Relationships forged and strengthened within HUM initiatives can endure beyond program boundaries, allowing for early contact and a more streamlined referral process between service providers and community, knowledge sharing and mutual growth, and new, stronger, and more effective collaborations on future initiatives. The impact of this approach is evident in the HomeBase Hoops, Red Cliffs project, and AOCTVR case studies,²⁵⁰ where improved relationships and strengthened collaborations consistently emerge as key outcomes. Each initiative highlights how fostering connections and working together has been integral to their success.

- **HomeBase Hoops** has helped improve relationships between young people and service providers involved in the late-night basketball program. As a result of their collaboration on HomeBase Hoops, young people are now more likely to reach out to the providers they know and have trusting relationships with when they are in need of support.
- **The Red Cliffs Project** has seen an improvement in relationships between community, Council and service providers involved in the co-design project. These relationships were a significant contributing factor to the success of the community's proposal for the Integrated Early Years Hub, including securing \$6 million dollars to develop the centre.

"I think it does definitely help with that collaboration because young people can recognise you ... you're from Hoops or from [the] school holiday program or from something else or in the community. And they're quite happy to share, happy that they're in a safe place and that I'll listen, or people will listen to their voice because youth don't get heard a great deal so they feel confident and safe that they can actually give their opinion and feedback and stuff like that." (Service provider)²⁵¹

"I'll tell you what it is, it's [The HUM Backbone Team] that bridge between community and Council because if we'd just gone to Council it wouldn't have worked in the same way, but Hands Up Mallee in the way that they are so respectful and collaborative, and interested and are then able to take that back to Council, then there's that bridge, is, I believe, what's going to make or break a lot of the projects that we want to roll out with" (Red Cliffs Project team)²⁵²



²⁵⁰ Case studies can be found in Annexes 1-3.

²⁵¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁵² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

- **AOCTVR** led to strengthened connections between stakeholders that enabled ongoing collaboration and engagement after the COVID-19 response was wrapped up. Examples of this include the delivery of Fun in the Parks, sectors inviting cross-sector colleagues to participate in committees, and other instances of knowledge-sharing, alignment of activities, and new joint initiatives.

“In terms of the organisations’ relationships, they were strengthened unbelievably ... When you come together on [AOCTVR], you ... share a bond over what happened [which] you can take forward ... I think this really strengthened ... the trust between organisations [which] can be used moving forward into other projects and things, so that’s good.”
(Government stakeholder)²⁵³

Building relationships is key to creating sustained systems change, as these relationships help unlock and facilitate new ways of understanding issues, designing solutions, and activating resources in alignment with a single common agenda.²⁵⁴



6.4.4. Multisector collaboration contributes to shifts in mindsets and practices

Finally, multisector collaboration offers a significant opportunity for learning and mindset shifts amongst participating individuals and organisations. Through their involvement in HUM they learn how other sectors and systems operate and interact, are exposed to new ways of working, get to test out new approaches, and learn from failures. These mindset shifts and changes in practices are essential to activating systems-level changes.²⁵⁵

There is compelling evidence that individual HUM partners are actively transferring the skills, knowledge, and ways of working gained through their engagement in HUM back to their organisations and sectors, both within the Mildura LGA and at a state-level.

“One of the things that I think is also a big shift because of Hands Up Mallee is where the funder - who for us is often the State Government or the Commonwealth government – says, ‘this is the model,’ or ‘this is what we want,’ and we say, ‘we’d love to partner, but we have a commitment to our community about these ways of working, and to each other as a collaborative, not just the broader community.’ So, pushing back and advocating for a model that better suits our needs.”
(Government stakeholder)²⁵⁶

“[After the Fun in the Park events] I think there was the regular check-ins, and also the regular reflection after every event... Which I think was great, because sometimes services forget to – that’s where a lot of the information’s coming from, from what people are picking up and listening to. [...] I have just started doing my own reflection and evaluation after [social support program].”

²⁵³ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

²⁵⁴ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

²⁵⁵ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

²⁵⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

So, is that parent needing this particular thing, or how can this be changed, how can we change this particular situation? So just looking at ways, well how could we do that better, and then bringing it up to management. I think once they hear it enough, sometimes they can't unhear it, because then they're like, well, how can we make this different.” (Service provider, reflecting on their learning experience with Fun in the Park and adapting reflection practices to their primary work).²⁵⁷

Early signs of systems change

Changes in how resources are shared and used

Across nearly all HUM initiatives, HUM partners are pooling and sharing monetary and staffing resources, infrastructure, data and other assets. Examples of this include both COVID-19 outreach activities (CERR and AOCTVR), HomeBase Hoops, Fun in the Park, and the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot. Service providers who have historically worked in silos are now taking a collaborative approach to addressing community needs beyond their involvement with HUM, as evidenced with the example below.

- **Service providers collaborating on mall walkthroughs.** When HomeBase Hoops collaborators identified the need for youth engagement outside of the late-night basketball program, they decided to come together and initiate ‘mall walkthroughs’ – walking through the local mall area to meet and chat with young people where they were hanging out. With each provider donating a bit of their time and energy, they have collaboratively strengthened their relationships with young people while also addressing the issue of youth crime in Mildura CBD. For more information, see the HomeBase Hoops case study in Annex 2.

“I got together with Vic Pol and some other agencies to coordinate what we called a co-patrol or a walk through. Then through that, [the HUM Backbone Team] got onboard, and we actually filtered a lot of those kids that didn't really have much to do on a Friday night, through to HomeBase Hoops. Instead of them congregating down the mall, causing issues, having police contact, they were occupying their time with HomeBase Hoops. Then we could ensure they were fed, they had fun, and they got home safely.” (Service provider)²⁵⁸

- **Mildura Food Hub.** A significant outcome of CERR was the transformation of the initiative's central food hub into a funded regional food hub. Prior to CERR, there was no central food hub in Mildura. Led by SMECC and with support of the MRCC and other service providers, HUM partners collectively applied for and secured a Victorian Government grant of \$650,000 to scale up their emergency response food hub into the Mildura Food Hub.²⁵⁹ In FY 2024 alone, the hub provided over 130,000 meals to individuals, students and families, at an estimated value of \$458,000.²⁶⁰ The Mildura Food Hub is an example of self-directed multisector collaboration that has encouraged increased state funding in locally designed solutions.

The Mildura Food Hub is expected to have significant ongoing impact on the Mildura region and has broadened the scope of support SMECC will offer to the community and towards food security. Several

²⁵⁷ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁵⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

²⁵⁹ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

²⁶⁰ Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council. (2024, 30 August). *Nourishing our community: A year of progress at the Emergency Food Relief Hub*.

evaluation participants cited that the opportunity and extended funding would not have happened if not for the partnerships and food distribution systems formed during CERR.²⁶¹

Given that multisector collaboration and collective resourcing is integral to HUM's ways of working, this embedded and consistent approach has enabled these instances of collaborative resourcing. In some cases, external factors have also contributed to the shift in resourcing practices, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for fast and urgent responses in the case of both COVID-19 outreach activities.



6.5. What factors catalyse or inhibit the impact of HUM's work to achieve multisector collaboration?

Catalysts of HUM's impact	Inhibitors of HUM's impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community, government and service providers who are open to doing things differently Strong relationships and partnerships A deep understanding of community systems and their impact – specifically through systems mapping A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership, community engagement and MEL skills Multi-year, flexible funding model 	<p>Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding and policy constraints Resource allocation (especially time and staff) Accountability requirements, including mandatory reporting on KPIs that do not measure outcomes and prevent accountability to the Mildura LGA community. Sufficient and suitable data Data sharing restrictions Competition for funding Mindset shifts that only reach the individual level

Detailed descriptions of the catalysts and inhibitors of HUM's impact can be found in [Chapter 10](#).

²⁶¹ Clear Horizon. (2021). COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report.

7. GROW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE - USE DATA, STORIES AND RESEARCH TO INFORM DECISIONS AND ACTIONS



Key findings

- HUM is guided by a MEL Framework based on a common agenda. HUM's overarching framework, alongside nested and mini-MEL plans ensures that all HUM activities and initiatives are underpinned by measurement, evaluation and learning.
- HUM makes evidence-based decisions using local data, relevant research, and community expertise.
- HUM grows the skills and knowledge of the collective to effectively undertake place-based systems change work.
- HUM has developed comprehensive internal and external evaluations, contributed to significant research and won awards for the collective's commitment to outstanding collaboration in social impact measurement.

7.1. What is meant by growing skills and knowledge and using data, stories and research to inform decisions and action?

Evaluating systems change and place-based approaches is a challenging task, due to the complexity of such approaches, the number of stakeholders involved, the range of changes initiated and the long-term nature of the work.²⁶² Continual investment in growing the skills and knowledge of the collective impact initiatives includes integrating and applying existing research and frameworks to inform decisions and actions. This includes applying approaches such as the Water of Systems Change framework, which is an actionable model for systems change makers with six conditions: policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics and mental models.²⁶³

A central principle of evaluating systems change and place-based approaches includes strategic learning. Through this learning, Backbones seek to grow the skills and knowledge of the collective.

“Systems change interventions are essentially a collective problem-solving process. They require leaders, often a network of diverse and multi-sector leaders, to collaborate intensively as they work in the ambiguity and tangled web of complex challenges. Given there is no formula for shifting a system, we need a continual process of inquiring into and testing assumptions about what will work next in an everchanging context. And this means placing evidence-based learning at the centre of the work”²⁶⁴

Strategic learning through data and research means referring to useful and targeted evidence that comes from practice (for example, data collected through the work of HUM) and from research pertaining to systems change more broadly. Setting up effective and contextually relevant data and measurement systems is essential to develop effective strategies for transformative community change. Using data, stories and research is a powerful tool to motivate community collectives to grow their skills and knowledge and inform decision making processes.^{265 266}

What HUM means by growing skills and knowledge and using data, stories and research...

As a systems change initiative with a place-based approach to working in partnership with the community, local service providers, agencies and three levels of government to improve outcomes in the Mildura region, continual growth in skills and knowledge is central to HUM's ways of working. This involves an ongoing and iterative commitment across the collaboration to both grow but also share skills, knowledge and learning as HUM matures and contributes to capacity building across the sector.

HUM makes evidence informed decisions to address the social issues that are being experienced in the Mildura LGA. Like a three-legged stool, addressing complex and entrenched social issues requires consideration of community insights and expertise, local data and stories, and research and evidence. HUM takes this three-legged stool approach to inform all its initiatives. Government data is brought to the community transparently and is used alongside community collected data and stories and relevant

²⁶² Clear Horizon Academy. (2024). Evaluating systems change and place-based approaches.

²⁶³ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

²⁶⁴ Clear Horizon Academy. (2024). *Evaluating systems change and place-based approaches*.

²⁶⁵ Rodrigues, M., and Fisher, S., (2017). *Collective Impact: A Literature Review*.

²⁶⁶ Waltzer, N., Weaver, L. & McGuire, C. (2016) *Collective Impact Approaches and Community Development*.

research to help understand what is happening in the community and inform the focus of its collective impact work. There is a shared commitment to MEL across all of HUM's initiatives.

7.2. How HUM grows the skills and knowledge of the collective

Summary of findings

The overarching HUM MEL Framework, co-designed by community and based on the Community Aspiration supports the growth of the skills and knowledge of the collective. The development of Nested MEL plans and the use of participatory approaches to research and data collection ensures everyone can be involved in HUM's UMEL activities. The HUM collective makes decisions utilising the three-legged stool approach, combining local data, relevant research and community voice.

When HUM became a Victorian pilot site for SPSP in July 2020, an assessment using SPSP's Progress Mapping Tool recommended the development of an overarching MEL Framework. During a UMEL Learning Circle in December 2020 it was emphasised that addressing complex and entrenched social issues requires a balanced approach, akin to a three-legged stool, considering community insights and expertise, data and stories, and research evidence. As a result of this process, HUM recognised the need for a robust framework to evaluate its progress, identify signs of systems change and early instances of impact, and guide its Action Teams in strategic planning. This framework would be crucial for capturing strategic learnings and ensuring effective measurement and evaluation of their collective impact. To achieve this, HUM identified a need for:²⁶⁷

- An overarching Theory of Change with high level outcomes.
- A robust framework to guide and its measurement, evaluation, learning, and reporting work.
- A MEL enabling group to support this work
- Consultancy expertise to facilitate the co-design process of these frameworks and support MEL capacity building of the HUM Backbone Team and partners.

²⁶⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Building the overarching MEL Framework*.



7.2.1. Co-designing HUM's MEL framework

In mid-2021 the HUM Backbone Team engaged Clear Horizon to support HUM's journey to co-build a MEL Framework to guide HUM's MEL approach across a 15-year timeline. Between August 2021 and February 2022, **24 HUM stakeholders** worked together with the support of Clear Horizon to **co-design HUM's overarching MEL Framework (2022-2037)**. Five members of the group were Aboriginal, bringing with them critical understandings of culture and place which was foundational to ensuring the Framework is culturally appropriate.²⁶⁸

"Aboriginal people need to be able to see themselves in this story, and these destinations for their children." (Aboriginal stakeholder)²⁶⁹

Figure 6. HUM's MEL Framework development timeline²⁷⁰



²⁶⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Building the overarching MEL Framework*.

²⁶⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (2021). *Measuring change together*.

²⁷⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Building the overarching MEL Framework*.

This Framework works to support learning and improvement, helps HUM to achieve and demonstrate its outcomes and enables HUM to build an evidence base for its ways of working. Key components of this framework include HUM's Journey of Change (aka Theory of Change), Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs), and its overarching MEL approach.

Figure 7. HUM MEL Approach



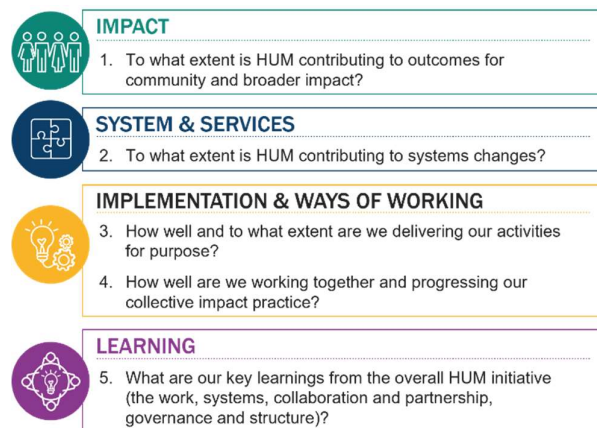
"[The MEL Framework] will help create a story from the heart of the work, showing why we are on this journey together." (HUM backbone team member)²⁷¹

While HUM's overarching MEL Framework is designed to measure, evaluate and learn from HUM's broad strategies over fifteen years, to ensure these long-term goals are met, monitoring work along the way that will contribute to systems changes and early instances of impact, requires nested and mini-MEL plans (mini MELs). These are designed to link the shorter-term goals of specific HUM projects, programs, initiatives and actions to the overarching MEL Framework.²⁷²

7.2.2. Developing Nested MEL plans and mini-MELs

In late 2022 HUM, with the support of Clear Horizon co-designed nested MEL plans for HUM's work focused on 0-8 and 9-18-year-olds. This process had a strong focus on capacity building and worked with over 29 people, including organisational representatives, parents/carers and young people, to co-design Journeys of Change and Key Evaluation Questions for HUM focused work with 0–8-year-olds and 9-18-year-olds and their families. Alongside these nested MELs, each individual HUM initiative is also guided by a mini-MEL plan and supported by an evaluation.²⁷³ These mini-MELs are designed to link

Figure 8. HUM Key Evaluation Questions



²⁷¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2021). Measuring change together.

²⁷² Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Building the overarching MEL Framework*.

²⁷³ For example, there are a series of both internally and externally produced evaluations of various HUM initiatives publicly available on the HUM website <https://www.handsupmallee.com/evaluations>

shorter-term goals within specific projects to the long-term goals of the overarching MEL Framework.²⁷⁴ Some of these evaluations are undertaken by the HUM Backbone Team and others by independent evaluators. By weaving the findings from a series of mini-MELs into the over-arching MEL Framework, HUM is building richer stories and deeper insights into what change is being achieved by the initiative, and how this change links and connects to the broader HUM Journey of Change.

When we did the evaluation of the Pools Pilot and it landed at Council, it sparked attention and added gravitas to the work. People could see more deeply what we were trying to do and what we were trying to shift, and they got excited about the ripple effects.” (HUM backbone team member)²⁷⁵

7.2.3. HUM uses participatory approaches to data collection and analysis

A core component of HUM’s UMEL approach is its use of participatory evaluation methods, tools and processes. Many of HUM’s internal evaluations include the usage of techniques such as journey mapping, yarning circles, most significant change and other approaches which can be co-led and co-created with community, including young people.²⁷⁶

“We tried to use tools that allow people to participate in the evaluation, ... [and] hear [their] voice come all the way through. It’s [also] easier to write things in their language ... because they’re actually helping, do the evaluation.” (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)²⁷⁷

7.2.4. HUM’s Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Team

The Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Team which sits within the HUM governance model played a central role in supporting the UMEL activities of the collaboration. A key focus of the team has been developing and overseeing the implementation of the overarching and nested MEL Frameworks and related KEQs, and studying and elevating learnings from evaluations. This approach enhances the line of sight across the collaboration, informs decision-making, and builds the skills of HUM partners in ethical, effective, and participatory measurement, evaluation, and learning.²⁷⁸ The team has been in recess during the periods of the Department of Social Services external evaluation and ChangeFest24. With the advent of shared decision making, local solutions and building the HUM data platform, there will be a review of the purpose and role of the HUM MEL Team.

Snapshot: Evaluating a collaborative emergency response

The focus of HUM’s reporting is to identify systems changes and instances of impacts for children, youth, and families alongside demonstrating how HUM’s way of working and learnings contributed to these results. For example, in 2021 HUM collaborators delivered AOCTVR, which supported residents facing major barriers to access PCR tests and COVID-19 vaccinations. To ensure maximum learning, HUM partners co-designed the KEQs for the independent evaluation and participated in the sensemaking process of the preliminary findings. HUM partners also co-created a video to capture and share their learnings.

²⁷⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Why create mini-MELs as part of your measurement, evaluation and learning strategy.*

²⁷⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report.*

²⁷⁶ See HUM (2022) *HomeBase Hoops Evaluation Report*, HUM (2022) *Red Cliffs Pool Pilot Evaluation*, Clear Horizon (2021) *Rich Home Learning Environments Evaluation Report* for examples of participatory evaluation.

²⁷⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report.*

²⁷⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Governance Structure.*

HUM is actively using the findings of this evaluation and their other work to make evidence-based decisions about future priorities. One idea that was prototyped is 'Fun in the Park'. To ensure strong learning and insights, a mini-MEL plan including a Journey of Change and learning questions were developed and multiple components of the idea were tested using short feedback loops with all key findings shared back to community and used to advocate for future funding. HUM has now embedded the practice of creating mini-MELs for all of its work all of which feed back into the over-arching MEL Framework

7.2.5. Ethics Framework

Supporting ethical and robust monitoring activities, HUM established an **Ethics, Privacy and Safety (EPS) Framework**²⁷⁹ which guides how HUM and all its functions have agreed to work. This framework further embeds the trust and transparency needed to work with community and facilitates increased agency and relationships for, and with, the community by provision and experience of ethical and safe interactions. HUM is currently considering how it may update the EPS Framework to include a guide to inform and support Aboriginal Data Sovereignty.

7.2.6. HUM makes decisions using evidence from local data, relevant research, and the expertise of community

HUM's strategic priorities and initiatives are all informed by and developed through what HUM calls its three-legged stool model, using a combination of:

- **Community voice:** Local, lived understandings of what children and families in the Mildura community need to thrive.
- **Local data:** Information from sources that help HUM understand what is happening in the community. The community's strengths and the challenges they are facing.
- **Current research:** Up-to-date research gives HUM an idea of the best actions to achieve change in the community.

"What's grown up along this work is a really strengthened conviction that we need to plan things like three legs of the stool. The community expertise, what the data says, what the research says."
(HUM Backbone Team member)²⁸⁰

7.2.7. HUM's understanding of its work is shaped by community voice and local data

HUM has engaged community members across all its internal development initiatives, including the development of its Collaborative Governance Model and Nested MEL frameworks. In addition to listening to community to understand the Mildura LGA better, HUM engages community in research activities to understand how the collaboration is doing and what it can improve. Alongside working with community to grow the skills, knowledge and expertise of the collective, HUM also works with a diverse range of stakeholders, utilising local data, research and stories from community to inform its future focus and initiatives.

²⁷⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Ethics, privacy and safety framework*.

²⁸⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

Snapshot: Progress Mapping workshops and Learning Circles

In 2021, 2022 and 2023, the HUM Backbone Team undertook Progress Mapping workshops²⁸¹ ²⁸² and Learning Circles²⁸³ with various HUM stakeholders, including members of the HUM Backbone Team, service providers, government representatives and community members. In 2023, for example over six yarning sessions, took place, with 32 stakeholders, including members of the Collaborative Governance and Yarning Groups, State and Federal Government, Local Government and service providers, and community members contributing to the process. Participants were asked to reflect on what HUM has achieved so far, the system challenges HUM faces, and areas it should focus on to progress its ways of working in the future.

The findings from these activities and input from participants have been captured in HUM's Progress Mapping Reports and informed their 2021-2022-23, and 2024-25 Action and Support Plans²⁸⁴, which set out the priorities that HUM planned to address over its following years.

Integrating community voice with local data allows HUM to holistically understand and therefore respond to challenges and trends across the region. Government data is being shared transparently with community and used alongside local data collected through partner services and through HUM MEL activities to illuminate the systems and context of what is happening locally and inform action to drive change. Examples of types of local data used to inform initiatives include local Australian Early Years Development Census (AEDC) data demonstrating childhood developmental vulnerability in Red Cliffs, data from local services such as the police to determine youth behaviour and encounters with the justice system as well as using local ABS data to help track and measure systems change.

"The deep desire for democratising data, and the sharing of data. Like that is something I think is awesome. And they're [HUM] working very hard to gather it. Allow for cultural ownership, but at the same time, seeing the value in sharing it, and not keeping it within siloed organisations, and how powerful that data can be for change, for positive change. Even though it can be capturing some of the worst elements of our little community, if you don't know it, you can't fix it.... And like for HUM, just looking at the kids that are running around our mall, being able to identify that there's that issue, being able to identify some of those kids, and then a safe way of encouraging them into playing basketball on a Friday night where they can get a free feed, and then the community can start seeing that as a positive – you know, intervention. Both from the kids that are participating in that, and then hopefully, the reduction in crime at that time period that it takes place" (HUM governance member)²⁸⁵

With a strong emphasis on community voice in combination with qualitative data, HUM incorporates publicly available Federal, State, and local data to help paint a broad picture and develop a robust understanding of the Mildura LGA's community story.

Snapshot: The role of AEDC data in the Red Cliffs Project

Within the Red Cliffs Project, sharing and utilising local data was central to its development. In the early phases of the co-design process with families, the Red Cliffs Project team was introduced to the **AEDC**

²⁸¹ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²⁸² Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²⁸³ A precursor to the progress mapping report

²⁸⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Support and Action Plan 2021-22 Reflective report*.

²⁸⁵ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

data. This dataset compares key indicators of school readiness in Red Cliffs' children with those across the entire Mildura LGA. Captured every three years, the AEDC data revealed a troubling trend for Red Cliffs: an increasing proportion of children not developmentally ready for school, unlike other areas in the Mildura LGA.

This data was presented by the Backbone Team and discussed alongside parents' lived experiences, expertise, and perspectives to build a shared understanding of what it might take to foster rich home learning environments for children in Red Cliffs. By combining local data with community expertise, the initiative created an enabling environment supporting the project team to co-design a series of rapid iterative prototypes. Essential to this process was building connections between service providers and parents/carers before introducing the data and adopting a strengths-based approach when sharing and reflecting on the AEDC data and statistics. This approach highlighted what families were already doing to support their children's developmental readiness for school.²⁸⁶ Collectively, this created a safe, supportive, and enabling environment focused on locally driven solutions to improve access to rich home learning environments for children in Red Cliffs and applied the three-legged stool approach of combining community expertise, local data and key research.

For more information about the Red Cliffs Project, see the case study in Annex 1.

7.2.8. Data sharing

HUM has participated in two separate data exchange pilots at both state and federal levels of government. The collaboration has received some non-publicly available data from both State and Federal Government.²⁸⁷ The data exchange pilot with the State Government, who shared information and links to publicly available data revealed that sharing data between governments and place-based initiatives is a complex endeavour.²⁸⁸ While this was a short-term pilot it was a useful process for the learnings of the HUM collective.

In 2023-2024, HUM participated in series of workshops to develop a Data Capability Framework and a Data Needs and Capability Action Plan for the Department of Social Services which was facilitated by the Nexus Foundation Partner.^{289 290}

"At the moment we're not getting the numbers (quantitative data) from government we need to help us make data driven decisions." (Service provider)²⁹¹

7.2.9. Relevant research is harnessed to support HUM's systems change agenda

Recognising the importance of the third leg of the stool, research and evidence, in supporting complex place-based change is central to HUM's unique ways of working. Here the collaboration is focused on fostering supportive and generative partnerships with researchers and institutions in the field.

Snapshot: Research Partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health

An ongoing research partnership with the Centre for Community Children Health within the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Dr Tim Moore brings research expertise and support to all early years

²⁸⁶ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

²⁸⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²⁸⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Community data reform pilot: Hands Up Mallee insights*.

²⁸⁹ Nexus Foundation Partner. (n.d.). *Creating a Place-Based Data Framework: Processes and First Phase Outcomes*.

²⁹⁰ McCosker, A., Shaw, F., Yao, X. & Albury, K. (2022). *A Data Capability Framework for the Not-for-Profit Sector*.

²⁹¹ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

projects and initiatives that HUM is involved in across the Mildura LGA. As part of this partnership Dr Tim Moore provided research field advice for community members and service providers participating in the co-design of the Family Child Hub. Learnings from research pertaining to the importance of the first 1000 days of life have informed HUM's work with community in mapping the first 1000 days.²⁹²

The work of the HUM 0-8 Action teams has also been guided by the Core Care Conditions Framework which was developed by Dr Tim Moore at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and shared with HUM in the partnership. These Core Care Conditions are the conditions that research has identified as needing to be in place for parents and carers to be able to meet the needs of their children and families and achieve the developmental outcomes sought for them.²⁹³

7.3. HUM grows the skills and knowledge of the collective throughout the learning process

Summary of findings

Embedding UMEL activities and storytelling for systems change across all areas of work HUM grows the skills and knowledge of the collective, and shares findings beyond the Mildura LGA.

By embedding UMEL and storytelling for systems change within all its initiatives and activities, HUM actively grows the skills, knowledge and learning of the collective. Community members are either active participants or co-collaborators in evaluation design, delivery and the sensemaking of findings. This learning mindset, and deep commitment to the three-legged stool approach to learning through change demonstrates the depth and breadth of HUM's commitment to continual growth, learning and improvement across all areas of its work.

"Youth (mainly Indigenous kids) led the data collection and analysis and presented their findings back to services, CEOs and the Mayor at the Arts Mildura They shared their findings about what's working and what should be changed, and they listened and then acted on it! An example is now we have free access for kids to outdoor pools across the Mildura LGA." (Yarning group)²⁹⁴

"We tried to use tools that allow people to participate in the evaluation, that while you're hearing your voice come through all the way through, so and it's easier to write things in their language if you're picking up on their language because they're actually helping, do the evaluation." (HUM Governance Group)²⁹⁵

²⁹² Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Systems Maps*.

²⁹³ Moore, T.G. (2021). *Core care conditions for children and families: Implications for integrated child and family services*.

²⁹⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

²⁹⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.



Snapshot: Red Cliffs Project Journey of Change co-design

In the initial phases of the co-design process for the Red Cliffs Project, the project team gathered ideas informed by their own experiences and AEDC data, recognising their potential for enhancing rich home learning environments in Red Cliffs. Four ideas were selected for testing. For each idea, the project team developed a Story of Change, outlining the short, medium, and long-term changes expected for families, services, and the community as a result of its successful implementation. These individual Stories of Change were then integrated into an overarching Story of Change for the entire Red Cliffs Project.

By adopting a strengths-based approach when introducing local data and developing Stories of Change, the team helped families think deeply about their connections to the community and each other. This approach ensured that the process was accessible and that measures were meaningful and relevant for the whole project team.



Figure 9. Red Cliffs Project Overarching Story of Change

7.3.1. Storytelling for Systems Change

Sharing learnings and growing skills, capabilities and knowledge is a core component of HUM's approach to systems change. Because of the unique characteristics of place-based work, understanding and measuring change within and across initiatives is challenging. Using story-based approaches to help measure and understand progress in place-based work is critical to the field. The HUM backbone has contributed to various articles, reports and newsletters sharing the impact and role of storytelling for systems change.²⁹⁶

Two core members of the HUM Backbone Team worked closely and collaboratively with the Dusseldorp Forum and Centre for Public Impact, to understand, share and explore how stories can be used more effectively to communicate the impact of community-led systems change work. The Centre for Public Impact, Dusseldorp Forum and HUM spoke with people in communities that are the focus of place-based initiative to understand the role they saw stories playing in their work. This expertise was combined with the insights of storytelling experts (people who create, teach and practice the art of storytelling) and the knowledge of First Nations peoples as the world's original storytellers. All of this knowledge and expertise was captured in the report titled *Storytelling for Systems Change*²⁹⁷ which has revealed the important insights about the role of storytelling in communicating the impact of place-based work.

²⁹⁶ Snow, T., et al. (2021). *Storytelling for Systems Change: Insights from the Field*.

²⁹⁷ Snow, T., et al. (2021). *Storytelling for Systems Change: Insights from the Field*.

“Stories can be used not just to evaluate, understand and showcase change that is occurring in a place, but can also act as a force for change in their own right.”²⁹⁸

This collaborative report which drew together conversations and insights from across the globe has been received with great interest and positivity. More than 40 people and organisations from around the world have reached out to share their experience of using storytelling to celebrate and support their work, and to share lessons and insights learned.²⁹⁹ HUM’s contribution to this report, and the role of a Backbone Team member as co-author demonstrates the commitment to sharing learnings, skills and knowledge internationally as the role of place-based work continues to enmesh itself into the Australian policy landscape.

As a leader in sharing learnings and best practices for place-based systems change, HUM together with Clear Horizon won the SIMNA award in 2022 in the category ‘Outstanding collaboration in social impact measurement’. This award highlights how HUM’s UMEL practices are nationally recognised and celebrated as leading the way in co-design approaches to UMEL.³⁰⁰

Early signs of systems change: HUM’s commitment to sharing skills, knowledge and using evaluation is extending beyond the Mildura LGA.

Place-based change as a national movement is gaining traction; there are currently over 300 place-based initiatives operating at a local, state and federal level.³⁰¹ HUM has made many contributions to the movement beyond the bounds of Mildura LGA, by continually sharing their learnings and experiences about this work through a variety of channels and mediums for multiple audiences. Their knowledge sharing at state and federal **public presentations**, contributions to **thought leadership publications**, **advocacy for policy changes** and **responses to knowledge sharing requests** from other communities are reaching and influencing decision makers at local, state and federal levels (see Chapter 9 for more information).

“Government partners also expressed gratitude to HUM for their generosity and openness to sharing their learning with other collective impact initiatives, furthering the agenda nationally and changing the way people report to government.”³⁰²

Significantly, HUM’s UMEL approach has been recognised in the Victorian Public Service Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning for Place-Based Approaches Toolkit (2023) as a best practice example, highlighting the unique ways in which HUM utilises guiding principles to inform all its UMEL work.³⁰³

As a SPSP site and member of the SPSP Backbone Alliance Group, HUM’s experiences and learnings contribute significantly to the federal collective impact initiative’s agenda and strategy. Shared learnings from HUM and other SPSP sites, along with their strong advocacy, have played a role in strategic decisions regarding the initiative’s model, including its plans for scaling, financial investment and how funds are distributed to communities, and decision-making powers and processes between communities

²⁹⁸ Snow, T., et al. (2022) *Places, systems and stories: the role of storytelling in place-based initiatives*, Australian Quarterly

²⁹⁹ Snow, T., et al. (2022) *Places, systems and stories: the role of storytelling in place-based initiatives*, Australian Quarterly

³⁰⁰ SIMNA. (2022). SIMNA award announcement.

³⁰¹ Collaboration for Impact. (2024). *The honourable Dr Jim Chalmers MP Speech ChangeFest24*. Figure shared by Dr. Jim Chalmers at ChangeFest24, in Mildura.

³⁰² Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁰³ ANZSOG & Victoria State Government (2023). *Place-based approaches: A guide for the Victorian public service*.

and government.³⁰⁴ In this way, HUM holds a position of influence in the state of the national place-based change movement; this has ripple effects for the six new SPSP sites as well as for other initiatives at state and local levels who draw upon SPSP resources and learnings for their own practices and ways of working.³⁰⁵

7.4. What does growing skills and knowledge and using data, stories and research to inform decisions and actions achieve?

Summary of findings

The HUM overarching and nested MEL frameworks are informing decisions and actions across the HUM collaboration, and embedding a culture of continual learning, reflection and progress mapping has grown HUM's ways of working and governance structures.

7.4.1. A strong foundation of UMEL is significantly informing and influencing the decisions and actions of HUM

The overarching and nested MEL Frameworks have already influenced HUM's work significantly. UMEL is now incorporated across all HUM activities including its strategy and project co-design and implementation processes. Additionally, it drives HUM's decision-making and has significantly improved the way HUM is able to demonstrate impact to diverse audiences. As the collaboration matures, the focus of HUM's UMEL activities and reporting has shifted away from capturing outputs and an emphasis on population changes, towards systems changes and instances of impact for children, youth and families as outlined in HUM's overarching and Nested Journeys of Change.

7.4.2. Embedding learning, reflection and progress mapping has contributed to growing HUM's ways of working and its Collaborative Governance Model

During the Progress Mapping workshops and Learning Circle in 2022, Aboriginal people voiced their needs for ensuring cultural safety, building trust, fostering a strong foundation for two-way learning, and enabling sustainable change. This was taken on board by the HUM Backbone Team, who took swift action to integrate Aboriginal representation throughout the governance structure. This included the appointment of an Aboriginal co-chair for the HUM Collaborative Governance Group, the co-design and appointment of an identified Aboriginal position for the Backbone Team, and creation of a Yarning Group consisting of Elders and Aboriginal youth.

For more information about community engagement in HUM's governance model, see [Chapter 5](#).

Early signs of systems change

Growing the skills and knowledge of the HUM collaboration is contributing to shifts in mindsets and practices across the service sector in Mildura

³⁰⁴ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact. (2022). *Disrupting Disadvantage: Early evidence of the impact of community-led change*.

³⁰⁵ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Alliance Group (2022). *Pre-budget 2023/2024 submission from the Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Alliance Group*.

Contributing to publications, being cited as best practice examples of place-based systems change, and collaborating with researchers, institutions and organisations to build the skills and knowledge of the collective all demonstrates the impact HUM is achieving through this enabler for change.

The strong evidence based three-legged stool approach modelled by HUM is contributing to local mindset shifts

HUM's unique approach to growing the skills and knowledge of the collaboration, and capacities of all HUM partners to consider the unique ways in which to utilise a strong evidence base to understand, evaluate and inform future decision-making is contributing to early evidence of mindset shifts in how local services identify, address and respond to issues and challenges in the community.

"Pretty much every issue that I know about that HUM deals with is a community-based issue and an issue that community has raised to HUM through HUM's interaction with the community at such a grassroots level. And we're always very quick to try and jump to the solution or the so-called solution and it often doesn't work or it's a band aid approach. Whereas from my dealings with HUM, it's very much evidence-based or community-based and really delving in and getting as much information across the board. And its personal stories, sometimes it's not necessarily statistic-based because when you pull one issue up, so many other issues are attached to it. HUM is leading that way in helping us understand how to use data and community voice." (Government stakeholder)³⁰⁶

7.5. What factors catalyse or inhibit the impact of HUM's work to achieve grow their skills and knowledge?

Catalysts of HUM's impact	Inhibitors of HUM's impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership, community engagement and MEL skills• A deep understanding of community systems and their impact• Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs• Multi-year, flexible funding model• Operation autonomy that promotes accountability to community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sufficient and suitable data• Data sharing restrictions³⁰⁷• A lack of understanding of collective impact work and the role of the HUM Backbone Team• Misalignment in our shared understanding of what is worth measuring³⁰⁸

Detailed descriptions of the catalysts and inhibitors of HUM's impact can be found in [Chapter 10](#).

³⁰⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

³⁰⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁰⁸ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

8. WORK ON ACTIVITIES THAT DELIVER HIGH LEVELS OF IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY ASPIRATION



Key findings

- HUM invests in strategies and actions that are expected to have the biggest possible impact on the community.
- The Community Aspiration provides a strong foundation and guide to determine the work of the collaboration and adopts a three-legged stool approach: combining research, local data, and community voice.
- All of HUM's high leverage activities deliver direct impact against the Community Aspiration, ensuring the focus and scope of HUM's activities remain aligned with the vision and approach of the collective.

8.1. What are high leverage activities?

Collective impact collaborations are oftentimes working towards solving complex social issues, but only have finite resourcing. Therefore, strategic decisions are necessary when choosing where to focus efforts, with a combination of two types of activities recommended:

- **Tactical projects** – Activities and pilots that build collaborative capacity, drive immediate impact and learnings, and create and help to maintain momentum. Tactical projects help collaborators retain excitement while they are working on their other activities that take much longer to achieve results.³⁰⁹
- **High leverage activities** – Activities that are expected to have the biggest possible impact on a common agenda towards achieving **systems change**. This is where a collective impact initiative should focus the bulk of its collaborative efforts.³¹⁰

For this chapter, the focus is on the second type of activity: high leverage activities.

³⁰⁹ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). Collective Impact 3.0.

³¹⁰ Graham, K. (2016). *Collective Impact in the CYAP context*.

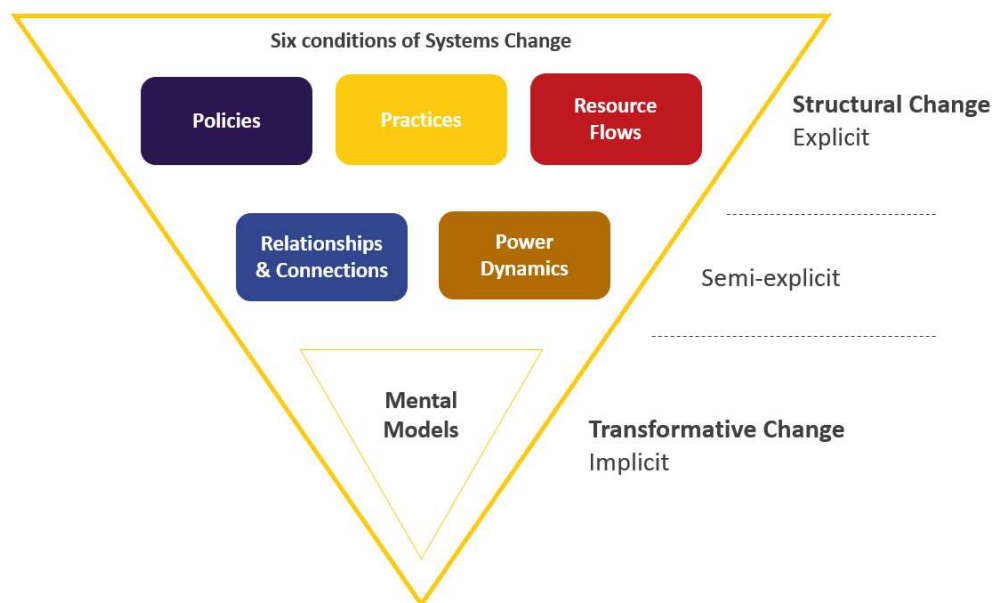
A **system** can be defined as a set of elements that are interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern or behaviour over time.³¹¹ To change systems one needs to understand the interdependent **conditions** that play a crucial role in holding a complex social problem in place.³¹² The six conditions of systems change, as understood through the waters of systems change model help to demonstrate how high leverage activities can contribute to both structural and transformative change.

These six conditions are:³¹³

- **Policies:** government, institutional and organisational rules, regulations, and priorities that guide people's and organisations' actions.
- **Practices:** the activities put in place by institutions, coalitions, networks, and other entities to improve social and environmental outcomes as well as the procedures, guidelines, and informal shared habits that guide this work.
- **Resource flows:** the way how money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets such as infrastructure are allocated and distributed.
- **Relationships & connections:** the quality of the connections and communication that occurs among different stakeholders in the system, especially among those with differing histories, values, and viewpoints.
- **Power Dynamics:** the distribution of decision-making power, authority, and formal as well as informal influence among individuals and organisations.
- **Mental Models (or mindsets):** the habits of thought; deeply held beliefs, assumptions, and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence the way we think, what we do, and how we talk.

As highlighted in the figure below, some of these conditions are explicit whereas others are semi-explicit or implicit:

Figure 10. Six conditions of systems change³¹⁴



³¹¹ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

³¹² Wright, D. & Meadows, D.H. (2009). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*.

³¹³ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

³¹⁴ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

While systems change conditions can be independently defined, measured, and targeted for change, it's important to understand they are also intertwined and interact with each other. This interaction can be positive, for example when a change in mindsets triggers policy change (e.g. the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Australia). Or negative, such as when poor relationships between important actors in the system prevent the scaling of effective solutions (e.g. when distrust between the community and police in a particular suburb prevents the scaling of a successful crime prevention program which achieved great outcomes elsewhere). Additionally, because conditions that are less explicit are often more challenging to address, collective impact initiatives must ensure they invest sufficient time and resources into changing existing relationships, power dynamics, and most importantly the underlying mental models that keep their complex social problems in place. Further, on top of the external dynamics of systems change, collective impact partners must also look at their own behaviour:

*"Any organisation's ability to create change externally is constrained by its own internal policies, practices, and resources, its relationships and power imbalances, and the tacit assumptions of its board and staff"*³¹⁵

What HUM means by activities that deliver high levels of impact on the Common Agenda

High-leverage activities refer to the HUM strategies and initiatives, including community voice, multi-sector collaboration and co-design projects, advocacy efforts, and research that are expected to shift the conditions for systems change and have the greatest impact on the Community Aspiration. These activities are delivered by the HUM Backbone Team in partnership with HUM partners, including community members across the Mildura LGA. HUM's Community Aspiration sits at the heart of all of HUM's collective impact work and is a key driver behind decisions on where to focus and direct the collective's energy.

8.2. How does HUM's work on high leverage activities support the Community Aspiration?

Summary of findings

HUM's Community Aspiration guides the direction and decisions regarding its high leverage activities, ensuring that all HUM work aligns with its Community Aspiration.

8.2.1. HUM's Community Aspiration

Through early [Community Conversations](#) in 2016 and 2017, HUM developed both an **evaluation paper**³¹⁶ and **innovation roadmap**,³¹⁷ which played a pivotal role in shaping the Hands Up Mallee Common Agenda,³¹⁸ now known as **HUM's Community Aspiration**.³¹⁹

This Community Aspiration was further refined through extensive consultation with HUM's partner organisations over a two-year period. Following this comprehensive consultation phase, HUM partners

³¹⁵ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*.

³¹⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (2017). *Community Conversations Evaluation Paper*.

³¹⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2017). *Community Conversations Innovation Roadmap*.

³¹⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2018). *Directions Paper: Our Common Agenda and Next Moves*.

³¹⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *What HUM is working towards*

agreed to adopt a collective impact approach to address the complex issues affecting the Mildura LGA community.³²⁰ This process is thoroughly documented in the Hands Up Malle Directions Paper (2016).³²¹

Additionally, in line with the three-legged stool approach, HUM drew further direction from leading collective impact and place-based systems change practitioners and research to ensure that its Community Aspiration aligns with best practices in the broader field.

Figure 11. HUM Community Aspiration



All HUM initiatives and activities align with the Community Aspiration, guiding decision-making and choices on where to best focus attention to ensure the highest leverage activities are prioritised. Ensuring that initiatives fit within HUM's scope: **prevention and early intervention** and direct HUM towards systems change, rather than siloed band-aid solutions.

Applying a shared approach: **people supporting people and strengthening families** ensures all HUM partners are engaged in activities that contribute to the same Community Aspiration. A shared approach means working with community members, service providers, organisations and community groups.

Finally, defining the focus: the first 1000 days (pre-conception to 2 years), best start to life (0 to 8 years), Young people matter (9 to 14 years) and tread your own path (15 to 25 years) keeps the collaboration on track and ensures continuous effort through high leverage activities within these key focus areas of impact.

As one of the five components of the collective impact approach, HUM's Community Aspiration ensures:

*"All participants have a common agenda for change, including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agree upon actions."*³²²

8.2.2. High leverage activities

HUM concentrates its efforts on high leverage activities that are expected to shift the **six conditions for systems change**, including mindsets, relationships/connections, power dynamics, resource flows, practices and policies to progress systems change and advance its Community Aspiration.

HUM's overarching and nested MEL Frameworks and its Collaborative Governance processes, along with its annual Progress Mapping and Learning Circles, collectively provide a robust evidence-based

³²⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *About HUM*.

³²¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2018). *Directions Paper: Our Common Agenda and Next Moves*.

³²² Hands Up Mallee. (2018). *Directions Paper: Our Common Agenda and Next Moves*.

approach through which HUM continually directs its attention, advocacy and resourcing towards the most impactful activities.

Key examples of HUM's high leverage activities are discussed in detail in the three case studies linked to this report,³²³ as well as in the initiative snapshots featured throughout this report, including those referencing the Red Cliffs Pools Pilot, Fun in the Park, HUM's advocacy work regarding the AOD Withdrawal and Rehabilitation Facility, and the Family and Child Hub in Mildura.

High leverage activities are not bound to programs, but also encompass ways of working such as HUM's approach to undertaking co-design and UMEL. The latter includes HUM's Overarching and Nested MEL Frameworks, and the many external and internal evaluations of its work such as AOCTVR, Rich Home Learning Environment (The Red Cliffs Project), Fun in the Park, and the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot. In addition to being exemplars of HUM's commitment to learning, HUM evaluations investigate whether the evaluated initiative contributed to shifts in systems change conditions. For example:

Shift in power dynamics: *"The agency of young people was increased by their experience of co-designing activities, opportunity to demonstrate leadership capabilities, and demonstrate positive role modelling. This was built throughout the pilot as they were involved in planning, promoting and running event activities, particularly those which required supporting younger children. Additionally young co-designers were critical in the evaluation process proving key feedback used in this report, and for them to directly report about the pilot at an upcoming Council Forum".³²⁴*

Shift in practice: *"Part of the commitment by the service partners when commencing this pilot was 'to show up in a different way: informal, fun, friendly, curious, brave and with a low-key service presence' ... Service partners consistently modelled different ways of 'doing' throughout the pilot. When reflecting on learnings and changes, service partners shared that they felt this commitment was necessary. It was difficult for some to change their usual practice, but the pilot was an opportunity to change through doing."³²⁵*

Shift in mindset: *"Several AOCTVR stakeholders held more traditional views on service delivery and the prospect of investing significant resources to reach what appeared to be a small cohort and having to change their service delivery approach made some people feel uneasy initially. However, the HUM Backbone Team encouraged new partners, particularly those in the health sector, to adopt new ways of thinking. They did this by helping them understand and see why AOCTVR was important: the communities within the Mildura LGA that were most vulnerable and likely to be hardest hit by COVID-19 had the least access to vaccines."³²⁶*

8.2.3. High leverage activities mapped against the community aspiration

The table below provides an overview of HUM's high leverage initiatives mapped against the Community Aspiration. It illustrates how the collaboration directs its attention, resources and advocacy towards activities that align with and drive impact in accordance with the Community Aspiration, which lies at the heart of HUM's collective impact approach.

³²³ The three case studies – Red Cliffs Project, HomeBase Hoops, and AOCTVR – can be found in Annexes 1-3.

³²⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Red Cliffs Pools Pilot Evaluation*.

³²⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). *Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation*.

³²⁶ Jongsma, F., O'Connor, K. & Gregg-Rowan, C. (2024). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response Case Study*.

Table 6. Mapping HUM's key high leverage activities against the Community Aspiration

Start date	Initiative	Scope	Focus	Shared approach
2016 - 2017	Community Conversations including Project Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2018	Mapping the first 1000 days (pre-conception to 2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	The first 1000 days (pre-conception to 2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2018	HomeBase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	Young people matter (9-14 years) Tread your own path (15-25 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers
2018	Youth Action Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	Young people matter (9-14 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers
2019	Mapping the best start to life (3 to 8 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	The best start to life (3-8 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2019	The Voices of Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	The best start to life (3-8 years) Young people matter (9-14 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members
2019	HomeBase Hoops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention 	Young people matter (9-14 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers
2020	Discovery Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2020	CERR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers
2021	Red Cliffs Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First 1000 days (pre-conception to 2 years) The best start to life (3-8 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2021	HUM MEL Framework co-design process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2021	AOCTVR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2021	Red Cliffs Connected events pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2022	Nested MEL Framework 0-8 co-design process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First 1000 days (pre-conception to 2 years) The best start to life (3-8 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers

Start date	Initiative	Scope	Focus	Shared approach
2022	Nested MEL Framework 9-18 co-design process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people matter (9-14 years) Tread your own path (15-25 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2022	Fun in the Park pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers
2022	Co-design of the Family Child Hub Mildura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First 1000 days (pre-conception to 2 years) The best start to life (3-8 years) Young people matter (9-14 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2022	HUM Governance model co-design process		All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2018	Mallee Community Voices		All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members
2022	Yarning Group		All	
2022	Red Cliffs Pool Pilot & Merbein Pool Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Early intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people matter (9-14 years) Tread your own path (15-25 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members Service providers
2024	ChangeFest24 Hosts		All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers



8.3. What does working on high leverage activities achieve?

Summary of findings

A focus on high leverage activities across HUM's collaborative initiatives is shifting the conditions for systems change within HUM Partner organisations and the Mildura LGA community more broadly.

Focusing efforts on high leverage activities is central to HUM's approach and is closely aligned with both the Community Aspiration and HUM's Theory of Change. The impact of HUM's high leverage activities is explored in detail in Chapters 4-7 of this report. In addition to the achievements highlighted through HUM's [authentic engagement of community](#), [transparent and locally led governance](#), [multisector collaboration](#), and [MEL skills and evidence-informed decision making](#), concentrating on high leverage activities also contributes to the following:

8.3.1. Systems built around the wellbeing of children and the common needs of families have a prevention focus

In line with the Community Aspiration's scope of prevention and early intervention, HUM's high leverage activities are focused on childhood wellbeing and are developed through considered community engagement and co-design approaches.

Setting the conditions for systems change within the community

Co-design processes used by HUM to prototype and pilot promising activity and program concepts such as the Red Cliffs Project, HomeBase Hoops, and AOCTVR are establishing the foundations for systems change within the community, with a preventative focus on the future wellbeing of children and families. These co-design projects and pilots are highly collaborative and are instrumental in changing mindsets, power dynamics, and practices.³²⁷

"HUM has been creating safer connected communities where all lives matter as well as linking in community agencies to work together to create safer connected communities with more action in the early years space." (Service provider)³²⁸

The HUM Backbone Team's ability to steer and direct the focus of the collaboration, by bringing partners together and supporting them to align with the Community Aspiration and focus on high leverage activities with an intergenerational focus and lens for prevention, is setting the conditions for systems change within the broader community. This uniquely positions HUM to have systemic impact, leading to long-term change for families and children across the Mildura LGA.

"Sometimes it takes a long time to move that dial, but if [organisations and funders] do have the confidence to move forward over a long period of time, that's when they can put true initiatives in place that actually do that change over many generations [...] which HUM very much does. Because that's the only way, from my point of view, the only way you make change is to prevent it in the first place." (Mayor, MRCC)³²⁹

³²⁷ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³²⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation survey*.

³²⁹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

8.4. What factors catalyse or inhibit the impact of HUM’s work to achieve progress towards the Community Aspiration?

Catalysts of HUM’s impact	Inhibitors of HUM’s impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared desire to put community first • Community, government and service providers who are open to doing things differently • Strong relationships and partnerships • A deep understanding of community systems and their impact • A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership skills and is well resourced • Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs • Multi-year, flexible funding model • Operation autonomy that promotes accountability to community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding constraints • Resource allocation (especially time and staff) • Accountability requirements, including mandatory reporting on KPIs that do not measure outcomes and prevent accountability to the Mildura LGA community. • Data sharing restrictions • Competition for funding • A lack of readiness to embrace change • Mindset shifts that only reach the individual level • A lack of understanding of collective impact work and the role of the HUM Backbone Team • Misalignment in our shared understanding of what is worth measuring

Detailed descriptions of the catalysts and inhibitors of HUM’s impact can be found in [Chapter 10](#).



9. REPORT ON PROGRESS AND SHARE OUR LEARNINGS FOR CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT AND AWARENESS



Key findings

- The HUM Backbone Team consistently shares its progress, learnings and ways of working with its diverse audiences and partners: the local community, service providers, all levels of government, other place-based change initiatives and a global collective impact community.
- The HUM Backbone Team reports on progress and shares HUM's learnings through various means and mediums from evaluation reports, newsletters, videos, contributions to literature, events and conferences. These diverse ways of sharing ensure the work of the collective is accessible for all audiences.
- Through sharing learnings and committing to continual improvement and awareness, HUM is contributing to changes beyond the Mildura LGA.

9.1. What is reporting on progress and sharing learning for continual improvement and awareness?

One of the five key condition for collective impact is continuous communication and inclusive community engagement.^{330 331} **Continuous communication** between all stakeholders of a collective impact initiative is essential to help build relationships and trust, and it enhances collaboration. It also fosters a common vocabulary, shared objectives, and better cross-sector coordination, motivating partners to co-learn and work together towards a common agenda.³³² Partners need sustained, ongoing communication, joint meetings and collaboration to strengthen their collaborative efforts and recognise the shared motivation behind aligning their diverse efforts.³³³

³³⁰ Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact.

³³¹ Cabaj, M. & Weaver, L. (2016). Collective Impact 3.0.

³³² Henne, B. (2014). *Continuous communication is essential in collaborative partnerships*.

³³³ Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact.

“Developing a sense of collaboration and information sharing can cause participating organisations to change their behaviour in ways that ultimately lead to longer lasting solutions or better outcomes. The organisations go through a learning process when they see the overall issues from a common perspective... Continually sharing information through feedback loops increases the likelihood that strategies will bring about successful outcomes. This collective learning process can then lead to modified behaviours more likely to successfully address the issues with longer lasting outcomes.”³³⁴

For collective impact initiatives to succeed they must consistently share learnings and continuously reinforce their commitment to a continuous cycle of sharing and reporting on systems change.³³⁵

What HUM means by sharing progress and learnings...

Sharing progress and learnings for continual improvement and awareness is central to HUM's collective impact approach. Closely linked to community engagement, sharing learnings for HUM means engaging the community, both locally and nationally in their place-based initiatives and advocacy work through hosting and contributing to place-based systems change gatherings, evaluation reports and learning reports, newsletters, blogs, social media, presentations, workshops and contribution to publications.

9.2. How HUM shares its learnings and report on progress for continual improvement and awareness



Summary of findings

The HUM Backbone Team share learnings and report of progress through hosting and contributing to gatherings and conferences, evaluation reports, community newsletters, social media, publications and national presentations.

The HUM Backbone Team actively shares its activities, progress, ways of working, learnings, and impact with diverse audiences across the Mildura LGA, Victoria, Australia, and the world. Place-based systems change as a national movement is gathering traction, with over 300 place-based initiatives operating at a

³³⁴ Waltzer, N., Weaver, L., & McGuire, C. (2016) Collective Impact Approaches and Community Development.

³³⁵ Cheuy, S. (2022). Learning from 10 Years of Collective Impact.

local, state and federal level in Australia.³³⁶ HUM is committed to sharing its learnings and reporting on its progress within this movement, while also raising awareness of the collective impact approach and HUM's ways of working to those new to systems change work.

9.2.1. Hosting and contributing to place-based systems change gathering

Snapshot: ChangeFest24

In 2024, the HUM Backbone Team and Connected Beginnings Mildura, alongside HUM partners, community, and local Elders hosted ChangeFest24 (CF24) in Mildura. [ChangeFest](#) is a nation-wide movement for place-based change in Australia.³³⁷ Since 2018, the movement has gathered for five country-wide events, where people and partners engaged in the growing field of place-based change come together to re-imagine and influence how change happens through community-led collaborative action. As a mature collective impact backbone, members of the HUM Backbone Team have attended and presented at previous ChangeFests in 2018, 2019 and 2023 and subsequently hosted CF24.

CF24 provided an opportunity for the HUM Backbone Team and Connected Beginnings to partner with the national ChangeFest convener, Collaboration for Impact, to develop and deliver CF24. Over three days in March, the Mildura community hosted over 480 visitors on the banks of the Murray River. The gathering included pre-event cultural gatherings for visiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander participants, site visits, local arts and culture, and opportunities for local organisations, services and businesses to present and participate, all under the strong cultural guidance and authority of Latji Latji and Barkindji Elders.

The HUM Backbone Team, HUM partners, and local community members contributed to a suite of presentations and activities at CF24, including:

- **A Welcome to Country ceremony** led by the local Aboriginal community.
- **Panel discussions** led by the HUM Backbone Team, Connected Beginnings Mildura, MRCC, SMECC, Mallee Family Care, Christie Centre and Sunraysia Arts and Learning.
- **Site visits** to Mildura Youth Space (led by HomeBase) and Family and Child Hub Mildura (led by SCHS).
- **Mildura Corroboree** - The Ngiiwa Yarna Committee, in partnership with MRCC invited all CF24 participants to attend the biannual Corroboree, a celebration of the history, culture and achievements of local Aboriginal people including dance competitions, music, and food.
- **Campfire** - A special evening session led by local Aboriginal community, inviting people to connect to Country through storytelling and journeying across the landscape
- **Pre event excursion** - Visiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were invited by the local Aboriginal community to attend a trip to Lake Mungo.

"This community has the infrastructure to pull off such a high standard of ChangeFest...fantastic place by the river with lots of different venues, accommodation and food outlets. HUM are very well connected,

³³⁶ Collaboration for Impact. (2024). *The honourable Dr Jim Chalmers MP Speech ChangeFest24*. Figure shared by Dr. Jim Chalmers.

³³⁷ ChangeFest. (2024). *About ChangeFest*.

and this was totally obvious. ChangeFest takes leadership and HUM is a strong hands-on leader.” (Philanthropy)³³⁸

“I loved how the Mildura community demonstrated shared leadership with Aboriginal Elders and other Australians. And how a local community can connect the local to the state and national, through their hosting.” (HUM Backbone Team)³³⁹

Key program highlights according to CF24 participants included the showcasing of the local context, capabilities, and culture of Mildura. Participants felt welcomed by the community and deeply appreciated the opportunity to listen to their stories and learn from their experiences.³⁴⁰ There is evidence of CF24 positively contributing to the place-based change movement beyond the gathering. Over 80% of participants surveyed indicating that they have made changes to their ways of working as a result of attending CF24, with over half stating that CF24 has contributed to a shift in their understanding of their role in community-led change.³⁴¹

“I think we often work in silos, and we have to try to justify why we do place based work, and so ChangeFest has been really useful in that it has helped me connect to other people who are doing similar work.” (Researcher)³⁴²

CF24 also included a guest presentation from the Honourable Treasurer Dr. Jim Chalmers, who visited Mildura and spoke about the significance and importance of place-based, community led change, celebrating the achievements of HUM across the Mildura LGA.

While attending CF24, Dr. Chalmers was invited by HUM to visit HomeBase, where he shared his reflections on the impact of learning about the progress, learnings and achievements of the collaboration.

“What you see at HomeBase is a really inspiring example of how youth can be connected and supported when community leads change.” (Hon. Treasurer Dr. Jim Chalmers)³⁴³

9.2.2. HUM evaluation reports, learning blogs and ‘what our community has to say’

For transparency and to support learning across organisations and with people who live and work in the Mildura LGA, representatives from State and Federal Government, Members of Parliament, as well as people involved or interested in place-based systems change, HUM publishes its evaluation reports on the HUM website. The website currently hosts **ten evaluation reports**, including **three** evaluations undertaken by **external** evaluators and **seven internal** evaluations performed by the HUM Backbone Team. HUM’s evaluation database can be accessed on their [website](#).³⁴⁴

A more detailed discussion of all of HUMs UMEL approaches is explored in [Chapter 7](#), further highlighting HUM’s commitment to continual improvement, reporting and sharing of learnings and findings.

The HUM website also hosts **four blogs** that offer insights into HUM’s measurement, evaluation, and learning approach, along with learnings from their collaborative outreach work during the COVID-19

³³⁸ Clear Horizon. (forthcoming). *ChangeFest24 evaluation*.

³³⁹ Clear Horizon. (forthcoming). *ChangeFest24 evaluation*.

³⁴⁰ Clear Horizon. (forthcoming). *ChangeFest24 evaluation*.

³⁴¹ Clear Horizon. (forthcoming). *ChangeFest24 evaluation*.

³⁴² Clear Horizon. (forthcoming). *ChangeFest24 evaluation*.

³⁴³ Collaboration for Impact. (2024). The honourable Dr Jim Chalmers MP Speech ChangeFest24.

³⁴⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Projects*.

pandemic and the implementation of their Connected Co-design work.³⁴⁵ HUM's learning blogs can be accessed on their [website](#).

In alignment with place-based, community led change, the HUM website further includes a 'What our community has to say' section which houses learning and documentation from **Community Conversations**, **Youth Conversations** and **Voices of Children**.³⁴⁶ These community perspectives can be accessed on their [website](#).

9.2.3. HUM newsletters and social media platforms

HUM's communication efforts include a **monthly newsletter**, a **Facebook page** with over 4.5K followers³⁴⁷, and a **LinkedIn page** with 141 followers.³⁴⁸ Through these platforms HUM shares updates of their work, important community events and activities, and opportunities to be involved with HUM. Followers use these platforms to share HUM activities and updates with their peers and provide feedback to HUM. To illustrate:

*"What a great example of genuine listening to community by services/collaborators who were willing to make things happen."*³⁴⁹

*"Nice work and hope the last day of your wonderful event concludes a great event for Australia and our local community 🍌🍌🍌👍👍" (Comment on Facebook post about CF24)*³⁵⁰

*"How amazing is this ❤️ I'm so excited about this ChangeFest. It's going to be epic, you guys reaching out like this is brilliant, informing community of opportunities to contribute. Such an amazing example to follow for the next hosts for ChangeFests to come" (Comment on Facebook post regarding expressions of interest for an Aboriginal artist to design the ChangeFest 24 logo)*³⁵¹

*"It was a fun afternoon the kids had a great time thank you 🥰" (Comment on Facebook post about the Merbein Pool Pilot)*³⁵²

The monthly newsletter features HUM's ways of working, collaborative efforts, insights and reflections from workshops, storytelling, and other examples of HUM's collective impact and place-based change work.

HUM also maintains a **YouTube channel** featuring **58 videos** that provide monthly progress updates, share evaluation learnings and insights, budget updates and showcase community members' experiences of HUM events.³⁵³

*"Love this video - amazing to have this resource that tells the story of how you responded to the challenges of COVID-19, and particularly how important community connection and trust is to what you are doing." (Comment on AOCTVR evaluation video)*³⁵⁴

³⁴⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *HUM blog*

³⁴⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Community Conversations*.

³⁴⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Facebook*.

³⁴⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *LinkedIn*.

³⁴⁹ Mildura Rural City Council. (2024, 02 June). Youth driven community success story receives state accolade.


³⁵⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Facebook*.

³⁵¹ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Facebook*.

³⁵² Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Facebook*.

³⁵³ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *YouTube channel*.

³⁵⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2022, 22 June). *Working together we can do it*.

“Wonderful organisation in our community working with and for our children and young people ”
(Comment on April 2023 video update about the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot on Facebook)³⁵⁵

By sharing updates, learnings, and progress through various mediums including audiovisual methods, HUM ensures accessibility and extends the reach of their impact.

9.2.4. Publications featuring HUM’s work

HUM’s work is further highlighted in multiple **government and independent publications**, where it is recognised as a **best-practice example** and **thought leader** in place-based systems change:

- **Co-designing the Hands Up Mallee Measurement Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework** (2024). Social Impact Measurement Network Australia (SIMNA).³⁵⁶
- **Storytelling for Systems Change: Listening to Understand** (2023). Centre for Public Impact, Dusseldorp Forum and Hands up Mallee³⁵⁷
- **Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning for Place-Based Approaches Toolkit** (2023). The Victorian Public Service³⁵⁸
- **Place-based approaches: A guide for the Victorian Public Service** (2023). ANZSOG and The Victorian Government³⁵⁹
- **Evidence for Action in the Early Years System Assessing System Leverage Points** (2023). Orange Compass, Centre for Community Child Health, Clear Horizon, and Sefa³⁶⁰
- **Disrupting Disadvantage: Early evidence of the impact of community-led change** (2023). Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact³⁶¹
- **Boundary spanning to improve community outcomes: A report on joined-up government** (2022). The Victorian Government³⁶²
- **Hands Up Mallee: Meet the community taking children’s wellbeing into their own hands** (2022). Clear Horizon³⁶³
- **Storytelling for Systems Change: Insights from the Field** (2021). Centre for Public Impact, Dusseldorp Forum and Hands up Mallee³⁶⁴. See [snapshot](#) for details.

³⁵⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Facebook*.

³⁵⁶ SIMNA. (2024, 11 July). Co-designing the Hands Up Mallee Measurement Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework.

³⁵⁷ Snow, T., Bandaranayaka, A., Fyfe, R., & Wolff L. (2023, 8 November). *Storytelling for Systems Change: Listening to Understand*.

³⁵⁸ Victoria State Government. (2023). *Place-Based Measurement, Evaluation and Learning*.

³⁵⁹ ANZSOG & Victoria State Government (2023). *Place-based approaches: A guide for the Victorian public service*.

³⁶⁰ McKenzie, F. et al. (2023). Evidence for Action in the Early Years System: Accessing System Leverage Points: Cluster 1 – Communities and families in the driver’s seat.

³⁶¹ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact. (2022). *Disrupting Disadvantage: Early evidence of the impact of community-led change*.

³⁶² Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. (2023). *Boundary spanning to improve community outcomes: A report on joined-up government*.

³⁶³ Clear Horizon. (n.d.). *Hands Up Mallee*

³⁶⁴ Snow, T. Murikumthara, D., Dusseldorp, T., Fyfe, R., Wolff, L., & McCracken, J. (2021). *Storytelling for Systems Change: Insights from the Field*.

“We learned through this process that stories can be used to change the system, as well as to evaluate, understand and showcase the change that is occurring in community”³⁶⁵

- **Place-Based Resilience: Community Driven Response and Recovery in a Time of COVID-19** (2020). Dusseldorp Forum³⁶⁶
- **Hands Up Mallee Case Study** (n.d.) Platform C³⁶⁷

9.2.5. Delivery of national presentations and workshops



HUM engages with the broader community beyond the Mildura LGA by delivering public presentations and workshops on various aspects of its collective impact work, as well as contributing to panel discussions.

- **Evaluating Systems Change and Place-Based Approaches Course presentations** (2024, 2023 and 2022) Clear Horizon Academy.³⁶⁸
- **ChangeFest presentations** (2024, 2023, 2019, 2018). For a full list of CF24 presentations, see the CF24 program.³⁶⁹
- **Presentation: ‘Through the lens of community’ Inclusive, Useable and Accessible Evaluation & Learning with cross-sector partners, families & youth** (2023). Australian Evaluation Society Conference
- **Panel discussion: Exploring partnership and collaboration and removing stigma and shame from asking hard questions in partnerships** (2023). Health Justice Australia Conference
- **Plenary panel: ‘Storytelling for systems change at community level: insights from the field’** (2022). Australian Evaluation Society Conference
- **Panel discussion: ‘Community listening: What happens when we start with children and families?’** (2022). Webinar. Centre for Community Child Health

9.2.6. HUM ensures ethical information management

To ensure an ethical process when information is being shared, HUM has developed an **Ethics, Privacy, and Safety (EPS) Framework** for gathering, using, storing, and sharing information. This framework guides HUM’s ways of working regarding ethical information management to ensure all HUM functions adhere to ethical standards and privacy obligations. The practices described in the framework are essential enablers for building the trust and transparency necessary for effective community

³⁶⁵ Snow, T. Murikumthara, D., Dusseldorp, T., Fyfe, R., Wolff, L., & McCracken, J. (2021). *Storytelling for Systems Change: Insights from the Field*.

³⁶⁶ Dusseldorp Forum. (2020). *Place based resilience: Community driven response and recover in a time of COVID-19*.

³⁶⁷ Platform C. (n.d.) *Hands Up Mallee*.

³⁶⁸ Clear Horizon Academy. (2024). *Evaluating systems change and place-based approaches*.

³⁶⁹ ChangeFest. (2024). *ChangeFest24 Program Flyer*.

engagement. It also aims to enhance agency and foster relationships within the community by ensuring HUM interactions are conducted ethically and safely.³⁷⁰

To support its implementation, HUM will develop two additional guides to sit alongside its current **ethics, privacy, and safety practice guide: a cultural safety framework**, and a **data sovereignty framework**.³⁷¹

9.3. What does reporting on progress and the sharing of learnings achieve?

Early signs of systems change

Ripples beyond place: influencing change in the place-based funding environment

Beyond the Mildura LGA, there is evidence that HUM is influencing other Australian Collective Impact initiatives and place-based systems change collaborations and is also beginning to generate influence within various levels of government.³⁷²

As a key site within the SPSP initiative and active member of the SPSP Backbone Alliance Group, HUM's experiences and learnings are pivotal to shaping the national agenda and strategy of this federal collective impact initiative. The shared learnings from HUM and other SPSP sites, along with their robust advocacy, have informed critical strategic decisions about the initiative's model. This includes influencing plans for scaling, financial investment strategies, the distribution of funds to communities, and the balance of decision-making power between communities and government.³⁷³

In this capacity, HUM has established itself as a driving force within the national place-based change movement, generating ripple effects that extend to new SPSP sites and other initiatives at state and local levels. These initiatives are increasingly drawing upon HUM resources and learnings to refine their own practices and ways of working.

*"Government partners ... expressed gratitude to HUM for their generosity and openness to share their learning with other collective impact initiatives, furthering the agenda nationally and changing the way people report to government."*³⁷⁴

As one of the four mature communities in the *Stronger Places Stronger People* partnership, HUM has played a valuable role in supporting other organisations and place-based initiatives across Australia in the following ways:

- **ChangeFest 24 participants** - By co-hosting ChangeFest 2024 with Connected Beginnings Mildura, HUM showcased its achievements and shared valuable insights, offering practical workshops, in-depth discussions, and site visits to over 480 individuals and organisations from across Australia engaged and interested in place-based systems change and Collective Impact approaches.

³⁷⁰ Hands Up Mallee (2024). *Ethics, privacy and safety*.

³⁷¹ Hands Up Mallee (2024). *Ethics, privacy and safety*.

³⁷² HUM (2023). *Looking Back to Move Forward: A Retrospective Evaluation of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative (2015-2020)*.

³⁷³ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Alliance Group (2022). *Pre-budget 2023/2024 submission from the Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Alliance Group*.

³⁷⁴ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

- **Ouyen and Robinvale neighbouring communities** - Expressed interest in HomeBase Hoops; HUM has shared key learnings on the program's success factors, enabling the adaptation of this youth engagement approach in other communities.³⁷⁵
- **Brimbank City Council** - Acknowledged HUM's Community Conversations toolkit and engagement plan as valuable resources, utilising them to develop their own Community Conversations kit.³⁷⁶
- **Southern Morton Bay Islands** - Used HUM resources.
- **Hands Up Casterton** - Inspired by HUM, this initiative has embraced shared values and principles, embedding them into their approach.³⁷⁷

9.4. What factors catalyse or inhibit the impact of HUM's work to report on progress and continually improve?

Catalysts of HUM's impact	Inhibitors of HUM's impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deep understanding of community systems and their impact • A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership skills and is well resourced • Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs • Willingness to share tools, learnings, and insights with communities beyond place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding constraints • Resource allocation (especially time and staff) • Accountability requirements, including mandatory reporting on KPIs that do not measure outcomes and prevent accountability to the Mildura LGA community. • Data sharing restrictions • A lack of understanding of collective impact work and the role of the HUM Backbone Team • Misalignment in our shared understanding of what is worth measuring

Detailed descriptions of the catalysts and inhibitors of HUM's impact can be found in [Chapter 10](#).

³⁷⁵ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact. (2022). *Disrupting Disadvantage: Early evidence of the impact of community-led change*.

³⁷⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Looking Back to Move Forward: A Retrospective Evaluation of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative (2015-2020)*.

³⁷⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Looking Back to Move Forward: A Retrospective Evaluation of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative (2015-2020)*.



10. CATALYSTS AND INHIBITORS OF THE IMPACT OF HUM

Key findings summary

Over the years, HUM and the HUM Backbone Team have achieved remarkable progress in establishing new ways of working and activating the steps towards systems change. In addition to HUM's unique approach to community-led work, there are foundational conditions which have been key enablers of HUM's success. There are also external factors which have presented barriers to greater progress, and hindered HUM's ability to advance its Community Aspiration. To support the HUM collaboration to make progress towards the Community Aspiration, it is a key role of the HUM Backbone Team to both unlock these enablers and address the barriers. However, both enablers and barriers must also be acknowledged when considering the work of HUM and its collective impact approach.

Specific enablers and barriers have been associated with each of the HUM Enablers of Change as discussed in Chapters 4-9. This section explores these factors in greater detail and the implications they have for HUM and its collective impact approach.

10.1. Factors that maximise the impact of HUM

The following have been identified as **catalytic factors** that have positively enabled the HUM Backbone Team to undertake its work to a high degree of success:

- **A shared desire to put community first.** HUM is grounded in its four principles – respect, commitment, continuous improvement and accountability – all of which are centred on community.³⁷⁸ HUM initiatives are guided by these principles, which promotes a shared sense of ‘community first’ amongst collaborators and ensures that issues of equity within community are at the forefront. As a result, service providers, government and community all recognise HUM – particularly the HUM Backbone Team – as being an initiative that is by community and for community. This has established community goodwill with the HUM Backbone Team, which has enabled deeper collaboration with community and a greater risk appetite from government and service providers for investing in innovative, community-led solutions.

“Community members described HUM as genuine, non-judgemental and active listeners who are invested in creating stronger communities.”³⁷⁹

“They’re very community minded. And I think that’s the thing. They’re not Hands Up Mallee minded. They’re community minded. Well, let’s do what’s right for the community, and the cards will fall where they fall.” (Service provider)³⁸⁰

“It is about people coming together to build community, not to build their own empires. That’s what it’s about.” (Service provider)³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2018). *Plan on a Page*.

³⁷⁹ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁸⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*

³⁸¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*.

- **Community, government and service providers who are open to doing things differently.** It is important that community actors are ready to engage with collective impact work, otherwise the efforts of a Backbone Team will have a hard time taking seed.³⁸² The HUM collective impact model was born from a shared understanding across leaders in the community, government and service providers that, despite their best efforts, there was a need for radical change to break the persistent cycles of disadvantage in the Mildura LGA.³⁸³ The idea to invest in a collective impact approach developed organically from community out of a desire to do things differently. It is this shared commitment to the collective impact approach that supports the continued engagement of government, service providers and the community in the HUM collaboration.
- **Strong relationships and partnerships.** The HUM Backbone Team's ability to make and maintain strong relationships across the community and sectors is a key enabler of the collaboration's success. The HUM Backbone Team consciously invests resources in nurturing these relationships and partnerships by showing up and being authentic, particularly with community. These strong foundations allow HUM to effectively draw on those relationships when there is a community need to be addressed.

*"HUM has [earned] the trust and confidence of the community through their work [of] actively listening and responding to their views."*³⁸⁴

*"HUM has the reputation of being good at holding space and time for people to connect to each other. Jane and the wider HUM team are seen as a strong ally for the community agenda."*³⁸⁵

*"To find out how big, like as widespread [the HUM Backbone Team] could have the reach because when they used to attend our meetings and that, and then in that meeting they might be in contact with someone from Mallee Family Care or MDAS or the hospital or whatever. So, they made them connections. And so, they can go and then deliver there and having that kind of footprint across community kind of stuff." (Community member)*³⁸⁶

- **A deep understanding of community systems and their impact.** Systems knowledge helps organisations to see the interconnections between different systems, understand how they behave over time, identify leverage points, and develop strategies for change.³⁸⁷ The HUM Backbone Team has undertaken multiple systems mapping activities that have helped to inform their understanding of systems dynamics that influence outcomes for children and families in Mildura.³⁸⁸ They have also used systems mapping in delivering initiatives such as CERR to identify system gaps and ensure these will be addressed.³⁸⁹ This has contributed to a well-informed Community Aspiration, accurate identification of enablers for systems change, and HUM initiatives that are well-designed and strategically aligned to collectively address important social outcomes.

³⁸² Weaver L. (2018). Ready, Set, Go: Building readiness for collaborative and community impact.

³⁸³ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Looking Back to Move Forward – A Retrospective Evaluation of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative*.

³⁸⁴ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁸⁵ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁸⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interview*.

³⁸⁷ Insight & Foresight. (2022, 21 June). The Benefits of Systems Mapping.

³⁸⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2018). *Systems Maps*.

³⁸⁹ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

"HUM's skills (gained through their collective impact work) were leveraged for systems mapping, identifying resources, identifying assets and gaps and how best to combine these to cater to community needs."³⁹⁰

- **A Backbone Team that has strong adaptive leadership, community engagement and MEL skills.** Having a team of influential champions is the most critical precondition required for successful collective impact models.³⁹¹ HUM has found an incredibly dedicated and skilled group of people to drive the work of the HUM Backbone Team. Across stakeholder groups, the team is regularly commended for the individual expertise and empathy that they bring to their work, in particular the leadership of the current Executive Officer.

"It's the people themselves that actually drive that kind of stuff. Your Janes and your Catherines and your Fionas to your Rachels to all your other intricate people here, they are the ones and the drivers, the ones that ... put themselves ... in that space and they drive it... Yes, and they've got to be passionate and ... be the right people to do the job. Not just anybody that come[s] along."³⁹²
(Community member)

"[HUM Executive Office] Jane was in the role for the last five years, and that made an absolute difference. So, Jane's leadership in collaboration and really understanding the benefit of a collective impact [approach] really led the work and [is] a significant contributor to what we achieved."³⁹³
(Service provider)

"Knowing that they [the HUM Backbone Team] were on board meant that it could happen. Your ideas are not going to fall on deaf ears."³⁹⁴
(Community member)

- **Access to external expertise to support specific capacity building needs.** In 2018, HUM committed to working with external experts and collaborators in ways that grow the local capacity of the HUM Backbone Team and HUM partners. This has involved coaching, the development of ongoing relationships with external consultants, and joint projects with researchers and academics. In each instance of working with external experts there has been a strong focus on the transfer of skills, knowledge and approaches to ensure capacity is built in the local community. Key examples include:
 - **Co-design coaching and support from TACSI** has built the capacity of the HUM Backbone Team in initiatives such as the Red Cliffs Project³⁹⁵, the development of the new Collaborative Governance Model^{396 397} and youth co-design projects.³⁹⁸
 - **Coaching and support from Clear Horizon** in developing HUM's UMEL tools and capabilities, including assistance with the development of HUM's overarching and nested MEL frameworks including their [Theories of Change](#). Clear Horizon was also commissioned to undertake a series of external evaluations of HUM initiatives, including CERR,³⁹⁹ AOCTVR⁴⁰⁰ and the Red Cliffs

³⁹⁰ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

³⁹¹ Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Hanleybrown, F. (2012). *Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work*.

³⁹² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

³⁹³ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

³⁹⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

³⁹⁵ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

³⁹⁶ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Governance Structure*.

³⁹⁷ TACSI. (2022). *Collaborative Governance for Hands Up Mallee*.

³⁹⁸ TACSI & HUM. (n.d). *Youth and family voice in the Mallee coaching content*.

³⁹⁹ Clear Horizon. (2021). *COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report*.

⁴⁰⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report*.

Project.⁴⁰¹ Additionally, they facilitated HUM's Progress Mapping workshops and Learning Circle in 2023⁴⁰² as well as provided ongoing coaching in UMEL.

- **A research partnership with the Centre for Child and Community Health** at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. This partnership brings research expertise into all HUM's early years projects and initiatives including implementing the Core Care Conditions Framework into HUM's Nested 0-8 MEL framework and the co-design of the Mildura Family and Child Hub
- **Multi-year, flexible funding model.** By becoming an SPSP site, HUM gained access to a ten-year funding grant.⁴⁰³ Long-term flexible funding models help to reduce the many challenges that grant-funded community-based organisations (including Backbone Teams) face, such as disrupted service provision, limited resources or gaps in infrastructure and operating costs, elevated stress and reduced wellbeing among staff, and conflicting priorities that impede alignment to an overarching strategy.^{404,405} Long-term flexible funding enables Backbone Teams to be more resilient and innovative and provides more appropriate timeframes for teams to achieve key outcomes, which often take longer when doing complex systems change work.^{406 407} This flexible long-term funding model has been identified as a key contributor to HUM's success and has helped unlock greater funding commitments from local and State Government as well.⁴⁰⁸

*"It is clear that continuing siloed funding for fragmented social service programs has not shifted population outcomes in education, justice, health or the early years in some of Australia's most disadvantaged communities. The first phase of SPSP demonstrates what is possible when the government commits to a partnership approach to place-based change alongside communities, State and Territory Governments, academia and philanthropy."*⁴⁰⁹

- **Operational autonomy that promotes accountability to community.** The HUM governance model grants the HUM Backbone Team greater autonomy than most community organisations. Although HUM receives funding from federal and State Government, and in-kind support from local government, its governance structure is centred around community. Instead of being primarily accountable to a single funder and their priorities, the HUM Backbone Team prioritises accountability to the community, which is crucial for building trust and support locally.

*"The autonomy that [the HUM Backbone Team] has, because it is auspiced by two organisations but not beholden to either...it makes a lot of stuff possible. The constraints of organisations often mean there's so many reasons why things can't be done, whereas HUM's can-do." (Government stakeholder)*⁴¹⁰

"The [HUM Backbone Team] doesn't report to a [traditional] board or in my case to a group of counsellors. So, they're not asking for permission or having to seek endorsement from governing bodies that still, particularly in a regional area are very traditional. And that enables Jane and her

⁴⁰¹ Clear Horizon. (2022). *Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report*.

⁴⁰² Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴⁰³ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact. (2022). *Disrupting Disadvantage: Early evidence of the impact of community-led change*.

⁴⁰⁴ Niras. (2022). BUILD Developmental Evaluation Final Report.

⁴⁰⁵ Global Fund for Children. (2023). *Trust in Action: The Bridge Between Grantmakers and the Grassroots*.

⁴⁰⁶ Schmitz, P. (2021). 10 Dangers to Collective Impact.

⁴⁰⁷ Committee for Economic Development of Australia. (2019). *Disrupting disadvantage: setting the scene*.

⁴⁰⁸ Centre for Public Impact. (2022). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴⁰⁹ Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Alliance Group (2022). Pre-budget 2023/2024 submission from the Strong People Stronger Places Backbone Alliance Group.

⁴¹⁰ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

team to do things, act in ways, try things that even the most forward thinking of organisations in our community couldn't do.” (Community member)⁴¹¹

10.2. Factors that restrict the impact of HUM

In addition to understanding what has helped HUM progress its collaborative work and achieve outcomes, it is important to identify and understand the factors that have hindered HUM's progress in advancing the Community Aspiration. This context is crucial when assessing HUM's achievements and highlights persistent challenges that HUM collaborators are working around and actively addressing in their collective impact work. These barriers include:

- **Limitations faced by HUM partners in changing their ways of working.** Service providers and local government, in particular, face limitations in their ability to change their ways of working to align with HUM's approach, particularly with respect to:
 - Funding and policy constraints
 - Resource allocation (especially time and staff)
 - Accountability requirements, including mandatory reporting on Key Performance Indicators that do not measure outcomes and prevent accountability to the Mildura LGA community.
 - Sufficient and suitable data
 - Data sharing restrictions

These limitations may be the result of restrictive funding, governance or operational requirements that discourage or prevent collaboration, a lack of readiness or desire to embrace new ways of working (as described below).

“We don't get funding; we are not funded to [support HomeBase Hoops]. We're having to reuse our other resources so we can do it... We're a healthcare provider and unfortunately, we have to adhere to what the requirements are. And we're also an NDIS provider... So, police checks, worker screening checks and [the requirements to have certain] vaccinations makes it ... quite a laborious process. And I think when you get that negativity around that, then it's like, oh, it's hard to get volunteers because of that process.” (Service provider, discussing challenges faced in supporting HomeBase Hoops)⁴¹²

“We've got to encourage them to work differently, I think. They get funding and they work to specific guidelines, and they don't know how to move out of that lane and adopt a different way of working. I think it's not their fault, it's the way it's set up.” (Government stakeholder)⁴¹³

- **Lack of readiness to embrace change.** In some instances, stakeholders simply are not ready to change their ways of working. This may be due to a lack of understanding of the proposed changes, or a lack of confidence that they would be able to implement them. Occasionally, service providers or government actors are actively opposed to change, out of a desire to maintain the status quo and retain their positions of power.⁴¹⁴ The HUM Backbone Team's ability to establish and nurture strong relationships, as well as their efforts to develop a rigorous evidence base for the positive impact of

⁴¹¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*

⁴¹² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*

⁴¹³ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report.*

⁴¹⁴ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report.*

their ways of working, have helped to change the minds of some reticent leaders; however, this remains a barrier to greater alignment to the HUM collaboration and Community Aspiration.⁴¹⁵

"We've come a long way, but we still got people who aren't on board yet. They're the ones we need to target. We got some people that sit on committees here who think they're untouchable. But we'll get there eventually. HUM has a role to play in that, as long as they have the blackfellas alongside them. It's about taking the journey together and we've got to 'walk the talk.'" (Community member)⁴¹⁶

- **Competition for funding.** Given the nature of short-term funding cycles for social support services, both in the private and public sector, organisations often find themselves in competition with one other to secure and maximise their funding. Competitive funding can discourage or even prohibit collaboration, either during the tendering process (e.g., refusal to share data when developing proposals) or after funds have been allocated.⁴¹⁷ Several HUM partners identified this as a reoccurring challenge, and one that contributes to organisations' reluctance to align their work with HUM.

"I think, there's always an issue of finance and funding for these types of organisations because they focus on intergenerational change... Often other organisations are really tied down to yearly outcomes or yearly percentages or to meet targets to get that funding again. And unfortunately, often a lot of those organisations are reactive ... That's how you get your funding through unfortunately, bad statistics rather than working in the prevention space, which HUM very much does." (Government stakeholder)⁴¹⁸

- **Mindset shifts that only reach the individual level.** Changes in management and administration can undermine established relationships. When new ways of working are held by individuals within HUM partner organisations, a change in management can undo much of that progress, either due to systemic factors or individual differences. In some instances, individual HUM champions have reflected on their inability to "move the dial" in introducing changes to ways of working, particularly in more established institutions and sectors. For sustainable change, HUM's ways of working need to be fully integrated into organisations. An understanding of, and value for, place-based work must be embedded at the organisational and sector levels to withstand the ebbs and flows of external systemic forces.⁴¹⁹ Formal MOUs between the HUM Backbone Team and HUM partners have been proposed as one approach to achieving more meaningful organisational level changes in practices and policies.⁴²⁰

"Even just the way you're looking at an issue, you're always looking for systems change. You're looking at [the] data, you're looking at community voice and you're pulling that all together and then you're taking that forward. I feel like that's just how I work now... So, ... State Government is totally different. I've found it tricky ... it's really different obviously to [working in] local government. There's a lot less flexibility [than] what I've had before, but you can still bring that way of working." (Government stakeholder)⁴²¹

⁴¹⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴¹⁶ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴¹⁷ Neville A. (1999). Competing Interests: Competition policy in the welfare sector. *Anglicare Australia*. 21.

⁴¹⁸ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁴¹⁹ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴²⁰ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴²¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

"Management. 100% management. The style, the new model... it doesn't facilitate well with working in partnership with anyone... and [our organisation] is going to be like that. [We] are going to be in and out. They're in and out of everything all the time [because of] changes in thought, changes in – the higher up the food chain you get, the more people want to put their stamp on things." (Service provider)⁴²²

- **A lack of understanding of collective impact work and the role of the HUM Backbone Team.**

Service providers, government, and community sometimes struggle to fully grasp and appreciate the impact of HUM's work because of the significant time investment required to achieve systems and population level change. The way progress is valued and measured in collective impact work differs from traditional monitoring and evaluation approaches, adding to the complexity. Additionally, collaborative initiatives led and supported by the HUM Backbone Team are often multifaceted, with outcomes that cannot easily be attributed to a single actor. This complexity poses a difficult for any Backbone Team, including HUM's, in demonstrating their impact in a clear and straightforward way to funders.

"I don't think people know, and I'm still working [on] how to articulate it in a little punchy nutshell, what HUM does, even in our own community." (HUM Collaborative Governance Group member)⁴²³

"It's very resource intensive to build good relationships and build strong relationships with community and make change and implement and try and test things and learn from it, and then change it and then implement it again. And so, things can take a long time. And I think others can look on that as if, what are they doing?" (Service provider)⁴²⁴

"I've had conversations with other colleagues and had to explain that no, [the HUM Backbone Team] are not part of X service or structure... those of us who participate know that they're a neutral voice, but not all services know that, and they may wonder if/why it is administered by DHS. I have had to explain that to people and we all need to continue to raise awareness about that." (Service provider)⁴²⁵

"I just hope that the Government just understands the importance of the work that they do, and the absolute value and just continues to fund it. Once again, we're constantly chasing funding for the things that are working, and they're just pouring funding into things that aren't working, and then they try and make the cuts in the places that they shouldn't be making them." (Service provider)⁴²⁶

- **Misalignment in our shared understanding of what is worth measuring.** Stakeholders, particularly government and philanthropic funders, often place a premium on quantitative, population-level data and program-level activities and outputs. This focus tends to overlook the 'missing middle' of the Theory of Change; the enabling conditions and systemic shifts required for systems change, which in turn enable population-level changes.⁴²⁷ In the case of HUM, this has contributed to challenges in demonstrating their achievements and building their case for continued and expanded investment.

⁴²² Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁴²³ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁴²⁴ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁴²⁵ Clear Horizon. (2023). *Hands Up Mallee Progress Mapping Report*.

⁴²⁶ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

⁴²⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2024). "Is Place-Based Evaluation Stuck? Continued..." *ChangeFest24 Presentation*.

- **Community-led, place-based work requires time to effect meaningful population-level outcomes.**⁴²⁸ In the early and middle stages of collective impact initiatives like HUM, progress should primarily be measured by the successful establishment of the enabling conditions, which are foundational for long-term change. Population-level measures alone are insufficient to capture the full impact; they only become truly meaningful once a collective impact initiative has achieved sustainable systemic shifts.⁴²⁹ Developmental evaluation, applied by HUM across several of its initiatives, is one approach to effectively capturing the complexity of long-term systems changes activated by collective impact models.⁴³⁰

*“I think Jane and the team are pretty good at portraying what they're doing to Council as well as getting Council involved so people see it firsthand. I don't think the local level is the issue. It's how do we make sure that the State and Federal [Government] see that this is a really, really good model.” (Government stakeholder)*⁴³¹



⁴²⁸ O'Flynn, L. (2022, 16 May). 5 challenges of evaluating place-based change.

⁴²⁹ Dart, J. (2018). *Place-based Evaluation Framework: A guide for evaluation of place-based approaches in Australia*.

⁴³⁰ Cabaj, M. (2014). Evaluating Collective Impact: 5 Simple Rules.

⁴³¹ Clear Horizon. (2024). *Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews*.

CONCLUSION

The HUM Backbone Team plays a pivotal role in unlocking the enabling outcomes that drive HUM's progress and in overcoming the barriers preventing systems change. Without an independent Backbone Team, much of the essential work required to realise HUM's Community Aspiration would not be feasible. The HUM Backbone Team serves as the engine behind the coordination, ways of working, strategy development, and mobilisation efforts that keep the collaboration aligned and focused on its long-term goals.

While HUM made significant strides in its early years, particularly in consultation efforts that shaped the Community Aspiration, in 2020 the initiative entered a phase that demands even greater Backbone support. Transitioning from work primarily focused on planning and realising tactical projects to a strong emphasis on co-design and high-leverage activities, HUM requires its Backbone Team more than ever to facilitate the implementation of the strategies that will bring its Community Aspiration to fruition.

Acknowledging HUM's achievements thus far, the ongoing success of its collective impact approach is intrinsically linked to the HUM Backbone Team's ability to provide an enabling environment for change which allows HUM partners to work well together and help HUM sustain and scale its efforts. As a critical catalyst of change, the HUM Backbone Team's role is not only indispensable, but must also be consistently supported to ensure HUM's enduring impact.

As the role of Backbone Teams and their expected achievements can be misunderstood and undervalued, particularly in the first 5-10 years of place-based change initiatives, this report has sought to reframe this dialogue by focusing on more appropriate measures of success. The report provides rigorous evidence for the significant contributions the HUM Backbone Team has made to establishing the enabling conditions required to activate systems change. It also recognises the role that HUM partners and the broader collaboration have in facilitating the spread and sustainability of new ways of working. In the future, it may be appropriate for evaluations of the HUM initiative to focus on measuring the contributions of these enabling conditions to creating systems changes, but in these early years it is the 'missing middle' of enabling conditions that should be the determinants of progress for place-based change initiatives.



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APPENDIX 1. HANDS UP MALLEE INITIATIVE DESCRIPTIONS, KEY OUTCOMES CONTRIBUTION TO HUM TOC OUTCOMES

Table 7. HUM initiatives

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
June 2015 - Early 2016	Building HUM's Foundations	From mid-2015 to early 2016, HUM established its foundations by building relationships with key partners and stakeholders and developing resources to hold, capture, and theme the Community Conversations (consultation activities) that would inform the next phase of its work.		
Sep 2016 - Aug 2017	Community Conversations	From October 2016 to June 2017, HUM engaged over 1,600 people across the Mildura LGA to learn about their passions, aspirations, concerns, and ideas, with the goal of informing its Community Aspiration.	The insights from these conversations were used to co-create the Community Aspiration that guides HUM's collaborative work. Additionally, its findings and recommendations are being used to inform new HUM initiatives, projects and focus areas. ⁴³²	Enabling outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.). A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making
Apr 2017 - Jun 2018	Project Y	Utilising youth-to-youth conversations, social media, and storytelling workshops to engage young people, Project Y, which was part of the Community conversations, gathered local youth's perspectives on living in the Mildura LGA.	Findings and recommendations from Project Y have led to the development of several HUM initiatives, incl. HomeBase and HomeBase Hoops. ⁴³³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.)
2018	Systems mapping	In early 2018 the HUM Backbone Team, supported by HUM partners, mapped the system for the First 1000 Days of Life by	A systems map was created from this work and is publicly available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy).

⁴³² Hands Up Mallee. (2017). *Community Conversations Evaluation Paper*.

⁴³³ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Community Conversations*.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
	First 1,000 Days (from conception to two years).	asking services and the community the framing question: “ <i>What works for and against a healthy, welcome and safe start to the first 1000 days of life?</i> ” In late 2018, HUM hosted an event which brought together 60 early years’ service providers and community members to identify opportunities for improving outcomes. Together, they identified leverage points in the system to intervene and priority actions for change. ⁴³⁴	on the HUM website. ⁴³⁵ Based on this mapping, four priority action areas were identified: 1) Children’s Hub (pop ups), 2) Hello Baby, 3) Care Proposals, and 4) Data/indicator Contacts. The creation of a Children’s Hub was identified as the top, informing the establishment of The Family and Child Hub in Mildura.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making
2018- 2021	Mildura Region School Breakfast Partnership	The Mildura Region School Breakfast Partnership commenced in 2013, however in 2018 became aligned with the HUM team and began to work with all partners more collaboratively to better use resourcing. The initiative then became a collaborative partnership with eight education partners and eight local schools in Mildura, two education providers and four local kindergartens to share resources, knowledge and funds. The collaboration ensured equitable access to healthy breakfast for local children increasing social and educational engagement. HUM specifically supported in building an evaluation and sourcing funding.	2141 breakfasts were served per week in 2019 across all partner schools, supporting health and wellbeing outcomes and ensuring children are ready to learn. Other outcomes included improved health literacy, increased concertation in the classroom, academic performance and enhanced behavioural and social skills. Since HUM’s involvement the number of participating education settings has grown from 8 to 24.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy)
2018-2020	Generations Music Together	A testing and trial program focus on intergenerational music learning where young children’s learning and play contributed to the wellbeing and social connection of families of children aged 0-5 years old and residents of Aged Care Facilities. Young children and their families learnt the joy of music and movement, sharing this with members of Aged Care facilities bringing music and	Through partnerships developed in this program, Chaffey Aged Care in Merbein have gone on to develop a childcare. This has created a resource to support children and their families in this satellite town. The CEO of Chaffey Aged Care publicly attributed the idea of co-located	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy)

⁴³⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). Looking Back to Move Forward: A Retrospective Evaluation of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative (2015-2020).

⁴³⁵ Hands Up Mallee. (2017). *Community Conversations Evaluation Paper*.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		generations together to improve mental health and well-being and socio-emotional development. The program implemented a differentiated fee-model to increase access to families who are not able to pay as much.	childcare service to seeing how powerful the integrational connection could be for both parties during the generations Music Together classes.	
2018 - present	HomeBase	Arising from youth-led conversations during Project Y, where young people in Mildura expressed their need for safe places to after hours and on weekends Sunraysia Community Health Services launched and staffed a trial venue in 2018. Following the trial's success, the initiative persisted due to the ongoing necessity for safe spaces for youth, despite the fact that it was not funded and delivered from existing funding sources, demonstrating the challenges, but also added importance of this initiative. HomeBase focuses on nurturing the social and emotional development of young people while offering weeknight activities that are chosen by participants to promote engagement and personal growth.	HomeBase now offers multiple services including health, AOD counselling, activities, a Youth Hub, Hoops and volunteer opportunities. Originally launched as a HUM initiative, at a time when there was no other after hours youth support services operating in the Mildura LGA, HomeBase now sits as a program within Sunraysia Community Health Services. ⁴³⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy)
2018 - present	Youth Action Team	A new partnership model for designing and testing prevention programs for young people. This action team is a sub-group formed from the Local Drug Action Team (facilitated by the HUM Backbone Team). The purpose of this group is to identify and implement prevention approaches for and with you. This is conducted after hours and run by a base of volunteers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy)
2018 - 2024	Mallee Community Voices	Mallee Community Voices (originally the Community leaders Table) was a group of people from the community who meet quarterly to support the work of Hands up		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on transparent and locally-led governance

⁴³⁶ HomeBase Mildura. (n.d). *Our Story*

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		Mallee. People involved share their knowledge, lived experience, connections, ideas and skills to strengthen the collective efforts of HUM. ⁴³⁷ It was important support during the transition to establish the Collaborative Governance group and the Yarning Group.		
2018, 2019 & 2023	ChangeFest presentations	HUM participated in and presented at ChangeFest 2018, 2019, and 2023.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising
June – December 2019	Mapping for the Best Start to Life (3 - 8 years)	In 2019 the HUM backbone moved to mapping the systems surrounding children aged 3-8 years. Insights gathered from services and community were used to build causal loops in the systems map for this age group. ⁴³⁸	The Best Start to Life Systems Map informed the Voices of Children Report and has since informed the development of the Municipal Early Years Plan (2020) ⁴³⁹ and the Red Cliffs Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making
January – June 2019	The Voices of Children	In parallel with Mapping the Best Start to Life, HUM, with support from MRCC's early years team, schools and early childhood settings conducted the Voices of Children Project. This initiative reached over 650 children in the municipality, with 375 allowing HUM to share their voices. ⁴⁴⁰	Using the words and imagery created by these children, HUM produced a storybook that captures the diverse hopes, dreams and views of children. Key insights from this project have informed Municipal Early Years Plans and HUM projects, in particular the Red Cliffs Project. ⁴⁴¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising

⁴³⁷ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Governance Structure*.

⁴³⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (n.d.). *Systems Maps*

⁴³⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). Looking Back to Move Forward: A Retrospective Evaluation of the Hands Up Mallee Initiative (2015-2020).

⁴⁴⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). About the Voices of Children project.

⁴⁴¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). The Voices of Mallee Children: Deep Dives.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
2019 – present	HomeBase Hoops	<p>HomeBase Hoops is an after-hours basketball tournament for youth aged 10 to 17 in Mildura. Since its inception in 2019, the program has conducted 10 terms, engaging over 200 young participants. Held four times a year over six-week tournament terms on Friday evenings, HomeBase Hoops offers young people a space to play basketball, share meals, and build connection with peers and adult mentors from their community. The program is free to join and includes complimentary food and transportation for participants.⁴⁴²</p> <p>Since 2021 financial support through SPSP has enabled HUM to continue to support the program through its main iterations and adaptations, as well as financially support an evaluation of HomeBase Hoops.</p>	Participation in HomeBase Hoops has led to shifts in how service providers engage with and deliver youth services across the Mildura LGA. Moreover, connections between young people and local youth services are also improving as a direct result of this initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising Resources are shared and used in different ways
2019 -2022	Centre for Community Child Health Learning Partnership	HUM has a research partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) of the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. This partnership arose through MRCC, Connected Beginnings and SCHS pooling funding to contract CCCH for their expertise in 2019/2020 to support the Discovery Sessions after the Coffee and Chat. This expertise was distilled to inform the Core Care Conditions which informed the 0-8 years TOC. HUM has shared its learnings on authentic community engagement in the Thriving Children, Thriving Communities webinar series with Dr. Tim Moore.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy)
2020 - 2022	Discovery Sessions	Using the 'Coffee and Chat' format, HUM hosted a series of discovery sessions with caregivers of children aged 0 to 8 years.	Based on the findings and with HUM's support, young people and families identified five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making

⁴⁴² Hands Up Mallee. (2023). HomeBase Hoops Evaluation Report.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		<p>Over 100 families participated in the Coffee and Chats, with approximately 30 of these families then participating in the Discovery Sessions which were held in between COVID19 lockdowns. Themes included what parents/carers identified as significant for their children's development, their hopes and dreams, what they love about being a parent/carer; and the challenges they face. The second session focused on children's health and development, living and working conditions, social connections, and culture and inclusion.⁴⁴³</p> <p>Discovery sessions were also held with youth aged 9 to 18 years. In 2022, the HUM Backbone Team and HUM partners, with support from the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), helped young people and families to co-design and conduct surveys and interviews to find out what their peers had to say about living in the Mildura LGA. This included questions about what would make a difference for them, their families, and their community. Young people and families analysed the information, selected the most important insights, and presented the findings to community leaders and key organisations.⁴⁴⁴</p>	change-enabling opportunities they believe will have the biggest impact and prioritised two for implementation by HUM Action Teams. Young people told HUM that there was nowhere affordable for youth to meet and socialise, particularly in satellite townships such as Red Cliffs and Merbein. These Discovery sessions led directly to the pool pilots in both Red Cliffs and Merbein. They also identified potential risks and protective factors. These Discovery sessions have informed the 0-8 and 9-18 nested MEL frameworks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.)
2020	COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR)	COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR): During the two COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, 18 HUM partners together with the HUM Backbone Team, prototyped and delivered an innovative approach to distribute food parcels, activity packs, social and financial support, and medicines to help	CERR delivered acute relief for individuals and families trying to meet their basic food needs and led to greater engagement and collaboration between HUM partners. A \$650,000 grant for an ongoing Food Hub was also	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) A focus on activities that deliver high levels of impact

⁴⁴³ Hands Up Mallee. (2019). The Voices of Mallee Children: Deep Dives.

⁴⁴⁴ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). Why create mini MELS as part of your measurement, evaluation and learning strategy.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		residents in need. By pooling their resources (knowledge, staffing, assets, etc), CERR partners were able to assist 3,354 people between March and December 2020. This support included the provision of 899 food parcels, 171 activity packs, and 194 cross-agency referrals. ⁴⁴⁵	secured by Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, a direct result of the collective CERR response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources are shared and used in different ways
November 2021	Storytelling for Systems Change Report	The HUM Backbone Team developed this report in partnership with the Centre for Public Impact and Dusseldorp Forum.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy)
December 2021	Panel Presentation - Australian Evaluation Society Conference	Executive Officer of HUM Jane McCracken contributed to a panel discussion exploring the strengths of using storytelling to measure and evaluate systems change work.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising
2021 -2022	HUM MEL Framework development	Between mid-2021 and the beginning of 2022, 24 HUM stakeholders, including Aboriginal community members and other community members, worked together with the support of Clear Horizon to co-design HUM's overarching Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning Framework for 2022 to 2037. This framework aims to support learning and improvement to help the collaboration achieve its social outcomes and build an evidence base that highlights what	Participants strengthened their understanding of and ability to apply MEL. Additionally, MEL is now integrated into all HUM's activities, guiding its decision-making and how HUM demonstrates its impact. HUM's reporting has shifted from focusing on outputs and population changes (which it currently isn't influencing yet) to demonstrating systems changes,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.)

⁴⁴⁵ Clear Horizon. (2021). COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response (CERR) Mildura LGA evaluation report.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		HUM is achieving and how its partners are working together.	changes for individual or groups of children, youth, and families, and how HUM's way of working are contributing to these results.	
2021 - present	Rich Home Learning Environment (Red Cliffs Project)	In 2021, Hands Up Mallee started a co-design process with parents of young children and Early Years Services to trial the Rich Home Learning Environment Project, also known as the Red Cliffs Project, in Red Cliffs, Mildura. It was funded by a seeding grant from the Paul Ramsay Foundation. Red Cliffs is a satellite town of approximately 5,000 people in the Mildura LGA, 20 minutes drive from Mildura city. This project aims to use connected co-design approaches with families and local service providers to identify challenges and opportunities for fostering rich home learning environments. It also involves the development and implementation of rapid, iterative prototyping of ideas to pilot within the local community. The Red Cliffs Project remains active, with the project team focusing on organising community events, advocacy efforts and planning for key early years services infrastructure upgrades in Red Cliffs. ⁴⁴⁶	Through the Red Cliffs Project families have become strong and empowered leaders in their community. Multiple events are co-designed and delivered in the local community each year, reaching between 50 and 140 people per event. Advocacy work led by families in the project team has involved influencing funding commitments for significant infrastructure upgrades in Red Cliffs, including a \$6million dollar investment from the Victoria State Government for a Integrated Early Years Hub. As a result of this project service providers are more aware and open to understanding and valuing community expertise and voice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All enablers for change • All systemic outcomes
October – November 2021	Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR)	In October 2021, HUM partners, along with the HUM Backbone Team launched AOCTVR to help close the vaccination gap in specific areas of the Mildura LGA that had low vaccination rates. Between October 10 th and November 20 th , 2021, AOCTVR organised 38 pop-up clinics, administering 1294 COVID-19 vaccinations and 406 PCR tests. AOCTVR effectively reached under-vaccinated groups by utilising a community-	Key outcomes: AOCTVR significantly increased COVID-19 immunisation rates within groups experiencing vaccination barriers in the Mildura LGA. It also provided an evidence base for locally led emergency responses and highlighted the importance of applying an equity lens to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All enablers for change • All systemic outcomes

⁴⁴⁶ Clear Horizon. (2022). Rich Home Learning Environment evaluation report.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		led approach drawing on the knowledge and connections of local Aboriginal and CALD leaders, bringing vaccination clinics directly to the people, and offering a holistic service experience meeting the unique needs of AOCTVR's target cohorts. ⁴⁴⁷	address health and wellbeing barriers within the community. In 2022, AOCTVR received the Victorian Public Health Care Award in the category 'Supporting Healthy Populations' for its accomplishments.	
2021, 2022 & 2023 (Annually)	Progress mapping and learning circles	A core component of the Department of Social Services Strong Places Stronger People funding which supports the HUM collective is annual and independently facilitated progress mapping and learning circles. This progress mapping occurs annually and involves the HUM Backbone Team, community members, delivery partners and people in government coming together to discuss the ways in which HUM has been making progress towards six enablers of collective impact. These enablers are, systems leadership; inclusive community engagement; understanding measurement, evaluation and learning; use of collective power for (collective) purpose, investment for policy and (collective) purpose, leading and supporting change. This process is facilitated by an independent party and followed by a Learning Circle to discuss the findings of the Progress Mapping Report. The findings from the Learning Circle form the basis for HUM's annual Action and Support Plan, which focusses on tangible actions to support the enabler of collective impact practice. Collectively these help the HUM collective see how it is growing collective impact ways	The 2022 reflection and learning process identified that HUM's Governance structured needed to move towards a community driven model. As a result, this was put into action through the development of the current governance redesign process which firmly places community at the centre of decision-making to shift power to the community. Similarly, progress mapping and learning circles processes in 2022 also identified a section key action area focusing on continuing work on deepening relationships between HUM and local Aboriginal communities and people. During these processes participants identified the need to incorporate 'healing structures and ways of working' into HUM's work. Subsequently, HUM has worked with the Aboriginal community to establish the Yarning Group (see above). The HUM Backbone Team also undertook cultural training to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and locally led governance • A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making

⁴⁴⁷ Clear Horizon. (2023). Active Outreach COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Response (AOCTVR) Evaluation and Learning Report.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		of working using a growth rubric of six enablers.	further build knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and history and has a strong commitment to ongoing cultural learning alongside the Aboriginal community.	
May 2022	AOD residential withdrawal and rehabilitation facility	Funding for a 30 bed facility in Mildura, announced as a result of years of advocacy work and development led by HUM in a secretariat role for a large group of collaborating agencies.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and locally led governance • A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making • Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) •
2022 - present	Red Cliffs Connected Events Pilot	In 2021, HUM conducted the Red Cliffs co-design project with parents of young children and early years services to understand what is needed to create a rich learning environment at home and in the community, supporting children's development and preparing them for school. This initiative arose out of the poor and worsening trend of AECD data in Red Cliffs (see the Red Cliffs Case Study in Annex 1 for greater detail). One of the key ideas that emerged and was prototyped became known as Red Cliffs Connected. From 2022 to 2024, local families alongside the HUM Backbone Team and partners, co-designed and organised a series of eight free events in public places across Red Cliffs. These events attracted over 500 attendees in total, providing children with opportunities to play with peers and enabling	Strengthened community connections and relationships between families and children in Red Cliffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) • A focus on activities that deliver high levels of impact • There's investment in locally co-designed solutions / innovations • Community voice is respected and a key driver in decision making •

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		families to build connections within their community. ⁴⁴⁸		
2022, 2023 & 2024	Presentations within Clear Horizon Academy Courses	HUM's MEL lead appeared as a guest speaker in Clear Horizon's Academy Course 'Evaluating Systems Change and Place Based Approaches' to share HUM's participatory approach to MEL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making • Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising
March – May 2022	Fun in the Park Pilot	Building on the success and lessons learned from AOCTVR, the Fun in the Park pilot aimed to further test the active outreach approach to meaningfully engage with and support the community. Buxton Sobee Park, Hornsey Park and Flamingo Park were chosen as sites due to their concentrated social housing and low social economic status, and because of the success of the AOCTVR approaches in these locations. One of the key intentions of the project was to engage early years services and model the active outreach approaches learned through AOCTVR efforts to encourage this approach to bring services to community, who might be challenged to go to services. Many residents near these parks, particularly those living in public housing, face barriers to accessing services and affordable activities for their children. Between 14 March and 23 May 2022, Fun in the Park organised seven free community events featuring music, games, art, sports activities, and BBQs. Each event had a strong emphasis on collaborative early years' service partners, equity, and ensuring activities were accessible to all, with		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) • Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) • A focus on activities that deliver high levels of impact • Government, services, and leaders think and act differently • There's investment in locally co-designed solutions / innovations • Resources are shared and used in different ways

⁴⁴⁸ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). Red Cliffs Connected Events Summary Report

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		attendance varying between 10 and 80 children and caregivers per event. ⁴⁴⁹		
May 2022	Community Listening webinar – Centre for Community Child Health	HUM contributed to a national webinar which discussed the Framework for Collaborative Decision Making developed through the Centre for Community Child Health. HUM provided insights into the importance of community involvement in place-based initiatives.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making • Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising
May – December 2022	Nested MEL Frameworks for 0-8 and 9-18 Action Teams	Between May and December 2022, a further 29 people including HUM partners, parents/carers, and young people participated in workshops to co-create Nested Journeys of Change and Key Evaluation Questions for HUM's work focused on 0-8 and 9-18-year-olds and their families. Findings from the Discovery Sessions (see above) and Project Y (see above) helped inform the conversations during the co-design sessions. Each co-design process resulted in a build your own journey of change menu, that HUM initiatives can use to create a bespoke TOC for their project as well as a mini-MEL template that can be used to develop simple MEL plans.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) • A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making
2022 - 2023	Co-design of the Family Child Hub Mildura	The Family and Child Hub co-design project began in September 2022, engaging 11 local community members and families from a range of different backgrounds, as well as staff from Sunraysia Community Health Services, Mallee District Aboriginal Services and Mildura Rural City Council. Through this co-design process, which included 15 workshops, the design, services and	The Family and Child Hub co-design project was initiated in response to the need for service expansion of the existing site and transfer to a larger setting. It engaged families to co-design the new space and develop a hub which is more family centred and welcoming. The Family and Child Hub now offers a comprehensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) • Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) • A focus on activities that deliver high levels of impact

⁴⁴⁹ Hands Up Mallee. (2022). Fun in the Parks Pilot Evaluation.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		approach of the space was determined and developed.	range of services to support families who care for children. This includes a drop-in service, a dedicated child and carer's space, Maternal and Child health services, Immunisation appointments, Occupation Therapy, Speech Pathology, Breastfeeding support, Playgroups and communal social spaces. These services are available to parents, grandparents, family members or others who provide care for children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government, services, and leaders think and act differently There's investment in locally co-designed solutions / innovations Resources are shared and used in different ways
December 2022	Community Data Reform (CDR) Pilot	In June to December 2022, HUM took part in a community data reform pilot (CDR). Championed by the Victorian Centre for Data Insights, the aims for the CDR Pilot were to demonstrate clear use cases for place-based initiatives seeking government held data, challenges faced by place-based initiatives in navigating varied departmental structures when seeking data and data expertise, and processes to establish safe data sharing agreements. ⁴⁵⁰	The pilot revealed that sharing data between State Government and place-based initiatives in Victoria is a complex endeavour. Data available to SPSP sites was restricted in terms of how it could be used, and who it could be shared with. Despite being a short-term pilot, it was a useful learning process for HUM and supported significant skill development in the HUM Backbone Team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising
2022 - present	HUM Governance re-design	In 2022, HUM adopted a new governance model to guide its ways of working and priority actions. This model was co-designed with Aboriginal people, family service providers, leaders from Council and Mildura community members. The Collaborative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) Transparent and locally led governance.

⁴⁵⁰ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). Community data reform pilot: Hands Up Mallee insights.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		Governance Group, comprising community members, service providers and local leaders, drives the new model, meeting regularly to make and advise on decisions. Other elements that are part of the model are, The Yarning Group, the HUM Backbone Team, HUM's engagement and action collaborations, and the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Team.. ⁴⁵¹		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An empowered community with agency to act
2022 - present	Yarning Group	The Yarning Group grew out of the Aboriginal Reference group, it is a group of local Aboriginal community members who form a key part of HUM's governance model. This group connects directly to the HUM Collaborative Governance Group and the Hands up Mallee Backbone Team. The Yarning Group provides cultural guidance and lens over the decision making of the HUM collaboration in areas such as ethics, data and data sovereignty, Aboriginal design and imagery, and engaging with the Aboriginal community. In late 2023, the Yarning Group organised a visit to lake Mungo for the HUM Collaborative Governance Group, enhancing participants' cultural awareness and understanding of the local Aboriginal cultural heritage of the region. ⁴⁵² This is also an example of doing governance different, with cultural learning for all Governance group members a core part of the unique governance expectations of the HUM collective.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) Transparent and locally led governance. An empowered community with agency to act

⁴⁵¹ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). *Governance Structure*.

⁴⁵² Clear Horizon. (2024). Hands Up Mallee evaluation interviews.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
2022 - 2023	Red Cliffs Pool Pilot	The Red Cliffs Pool Pilot is a youth driven initiative that emerged through both the Youth Discovery Sessions, and a co-design project with Red Cliffs youth, families and local service providers between March and December 2022 to identify key priorities, challenges and opportunities to support positive outcomes for youth development. During the co-design process, young people told HUM that they felt there was nowhere affordable in Red Cliffs for youth to meet and socialise. Responding to this, the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot aimed to provide a safe, affordable and accessible place for young people to meet and socialise in Red Cliffs. During the school holidays in January 2023, the pilot offered free access to the Red Cliffs swimming pool for children and young people aged 17 and under, along with a range of activities, events and snacks to encourage participation.	<p>The pilot significantly increased community usage of the pool, attracting over 3,000 visitors in one month. It also empowered youth leaders, who reported enhanced leadership skills, pride in their achievements, and learning valuable life lessons. This pilot also demonstrates the strategic impact of HUM initiatives, the significant impact on children and young people this initiative created demonstrated to Council and other services that removing monetary barriers does not cost services but is instead a positive investment in youth and children.</p> <p>In 2024, The Red Cliffs Pool Pilot received the VIC/Tas Community Based Initiative of the Year Award at the Parks and Leisure Australia Awards of Excellence.⁴⁵³</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) A focus on activities that deliver high levels of impact Government, services, and leaders think and act differently There's investment in locally co-designed solutions / innovations Resources are shared and used in different ways
2023	Merbein Pool Pilot	Based off the success of the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot and recommendation from the Red Cliffs Pool Pilot evaluation to test the approach in another small satellite township of a similar size and distance from Mildura, a similar pilot has been successfully trialled in Merbein. This second pilot demonstrates the significance and impact of opening pools across the region for free summer holidays, and the net positive affect this can create in providing safe, healthy spaces for young	1356 young people and children engaged this pilot, an 81% increase in number of visitors to Merbein pool from the previous year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) A focus on activities that deliver high levels of impact

⁴⁵³ Hands Up Mallee. (2023). Red Cliffs Pools Pilot Evaluation.

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
		people and children across the broader Mildura LGA.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government, services, and leaders think and act differently There's investment in locally co-designed solutions / innovations Resources are shared and used in different ways
September 2023	Presentation - Australian Evaluation Society Conference	The HUM MEL Lead together with a Principal Consultant from Clear Horizon co-delivered the presentation 'Through the lens of community: Co-designing HUM's Measurement, Evaluation and Learning approach together with cross-sector partners, families, and youth.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising Changes are happening beyond the Mildura LGA
September – November 2023	Progress Mapping Yarns	30 HUM partners representing six stakeholder groups participate in HUM's Progress Mapping Yarns, informing HUM's Progress Mapping Report 2023.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising
November 2023	HUM Learning Circle	27 HUM partners participate in HUM's Learning Circle resulting in an overview of HUM's priority strategies for 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making
November 2023	Panel Presentation - Health Justice Australia Conference	The HUM Backbone contributed to a panel discussion exploring partnership and collaboration and the importance of removing the stigma and shame from asking hard questions in partnerships.		
November 2023	Storytelling for Systems Change: Listening to	The Centre for Public Impact publishes this significant report which HUM contributed to.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making

Year	Initiative	Description	Key outcomes achieved	Contributed to HUM TOC Outcomes
	Understand Report			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising Government, services, and leaders think and act differently Changes are happening beyond the Mildura LGA
2024	ChangeFest24 Hosts	HUM and Connected Beginnings Mildura were the local hosts for ChangeFest 2024 (CF24), the nation-wide movement for community-led place-based change in Australia. This annual gathering allows time to celebrate, learn and demonstrate how diverse communities are encouraging cross sector collaboration, meaningful engagement, and centring the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community as a vital pathway in transformative change. HUM has also participated in and presented at ChangeFest 2018, 2019, and 2023.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTIQ+, etc.) Multi-sector collaboration (collective efforts, resourcing, advocacy) A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising Government, services, and leaders think and act differently Changes are happening beyond the Mildura LGA
May 2024	Case study in Evidence for Action in the Early Years System Assessing System Leverage Points Report	HUM featured as a case study in the "Evidence for Action in the Early Years System Assessing System Leverage Points" report by Orange Compass, The Centre for Community Child Health, Clear Horizon, and Sefa.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on growing skills and knowledge / Evidence-informed decision making Sharing of progress and learnings for improvement and awareness raising Government, services, and leaders think and act differently Changes are happening beyond the Mildura LGA

APPENDIX 2. DEFINITIONS

Please see below for an overview of key terms related to place-based systems change, frequently referenced throughout this report, along with their definitions.

Table 8. Definitions of key terms used in report

Term	Definition
Collective impact	<p>A specific form of collaboration that brings people and organisations together who agree on doing the following five things to help solve complex problems in their community:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone agrees on a joint vision 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 decision making. 4. Everyone shares evidence (numbers and stories) and insights about their work and what they are learning. 5. The collaboration is supported by a Backbone Team that helps everyone to work well together, step out of their comfort zone, and commit to a different way of working.
Community Aspiration	<p>The work of HUM is guided by the Community Aspiration – an agreed upon vision for the Mildura LGA community. The Community Aspiration for HUM is ‘<i>a connected community where families matter, and children thrive.</i>’</p> <p>This shared vision is also referred to as a ‘Common Agenda’ in place-based systems change; it guides collaborators and ensures that activities are aligned in strategy and working towards the same goals for community.</p>
Enablers of Change	<p>The ways of working that a place-based initiative aims to establish and embed across its activities, Backbone Team and collaboration partners. Once in place, enablers of change (or enabling outcomes) are expected to lead to systemic transformations which in return will drive population-level impact within a specific geographic area. What enabling outcomes should look like will vary slightly between different communities to accommodate local contexts and needs. Progress against enablers of change is evaluated and tracked over time and is an important marker for success, especially in the initial years of place-based initiatives.</p>
Equity	<p>The principle of creating the conditions for fair and just inclusion of all individuals based on their specific needs and circumstances. Unlike equality, which means giving everyone the same resources or opportunities, equity recognises that people start from different places and may require different kinds of support to achieve similar outcomes. It means identifying gaps in opportunities, outcomes, and representation, and taking targeted actions to address those gaps not just for individuals but systemically so that everyone can have a good life.</p>
Journey of change	<p>The strategic roadmap that clearly outlines the key steps HUM believes are essential for achieving its Community Aspiration. It illustrates the connections between HUM’s ways of working and the expected outcomes along the way.</p>
Place-based approach	<p>An approach that targets a specific location to build on local strengths or respond to a complex social problem.</p>
Systems change	<p>Refers to solving the underlying issues that drive complex problems, rather than focusing on one isolated issue or symptoms. This can be achieved by shifting the</p>

Term	Definition
	system's purpose along with mindsets, power dynamics, relationships/connections, resource flows, practices and policies.