



The Royal
Children's
Hospital
Melbourne

PLATFORMS GUIDE

**IMPROVING CHILDREN'S
WELLBEING THROUGH
COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE**

2019

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The Centre for Community Child Health

The Centre for Community Child Health is a department of The Royal Children's Hospital and a research group of Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

We work with families, communities and governments to advance equitable health and developmental outcomes for all children. Our work involves discovery, learning, testing and trialling, educating and advocating. Our extensive international networks help to ensure that we remain at the forefront of efforts to improve - and support others to improve - children's health, development and wellbeing.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i	STEP 3	
The Centre for Community Child Health	i	Create a shared vision for change	23
		Why is a shared vision for change needed?	23
		How to create a shared vision for change	24
GLOSSARY	iv	CHECK AND REFLECT	25
		RESOURCES	25
		SUPPORT	25
INTRODUCTION	1	LEARN	
What is Platforms?	1	Learn about the community together	26
Why use Platforms?	1		
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS	3	STEP 1	
		Prepare for learning together	27
		Why is preparing for learning together important?	27
		How to prepare for learning together	27
		PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE:	
		TAKING AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH	29
USING PLATFORMS	4	STEP 2	
Platforms Icons	5	Hear from the community	30
Platforms Principles	6	Why is hearing from the community important?	30
CHECK AND REFLECT	10	How to hear from the community	31
RESOURCES	10	HOLD A COMMUNITY FORUM	32
SUPPORT	10	Why is holding a community forum important?	32
		How to hold a community forum	32
		PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE:	
		LEARN AND REFLECT	33
ENGAGE		STEP 3	
Lay the foundations for change	11	Select a shared priority	34
		Why is selecting a shared priority important?	34
		How to select a shared priority	34
STEP 1		STEP 4	
Engage and mobilise the community	12	Pause and reflect	36
Why is community engagement and mobilisation important?	12	Why is pausing and reflecting important?	36
How to engage and mobilise the community	13	How to pause and reflect	37
RAISING AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE	14	CHECK AND REFLECT	38
		RESOURCES	38
		SUPPORT	38
STEP 2		ACT	
Begin building respectful relationships	15	Design, test and implement solutions	39
Why is building respectful relationships important?	15		
How to build respectful relationships	15	STEP 1	40
CHECK AND REFLECT	17	Learn more and design together	40
RESOURCES	17	Why is learning more and designing together important?	40
SUPPORT	17	How to learn more and design together	41
		PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE:	
		USING DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVIDENCE	43
BUILD			
Build a community partnership	18		
STEP 1			
Establish or strengthen a community partnership	19		
Why is a community partnership needed?	19		
How to form a community partnership	19		
Hold the first community partnership meeting	20		
STEP 2			
Develop a Working Together Agreement	21		
Why is a Working Together Agreement needed?	21		
How to develop a Working Together Agreement	22		

STEP 2	
Select powerful solutions	44
Why is selecting powerful solutions important?	44
How to select powerful solutions	44
DEVELOP A THEORY OF CHANGE	46
Why is developing a theory of change important?	46
How to develop a theory of change	46
STEP 3	
Test and adapt	47
Why is testing and adapting important?	47
How to test and adapt	47
PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE:	
ADAPT TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT BY TESTING	49
STEP 4	
Implement and monitor	50
Why is important to implement and monitor?	50
How to implement and monitor	50
CHECK AND REFLECT	52
RESOURCES	52
SUPPORT	52

REVIEW

Review, share and refine	53
--------------------------	----

STEP 1	
Develop a partnership learning plan	54
Why is developing a partnership learning plan important?	54
How to develop a partnership learning plan	55

STEP 2	
Reflect on the information together	56
Why is reflecting on the information together important?	56
How can you do this step?	56

STEP 3	
Share and celebrate	57
Why is sharing and celebrating important?	57
How to share and celebrate	58

STEP 4	
Consider next steps	59
Why do this step?	59
How can you do this step?	59
CHECK AND REFLECT	61
RESOURCES	61
SUPPORT	61

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Supporting health, development and wellbeing in the first 1000 days	3
Figure 2: Platforms Roadmap	4
Figure 3: Platforms Principles	6
Figure 4: Ecological model	8
Figure 5: The components of evidence-informed decision making	43
Figure 6: Deciding the scale of testing	45
Figure 7: Common ways of testing solutions, using action and reflection cycles	48
Figure 8: Consider next steps for your partnership	60

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Platforms Icons	5
Table 2: Approaches for learning more and designing together	41

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Supporting health, development and wellbeing in the first 1000 days	65
Appendix 2: Platforms Roadmap (with steps)	66
Appendix 3: Platforms Roadmap (without steps)	67
Appendix 4: Ecological model	68

GLOSSARY

Adversity

Adversity is being exposed to hardship, difficult or challenging circumstances.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency that provides official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia.

www.abs.gov.au

Australian Early Development Census

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide data collection of early childhood development at the time children commence their first year of full-time school.

www.aedc.gov.au

Backbone organisation

A dedicated organisation with staff and skills to coordinate and/or manage services, organisations and individuals participating in a place-based (or collective impact) initiative (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Collective impact

Collective impact is an approach that brings together different sectors to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligned efforts and common measures of success (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Co-design

Co-design is an approach that involves people who use or are affected by an initiative or service in the design of that initiative or service. "Co-design signifies the active involvement of a diverse range of participants in exploring, developing, and testing responses to shared challenges" (Blomkamp, 2018, p. 731).

Co-production

Co-production is working together to combine skills, expertise and experience to effect positive change in communities. "Co-production is delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours" (Boyle & Harris, 2009, p. 4).

Community conditions

Community conditions are the various economic, social, political, environmental, technological, and legal factors that affect a community.

Community engagement

Community engagement is a relational process that actively seeks to incorporate community values, concerns and aspirations into a decision-making process.

Cross-sector collaboration

Cross-sector or multi-sector collaboration seeks to bring together people or organisations that represent a range of sectors such as education, health, housing, transport and the community.

Data

Data are measurements or observations that can be used as a source of information (ABS, 2013).

Disadvantage

Disadvantage is unfavourable conditions or circumstances. Social disadvantage is defined by as "a range of difficulties that block life opportunities and which prevent people from participating fully in society" (Vinson and Rawsthorne, 2015, p. 19).

NAPLAN

The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It tests essential skills including reading, writing, spelling and numeracy.

www.nap.edu.au

Place-based approach

Place-based initiatives are those that focus on citizen engagement and local decision making within a geographic location. "Stakeholders engaging in a collaborative process to address issues as they are experienced within a geographic space, be it a neighbourhood, a region, or an ecosystem" (Bellefontaine & Wisener, 2011, p. 6).

Plan Do Study Act cycle (PDSA)

A PDSA cycle is a tool for planning, trying and observing change, and acting on the results.

Platforms Guide

Platforms Guide: Improving children's wellbeing through community-led change is a guide designed to support services, community groups and governments to successfully implement the Platforms approach in a community.

Platforms Principles

The Platforms Principles underpin the implementation of the Platforms approach and guide thinking and action. The principles should be applied flexibly and adjusted to meet the unique strengths, needs and preferences of the local community.

Platforms Roadmap

The Platforms Roadmap outlines a phased-process for implementing the Platforms approach.

Progressive (or proportionate) universalism

Progressive universalism refers to actions to influence development that are universal but implemented with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage (e.g. Medicare is available to all, but those with greater health needs have access to additional services).

Respectful relationships

Respectful relationships are those that focus on the feelings, wishes or rights of others. Respectful relationships should be reciprocally beneficial for those involved.

Service system

A service system refers to a range of services that seek to respond to the needs of a particular group of people, such as children and families.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder is any individual, group or organisation potentially affected by, or with an interest in, an initiative project.

Theory of change

A theory of change provides an explanation for how and why a program, initiative or solution is thought to work.

Theory U

Theory U is a change management theory. The 'U' reflects the shape of the change journey as participants critically reflect and craft new ways of working together.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is being susceptible to physical, emotional or mental injury.

Working Together Agreement

A Working Together Agreement outlines how people plan to work together cooperatively to help enable productive, sustained working relationships that meet everyone's needs and expectations.

INTRODUCTION

What is Platforms?

Platforms is a community-led approach developed by the Centre for Community Child Health that seeks to improve the environments and experiences of children in the communities in which they are born, live, learn and grow.

Platforms is founded on a commitment to working in partnership with families, community members, services, governments and other stakeholders to improve the community conditions that shape children's wellbeing. It provides guidance on how to strengthen community 'platforms' – such as safe and supportive neighbourhoods, connected families and high-quality services – for better health and equity for children and their families.

Platforms was developed in 2005 as a tool for improving outcomes for children in the early years through service redevelopment. It is informed by evidence and over 15 years of experience applying the approach in communities across Australia. Learning from the experience of these communities has contributed to the continuous refinement of Platforms.

This Platforms Guide (the Guide) is designed to support services, community groups and governments to successfully implement the Platforms approach in their local community. This edition incorporates revised research and practice evidence.

The Guide is designed for use in conjunction with Platforms training and resources.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

Why use Platforms?

Improving the health, development and wellbeing of children means improving the environments and experiences in the communities in which they are born, live, learn and grow. This is because experiences and environments during children's early years build the foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing.

Around one in five children are arriving at Australian primary schools developmentally vulnerable. This means that around 20 per cent of Australia's children have not had the experiences or environments they need for healthy development. We know that those who start behind are at risk of staying behind, and are also at greater risk of having health, social and emotional problems in adulthood.

Communities with a high proportion of families experiencing adversity may find that traditional service-oriented approaches to supporting children and families fail to deliver desired change. There are two key reasons for this: the first is that services (particularly non-integrated, stand-alone services) are often ill-equipped to deal with the multifaceted and complex nature of problems facing families today; and the second is that families experiencing adversity may have a history of being mistrustful of services.

"Platforms has had a strong influence on the way I view community connection and collaborative practice and has enabled me to develop authenticity in my engagement with the community. The training has provided the tools and knowledge to understand the needs and wants of community and create partnerships that support the implementation of programs and processes that are driven by children and their families through respectful relationships."

CEO, Early Years Service.

Platforms is distinctive from traditional approaches in two key ways: its ability to cope with complexity and its focus on working in partnership.

An ability to cope with complexity

Platforms supports communities to understand all of the factors contributing to complex problems, and to be able to respond more rapidly to unpredictability, new information and emerging issues. Platforms shows promise in tackling inequity and complex problems where traditional service-oriented approaches have failed.

A focus on working in partnership

Platforms takes a place-based, community-led approach. It focuses on citizen engagement and local decision making within a geographic location. It supports communities to come together to focus on issues that matter to communities, to enable and empower the community voice, and to activate and strengthen the community's ability to respond to identified problems.

Successfully addressing deep and persistent disadvantage and childhood vulnerability requires long-term investment in individual communities. Platforms supports a comprehensive and sustained approach to supporting children's health, development and wellbeing.

"I completed the Platforms training about six years ago and it remains the foundation from which I approach all roles and jobs. The challenging training re-oriented my understanding of my role as a facilitator of people, conversations and actions. I have used this training in both international and domestic roles - achieving critical success in often complex and demanding environments. Its content considers all contexts and provides the formula for creating sustainable change."

**Occupational Therapist,
Integrated Family Services.**

"Real conversations and relationships with families are so much more than collecting information from them. After working in local government, doing what I thought was good consultation and community engagement, I suddenly had a big light go on for me in Platforms training. I remember going home and talking about it! Putting aside ego and my work history, I'm constantly amazed by the effect of stopping and thinking about how we are working with families. Now as a manager of programs, because of the Platforms framework, I can't help but be asking myself and my colleagues all the time the uncomfortable question "where are the families in all of this?"

**Coordinator,
Child and Parent Centre.**

"Over the past five years I have been fortunate to be part of Platforms in Western Australia... Reflective practice strategies sit at the heart of Platforms and hence, draw me back to keep the child at the centre of our work. In the struggle to increase reach and to be relevant in today's world the Platforms Roadmap has been a steady compass to guide my steps and of those I lead."

**Manager, Parenting, Family,
Child and Youth Support.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS

Experiences and environments during children's early years build the foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. Positive experiences and environments – such as responsive care, nurturing relationships, nourishment, secure housing – support good health, development and wellbeing.

While it is never too late to make changes that improve health and wellbeing, evidence tells us that the first 1000 days of life are a critical period of development

– a distinct and timely opportunity to have a lasting impact on children's social, emotional and physical wellbeing (see Figure 1).

Meeting a child's needs extends beyond families to the wider community: optimising early childhood development requires an integrated and holistic approach to policies, programs and services.

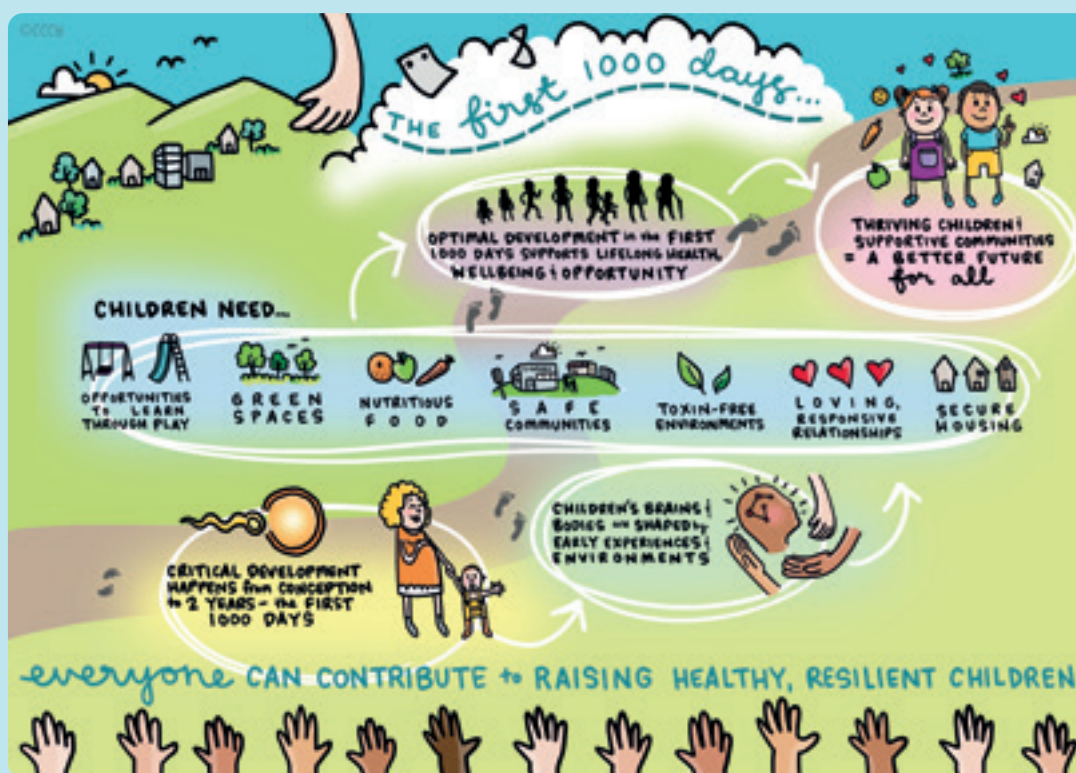


Figure 1: Supporting health, development and wellbeing in the first 1000 days. Source: CCCH 2018.

Tackling vulnerability

Many children experience vulnerability during their childhood – it may be lasting or brief, a little or a lot. Currently, around one in five Australian children begin school developmentally behind their peers. This means that approximately 20 per cent of children have not had the experiences or conditions they need for optimal development. This can have a lasting impact on their social, economic and educational future.

Successfully addressing deep and persistent disadvantage and childhood vulnerability requires different sectors, services and platforms to come together for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to supporting children's health, development and wellbeing. It requires valuing and using the insights of communities, families and children to drive tailored and informed solutions.

USING PLATFORMS

The Platforms Guide (the Guide) provides an overview of the Platforms approach, including its rationale, principles and intended impact. The Guide follows the structure of the Platforms Roadmap (see Figure 2).

Each chapter in the Guide outlines a phase of the Platforms Roadmap and includes:

- an **overview** of the phase
- key **steps** within the phase (including why they are important and how to apply them)
- additional **resources**
- available **support**
- **check and reflect** questions to monitor your progress.

PLATFORMS ROADMAP

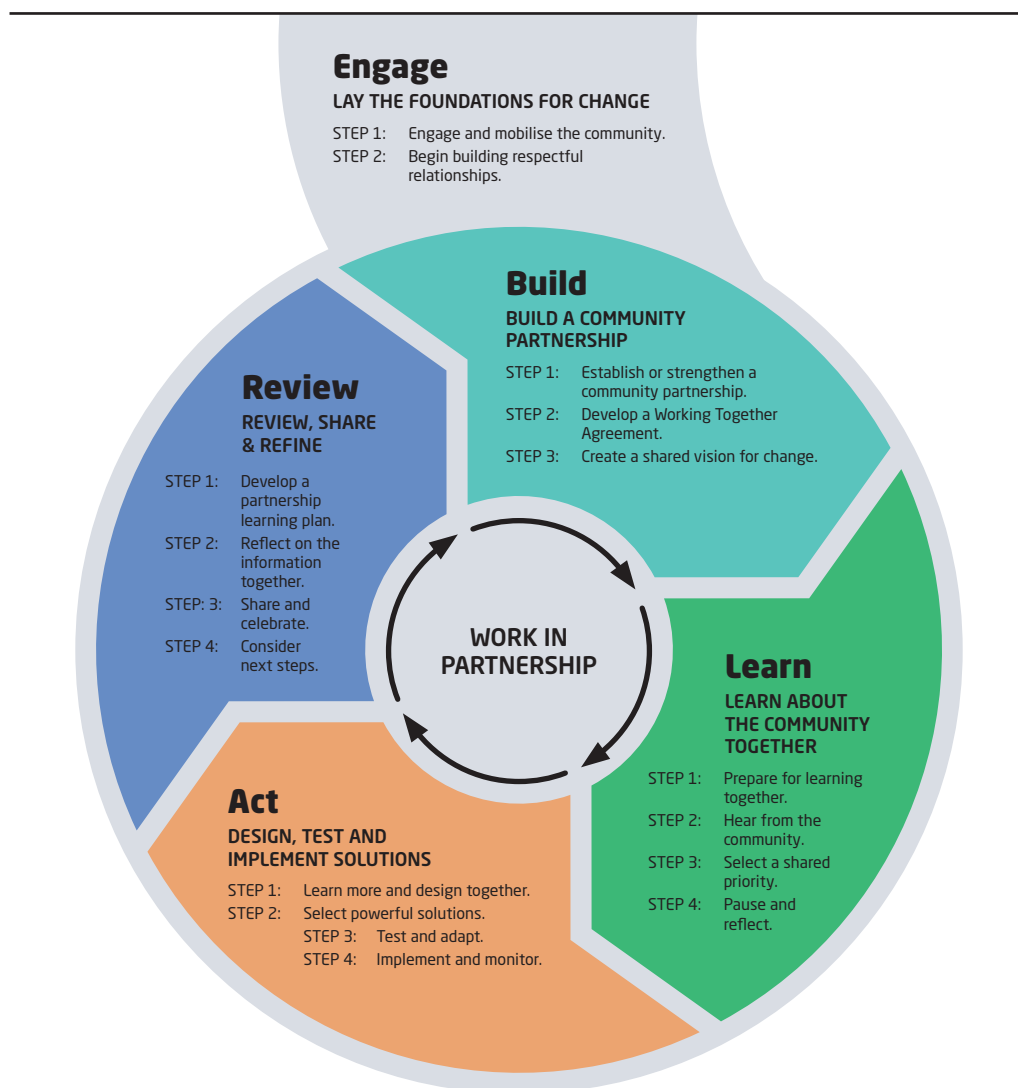


Figure 2: Platforms Roadmap

The Platforms Roadmap (the Roadmap) outlines a process for implementing the Platforms approach that comprises five phases. Phases 1-3 (**Engage, Build and Learn**) focus on engaging and mobilising people, building relationships and partnerships, and learning about the community. Phases 4-5 (**Act and Review**) focus on the design, testing and implementation of changes, as well as regular reflection and refinement of the approach. It is important to note that while the Roadmap depicts the phases in a sequence, the process is dynamic and iterative. In practice, communities should expect to move back and forth between the phases as they continue to develop, learn and refine their work together. The time spent in each phase will depend on the nature of the community and the desired changes – it could range from weeks to months or years.

Platforms Icons

Icons throughout the Platforms Guide highlight important information and additional resources to support your success.

TABLE 1: PLATFORMS ICONS

Icon		Description
	Check and reflect	This icon highlights questions that prompt you to check and reflect on your progress.
	Resources	This icon alerts you to related tools, readings or templates. For links to all resources visit www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms Resources and links are updated as new material becomes available.
	Principle in practice	This icon indicates what a Platforms Principle looks like in practice.
	Support	This icon indicates the relevant specialised training or consultancy support on this topic available from the Centre for Community Child Health.

Platforms Principles

The Platforms Principles underpin the approach and guide how to think and act when implementing Platforms. The principle of 'work in partnership' provides a basis for all Platforms activity and shapes the application of the other seven principles (see Figure 3).

The principles should be applied flexibly and adjusted to meet the unique strengths, needs and preferences of the local community. This means communities may choose to modify or develop additional principles to ensure they are relevant and meaningful.

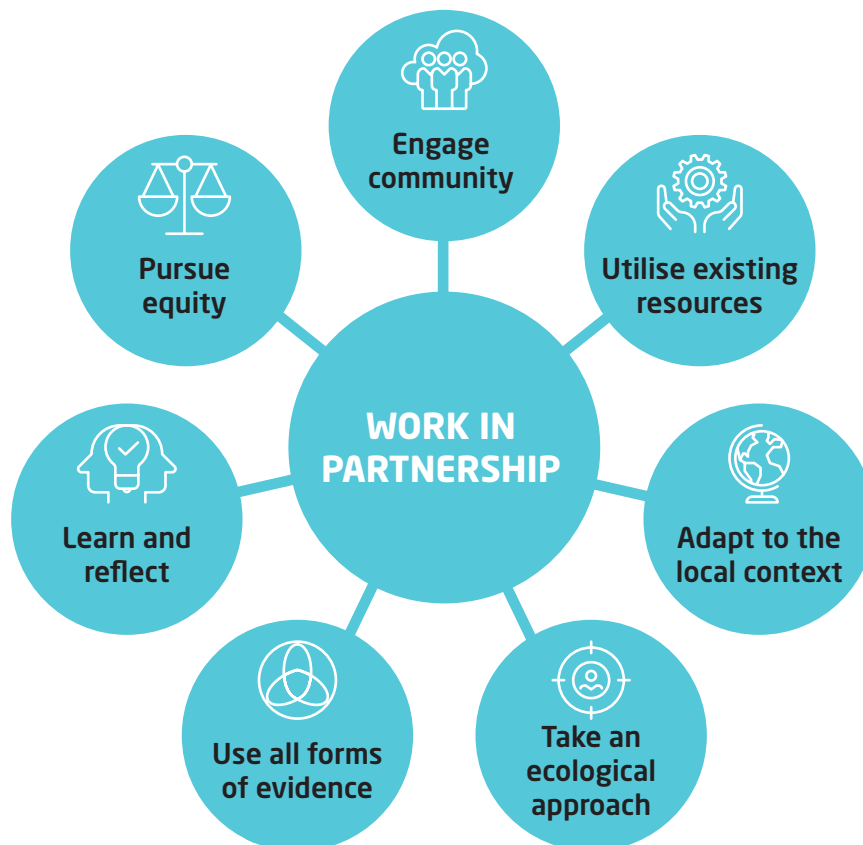


Figure 3: Platforms Principles

Work in partnership

Respectful and helpful relationships between people are fundamental to working together successfully. The Family Partnership Model (Davis & Day, 2010) describes the building and sustaining of these relationships as 'working in partnership'. Attributes of working in partnership include:

- actively working together
- recognising the expertise of all within the relationship
- mutual respect
- being open and honest
- negotiation
- demonstrating trust
- acknowledging the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders
- acknowledging and building on the strengths of individuals and communities.

Building a culture of partnership is dependent on everyone involved understanding and committing to this way of working. Those leading and/or facilitating the process have a responsibility to model, and explicitly explore, the attributes of partnership to enable this approach to be adopted. All involved – including those who connect with the Platforms process along the way – should be able to experience this culture of partnership through the interactions, decisions and joint work characterised by the Platforms Principles.

Engage community

The engagement and involvement of the community in defining opportunities and issues, developing and testing solutions, and leading the entire change process is fundamental to Platforms. This is because:

- involving the community enables individuals to develop the skills and self-esteem that helps to build community capacity
- the connections developed promote community cohesion and help to build stronger social bonds
- when local knowledge is used to shape local priorities and strategies, the community's needs and wishes are more likely to be met.

Despite the benefits of community engagement, genuinely involving the whole community – so that even those who are rarely heard are included – is hard to do well. Genuine community engagement involves much more than consultation. It means community members working with service providers and funders to co-design, co-deliver and co-evaluate a change process or initiative. This requires those facilitating the process “to see and do things differently”. This involves:

- creating a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment
- spending time developing and nurturing relationships
- fostering leadership and ownership of the change or initiative within the community.

The time, expertise and commitment that genuine community engagement requires should not be underestimated. It requires those facilitating the process to be patient and attuned to the needs of all involved.

Utilise existing resources

Communities have considerable assets, services and investments that can often be reorganised to implement an agreed course of action and realise the shared community vision. This typically requires individuals and organisations to coordinate or collaborate, which can require significant change for those involved. Coordination and collaboration can be promoted by developing trusting and respectful relationships, a shared philosophy and vision, clear governance structures and processes, and providing dedicated coordination resources.

Adapt to the local context

Every community is unique and has different strengths, needs, values and opportunities – there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution. Community characteristics should inform decision making, particularly when determining courses of action or interventions, to ensure their suitability. This requires facilitators of the process, and others with strong decision-making abilities, to avoid assuming they know what is required and to ensure that the experiences of those who live in a given community are influential in shaping decisions.

Take an ecological approach

Platforms is based on the theory that a child's development is influenced by multiple factors in their immediate (e.g. family/household) and wider environment, and that factors closest to the child will have the strongest influence on their development. To improve child outcomes, all influencing factors need to be addressed through this multi-level or 'ecological approach'. An ecological approach seeks to recognise the wider social, environmental, political and economic factors that affect and influence children and families. See Figure 4 for details on the ecological model of child development.

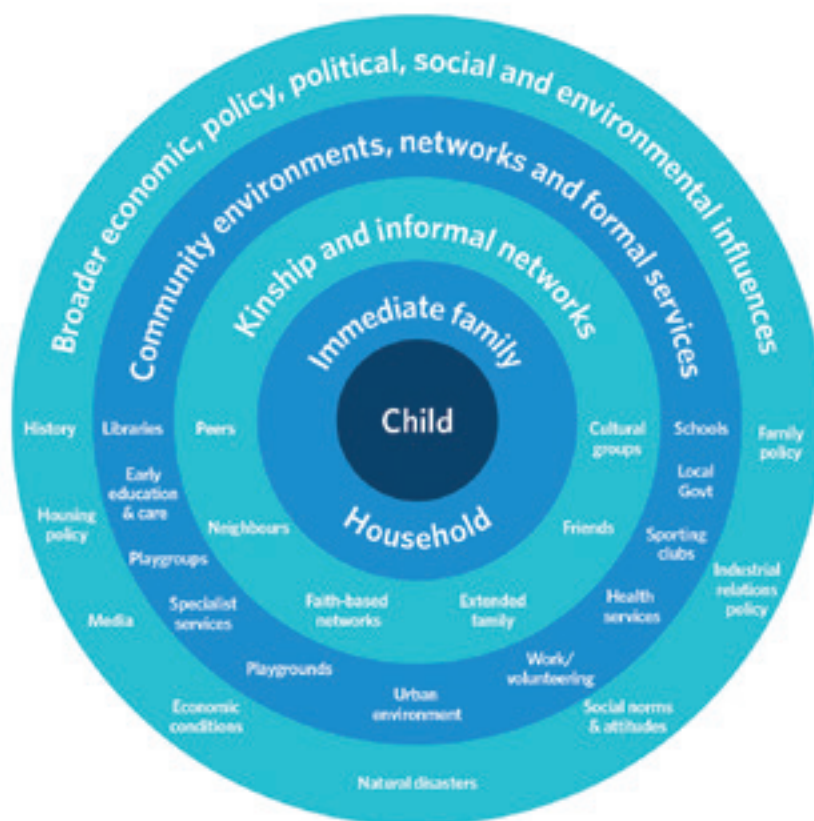


Figure 4: Ecological model (Centre for Community Child Health 2015, adapted from Bronfenbrenner et al., 1979).

Use all forms of evidence

Platforms recognises there are multiple sources of evidence: the best available research evidence and data, professional practice wisdom, and the values, knowledge and experiences of families. These different forms of evidence should be used to inform decision making about where and how to focus efforts, and how to monitor and evaluate progress towards outcomes for faster and greater impact.



Learn and reflect

Communities are dynamic: populations can grow or diminish, and characteristics can change, altering community needs. Platforms emphasises that learning about the community is continuous. It encourages those involved to identify and respond to emerging needs and opportunities, and adjust resources and priorities to enable progress to occur. In Platforms, reflective practice can be a powerful tool for promoting learning from experiences and supporting improvement. Broadly, reflective practice involves an experience, reflection on that experience, and subsequent action or change of practice. Effective reflective practice requires those undertaking it to not only evaluate and modify their actions, but their underlying beliefs, to become agents of personal change. Questions that can help to shape meaningful reflective practice include:

- What is reflection?
- What does it look like?
- What are the benefits?
- How do I do it?

Pursue equity

The Platforms approach supports communities to address the barriers that prevent equitable opportunities for children and their families. Power dynamics can be a significant challenge in the pursuit of equity. Platforms facilitates the sharing of power to enable decision making that represents the true wants and needs of the community. Platforms also aims to ensure that all members of a community are represented, particularly those that have not traditionally been given a voice. This includes culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, caregivers with physical and mental health issues, and families of children with disabilities.

In relation to service delivery, Platforms facilitates an approach based on both universal and targeted services enabling the whole population to receive essential care, while providing more intensive support to those who need it (progressive or proportionate universalism). High quality, relationship-based services delivered using this approach support the pursuit of equity by enabling families experiencing adversity to access support and increase their sense of community belonging.

CHECK AND REFLECT

Are you Platforms ready?

Have you:

- ☐ identified an **appetite or impetus for change**?
- ☐ gained sufficient **funding** to support the change process or a strategy for sourcing funding?
- ☐ sourced the **expertise and experience** necessary for the change process?
- ☐ identified **like-minded and committed people** and/or organisations in the community who are passionate about this change?
- ☐ identified one or more organisations prepared to provide **leadership**?
- ☐ considered how to **engage marginalised or vulnerable community** members?
- ☐ considered how to ensure **community members take up leadership roles** in the process?
- ☐ identified **businesses or philanthropists** who could be involved?
- ☐ considered how you can **learn from others** who have used Platforms in their communities?

LEARNING PLATFORM

Collaboration for Impact

Access tools, resources, links and case studies from across Australia on how to build and support system change through collaboration.

COMMUNITY NETWORK

Opportunity Child

Join the Opportunity Child network of communities across Australia that are working together to improve early childhood development outcomes.

SUPPORT

CCCH specialists are available to provide customised guidance and support for the Platforms approach, including the Platforms Principles, phases and steps.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

RESOURCES

ONLINE FORUM

The Collective Impact Forum

Access resources and online peer support from others undertaking collective impact efforts.

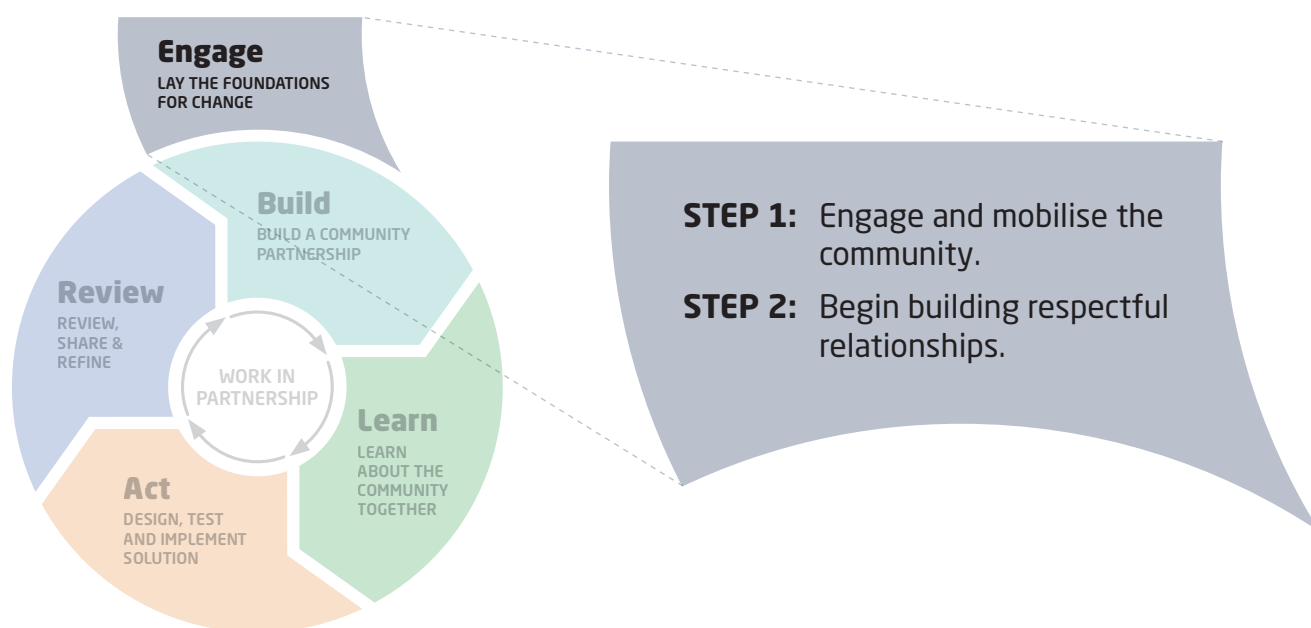
RESOURCE LIBRARY

The Tamarack Institute

Access a library of tools and resources on collective impact, community engagement, collaborative leadership, innovation and evaluation.

ENGAGE

Lay the foundations for change



OVERVIEW

Community engagement provides the foundation for making a lasting difference to children's lives in the community. This phase focuses on engaging community stakeholders, raising awareness about the need for change and building respectful relationships to enable community-led action that can improve outcomes for children.

By the end of this phase, you will:

- be **connected** with people in your community who want to change the conditions for young children and their families
- have a **shared understanding** of why service and community environments need to change and what needs to change
- see initial **motivation and momentum** for change emerge
- see **respectful relationships** emerging between people who are essential for success.



STEP 1

Engage and mobilise the community

This step focuses on identifying a broad range of people and organisations in the community who can help to bring about improvements for children and their families. The aim is to engage and build trusting relationships or good rapport with people, and build motivation to effect change together. This step is often coupled together with **Step 2 | Begin building respectful relationships**.

Why is community engagement and mobilisation important?

Community engagement is a critical component of Platforms that forms both a foundational phase and a principle that guides action throughout the initiative. This is because community engagement:

- increases the likelihood that solutions or initiatives will meet the needs of communities and have their support
- expands community members' social connections and networks
- is essential for gaining diverse perspectives and experiences about the community and its priorities
- enables community involvement in decision making on issues that affect or matter to them
- helps to build community trust, and understanding between often disparate groups, to enhance efforts and minimise misunderstanding or conflict.

Engaging people as valued contributors helps to build momentum and commitment for making change. When people are mobilised, they are more likely to share their skills, knowledge and resources to enable faster and greater impact.

How to engage and mobilise the community

Identify who to engage

Identify people in the community who are interested in children's wellbeing and can help to bring about change. This means individuals or organisations that can contribute to improving children's wellbeing, and those likely to be affected by change, including:

- parents and carers of young children and their extended families and kinship groups
- professionals including practitioners, managers and leaders working with young children and families in a range of sectors, e.g. health, education, childcare and child and family support
- people from influential organisations including local government and the police
- cultural, philanthropic, political and industry leaders
- non-profits, community services, schools and members of their local governance groups, e.g. school councils or parent and friends associations
- cross-sector groups, e.g. early years networks, communities for children, local action groups and associations that support children, families and young people
- community and neighbourhood centres and other centres that support children, families and young people.

It is also important to consider hearing from families who are disengaged from services. Their untold stories can provide valuable insights into what needs improvement in the community and how to bring about change.

Raise awareness about why change is needed

This task builds a shared understanding of why change is needed between people who are affected by and can contribute to improving children's wellbeing. It involves starting new conversations, sharing information, hearing different views and considering what change might mean for the community. Individual conversations, community workshops and forums provide different ways of bringing people together to discuss, share and learn from each other, and build a shared understanding.

It can be helpful to frame raising awareness conversations and workshops around three questions: Why change? What to change? How to change? See **Raising awareness of the need for change** to explore these key questions further.

It is vital that the community's responses to these questions are heard and valued. This means community conversations, workshops and forums must be inclusive and respectful. Tips for ensuring inclusive and productive events include:

- Consider the ideal number of people to invite so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to a meaningful discussion.
- Ensure the number of participating community members outweighs the number of professionals.
- Identify strategies for encouraging and supporting people who may not frequently be heard or who may be harder to reach.
- Hold the event at a time and location that gives participants the best chance of attending.
- Consider the information that people will need to be able to participate in a workshop in a meaningful way.

Data can be another source of information that helps to raise awareness and build a case for action on children's health, development and wellbeing. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) provides a snapshot of children's development as they enter school. Specific local community results are available and can help the community understand how children in their first year of school are faring and if change might be needed.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Why change?

- The early years of a child's life are critically important for development. What happens during this period can have lifelong consequences for children's health and wellbeing.
- The conditions under which families are raising young children have altered dramatically in the last few generations, and the social and health issues we now face are more likely to be complex problems that require sustained collective action.
- The benefits of improved social and economic conditions have not been evenly distributed, and many children begin life in challenging circumstances. Since development is cumulative, early disadvantage can be amplified over time, with adverse consequences for the individuals and the community.

What to change?

- Many different factors affect children's development and family functioning, and no single form of intervention can make a sustained difference. Improving the long-term health, development and wellbeing of children experiencing significant disadvantage requires a multilevel, ecological approach.
- The social conditions in which people live can have a greater impact on their health and development than the health and other services

they receive. Finding ways of improving these conditions must become a major goal for communities and service systems.

- Families benefit from a range of early childhood and family support services. These need to be integrated to ensure easy access by all families, and tailored to the needs of differing community groups to ensure full inclusion.
- The way in which community environments, facilities and services are planned and delivered needs to shift, from top-down approaches to more direct engagement with families and communities as partners in the planning and delivery process.

How to change?

- Recognise that changing the conditions for children and families takes time and requires broad commitment to doing things differently.
- Establish a local early childhood partnership group to address the collective needs of families, involving as wide a range of stakeholders as possible and making a long-term commitment to improving community outcomes.
- Engage community members in long-term partnerships to co-design and co-produce the environments, facilities and services that will best suit their needs.





STEP 2

Begin building respectful relationships

This step focuses on cultivating respectful relationships and a culture of partnership that will provide a foundation for new ways of working together.

In respectful relationships, people treat one another the way that they like to be treated: everyone practises and experiences mutual respect, trust, good communication, honesty, inclusiveness and understanding. This ensures that everyone feels equal, safe, valued, cared about, and accepted.

Why is building respectful relationships important?

Respectful relationships are at the heart of developing a new way of working. A strong foundation of respect helps everyone to give their very best and collaborate to improve outcomes for children. When respect is present in relationships, they are more authentic and trusting - this is vital for the long-term collaboration required for addressing complex issues.

How to build respectful relationships

There are many ways to build respectful relationships between parents and other stakeholders, such as service professionals. This includes: making first impressions count; engaging generously; applying interpersonal skills; getting to know peoples' needs and expectations; and creating an environment of equal opportunity.

Make first impressions count

First impressions are important: they can be lasting and difficult to change. Being aware of this can help get new relationships off to a good start. Consider the respect and openness necessary for establishing effective relationships. Note that we may begin relationships with perceptions and expectations about what we are likely to experience, based on past encounters with others that may not be helpful for working together.

It is particularly important to be thoughtful about our first encounters with those we perceive to be different from ourselves. Consider potential messages that you may send through your appearance, behaviour, words and non-verbal cues in first encounters, and small factors that may be of significance, especially with people who may be mistrusting of professionals.

Engage generously and genuinely

It is common to find it difficult to spend time with people we are not comfortable with, and some parents are not comfortable with professional services. To create previously unimagined ways of working together, professional services need to engage generously and genuinely with such people. This makes it possible to begin to understand potential barriers to engagement.

Parents may resist engaging with services for reasons including:

- shame
- distrust of services
- lack of confidence
- the attitudes and behaviours of practitioners
- service inaccessibility.

With this in mind, professionals must work hard at building rapport and trust between themselves and the parents they encounter for the ultimate benefit of children.

Practise essential interpersonal qualities

Interpersonal qualities such as empathy, genuineness, personal warmth, attunement and humility are central to helping put parents at ease. Day, Ellis and Harris (2015) stress that these attributes need to be seen and experienced. Reviewing how we practise these interpersonal qualities can provide opportunities to give and receive feedback. Helping each other to change, when change is necessary, is essential for respectful, authentic and sustainable relationships.

Get to know needs and expectations

Spend time with stakeholders – one-on-one or in groups – to help build respectful relationships. Aim to understand:

- their motivation to participate and take action
- the impact change may have on them
- the benefits and costs to them of being involved
- how long it might take to see change
- other people who may be interested
- the importance of people working together
- strategies to address the challenges of working together.

Create an equal playing field

In respectful relationships, it is vital that everyone feels welcome, comfortable, respected, valued and included. This is especially important when working with people who may feel that they have less status or power, or who may lack confidence. Even small things can make a difference in putting people at ease, from what we wear to community meetings and how we introduce ourselves, through to offering to make drinks for others, listening intently and valuing contributions.

CHECK AND REFLECT

Have you:

- ☐ genuinely **engaged diverse community stakeholders** including those whose voices are often ignored?
- ☐ **secured the support** of your partners? (How will you know?)
- ☐ begun to establish **respectful, genuine and inclusive relationships** with people who are essential for success?
- ☐ begun to establish a **shared understanding** of why service and community environments need to change and what needs to change?
- ☐ started to see **momentum and motivation** for change emerge?

RESOURCES

DATA

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

A nationwide data collection of early childhood development during their first year of school. It provides data that highlights what is working well and what needs to be improved to support children and their families.

ANIMATION

Brain Builders

An engaging and accessible story communicating how children's brains develop and how to support a lifetime of good mental function and health.

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Framing child development and care in Australia

Evidence-based communication tools to help raise awareness of child development, why it matters and turn this awareness into meaningful action.

SUPPORT

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Platforms Training

A training program designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to implement Platforms.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Family Partnership Model Foundation Course

A course designed to enable participants to engage effectively with parents and families. Participants will develop knowledge, skills and confidence in the processes of the evidence-based Family Partnership Model.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Engaging Families

A workshop that helps participants to engage, identify and apply strategies that promote and support parent engagement, and enable genuine partnerships.

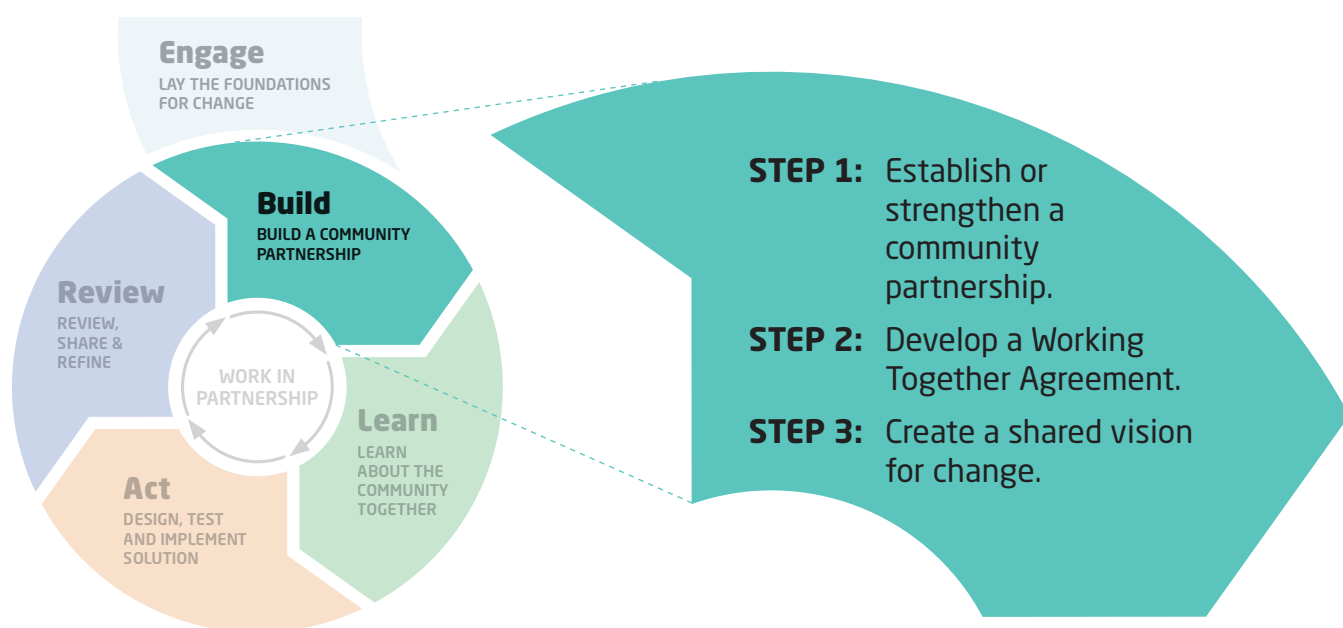
CONSULTANCY

CCCH specialists are available to provide customised guidance and support for community engagement and building respectful relationships and practices.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

BUILD

Build a community partnership



OVERVIEW

A strong community partnership is one that works together with a united vision for improving children's lives. The community partnership will determine how change is planned, brought to life and realised. This phase focuses on building a strong community partnership and commitment to working together.

By the end of this phase, you will have:

- established a **community partnership** that includes representatives from the community
- developed a shared understanding of how partnership members will work together (a **Working Together Agreement**)
- created a **shared vision** to guide the work of the partnership.



STEP 1

Establish or strengthen a community partnership

This step focuses on establishing or strengthening a community partnership that includes people from the community and service system who can lead change. It brings everyone together to formalise the partnership, with an emphasis on inclusiveness and equal opportunity.

Why is a community partnership needed?

A community partnership drives change and makes it possible to:

- secure **commitment** from people and organisations
- consider diverse **perspectives** on what influences children
- inform **data, strategies** and **governance**
- share **control** between the community and service providers.

How to form a community partnership

Identify and invite potential community partnership members to an initial meeting. These will be the people that you identified in the **Engage** phase (see **How to engage and mobilise the community**) and whose awareness you have already raised. They should include community members and other stakeholders interested in, or affected by, your efforts.

The first partnership meeting will allow participants to:

- find out more about what is being asked of them
- consider whether their motivations align with others
- help to define the parameters of the change
- determine roles and responsibilities.

If there is an existing partnership in your community with a focus on children and families then **Build | Step 1** may involve engaging that partnership to lead change or to collaborate more broadly for change.

Hold the first community partnership meeting

Your initial meeting is an opportunity to engage community members. Given the diversity of roles, professional experience and power within a diverse group, consider how to ensure that everyone feels welcome, included, comfortable and valued. This may include:

- when and where the meeting is held
- how the meeting room is set up
- whether food and drinks are provided
- whether childcare is needed
- how participation is facilitated
- how people dress
- how to warmly greet participants and introduce them to each other.

Meetings should be managed to ensure that all participants have equal opportunity to express their views and ideas, without power differentials based on roles and responsibilities. It can be helpful to contact participants before the meeting to discuss their expectations, concerns and ability to ensure everyone feels welcome to contribute.

This first meeting sets the tone for subsequent meetings.





STEP 2

Develop a Working Together Agreement

This step involves developing a Working Together Agreement. A Working Together Agreement establishes a shared understanding of how the community partnership group will work together to enable a productive and effective partnership. A shared understanding exists when everyone in the group knows how they need to be and act while working together.

Why is a Working Together Agreement needed?

A Working Together Agreement is important because it:

- supports community partnership group members to work in genuine partnership
- makes it clear that everyone in the group is equal - strengthening engagement of members who have less power and/or confidence
- helps to resolve disagreements or concerns about behaviour within the partnership
- establishes ways of working together that align with the Platforms Principles.

How to develop a Working Together Agreement

Developing a Working Together Agreement involves explicitly exploring the values that are vital to a group's function, such as trust, honesty and respect, and agreeing on how you will enact those values.

Facilitate whole-of-partnership discussion/s in a way that provides everyone with the chance to talk about what they think should be included in the agreement. Methods include asking people to:

- discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups before sharing with the whole group
- write their ideas on paper and then collecting these pieces of paper and talking through each idea.

Developing a relevant and useful Working Together Agreement takes time. It could take several meetings to set up the agreement and usually involves seeking others' input both within and outside meetings.

Once the group has created a Working Together Agreement, keep it evolving over time by:

- reviewing, adapting and building on the agreement to ensure it is still relevant to the group
- using the agreement as a starting point for introducing new people to the work of the community partnership group
- considering how the agreement is reflected in the behaviour and actions of all members.





STEP 3

Create a shared vision for change

This step involves creating a shared vision for change that helps people to dream big about how good things could be. A shared vision for change describes a future picture of the community that realises the aspirations that the partnership hopes to see as a result of the work.

Why is a shared vision for change needed?

A shared vision for change is important because it:

- builds excitement and commitment among group members - who may not have previously had the chance - to explore how different and positive things could be
- inspires and unites diverse people striving to bring change to life
- guides the direction and focus of the community partnership's work together
- provides clarity for new group members and reminds everyone of the desired change.

How to create a shared vision for change

The shared vision for change should be long-term, big picture and not immediately achievable. Importantly, the vision needs to be agreed upon by the whole partnership group.

In the whole-of-partnership workshop/s, consider using creative methods to inspire members and enable them to think broadly about what it is they wish for the community. Methods might include:

- a visioning activity
- drawing
- painting
- cutting up photos and pictures and pasting them onto a board
- creating a 3D model of your community from cardboard, playdough or other craft materials.

This will help to create a vision statement that is as representative of the whole community's aspirations as possible.



CHECK AND REFLECT

Have you:

- ☐ determined if your **community is ready** to hold its first community partnership meeting?
- ☐ planned to make your meeting as **inclusive** as possible (e.g. best time of day, location, room set-up, childcare)?
- ☐ considered **how best to invite people** to join the partnership (e.g. in person, email, telephone) and what impact the method of invitation may have on the individual?
- ☐ considered how to **prepare people** for your first meeting?
- ☐ identified **who would be best to facilitate** your first meeting in a way that truly reflects working in partnership?
- ☐ established a **community partnership** that is representative of your community?
- ☐ developed a **Working Together Agreement** that establishes a shared understanding of how members of the partnership will work together?
- ☐ established a **shared vision** to guide your work?

RESOURCES

TIP SHEET

Planning and running an inclusive meeting

This tip sheet provides strategies for planning and conducting inclusive and effective community meetings.

RESOURCE PAPER

Moving Forward Together: A guide to support the integration of service delivery for children and families

This guide examines four key elements to support change: genuine community engagement, connecting the community, enabling and nurturing local leadership, and establishing a common language.

ACTIVITY

The 10 year dream - a story for visioning

This activity will help you develop a process for creating a shared vision.

SUPPORT



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Platforms Training

A training program designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to implement Platforms.

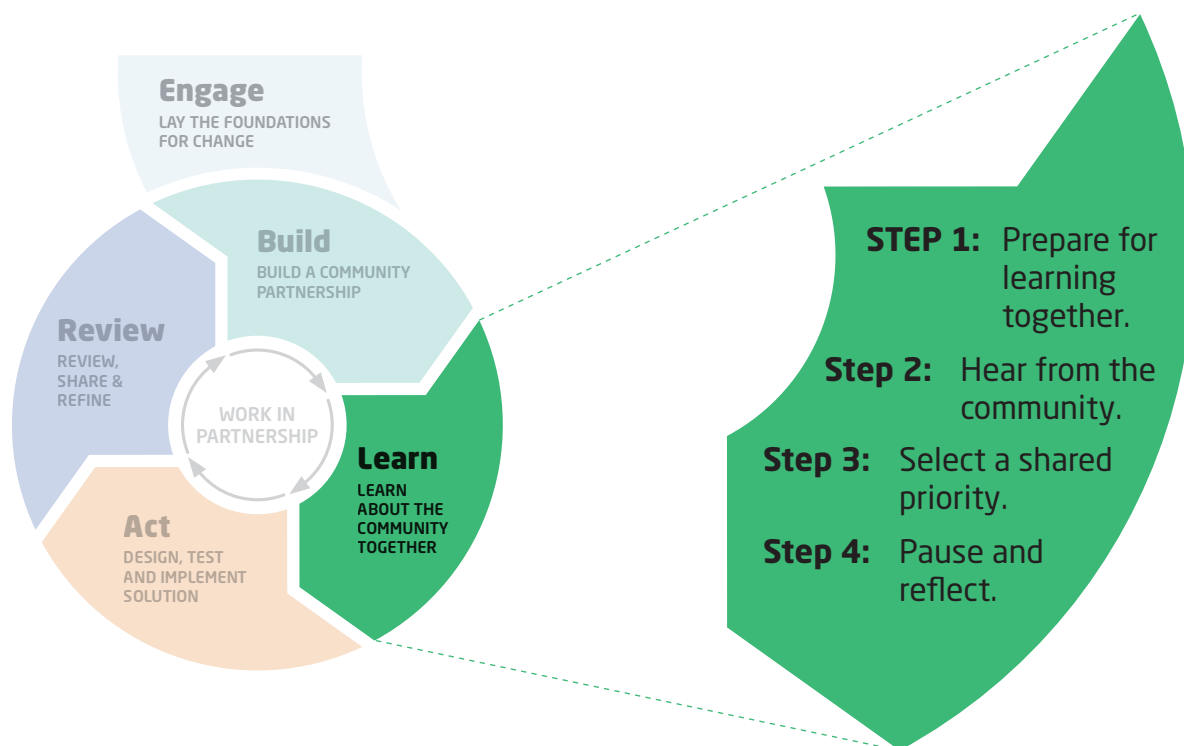
CONSULTANCY

CCCH specialists are available to provide guidance and support for building and sustaining community partnerships, including establishing a shared vision and a Working Together Agreement.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

LEARN

Learn about the community together



OVERVIEW

Learning about the community focuses on the process of learning together. This phase requires the partnership to appreciate the wisdom and expertise community members will bring to the process, hear the community's stories and experiences, and build ways of respectfully working alongside community members as co-learners. At the end of this phase, the partnership will select a priority to focus their future work together.

By the end of this phase, you will have:

- heard the **experiences and stories** of people who live in the community, especially those whose voices are not always heard
- gained **insights** about the community's strengths, needs and opportunities to improve children's wellbeing
- agreed on an **initial priority** to guide further learning and action by the partnership
- built the partnership's commitment to **learning and reflecting together**
- strengthened **relationships and connections** between members of the community partnership.



STEP 1

Prepare for learning together

This step prepares the partnership to learn together in new ways and appreciate why this is important.

Why is preparing for learning together important?

It is vital to ensure that any changes made by the partnership align with the community's wishes and are informed by the best available information. This occurs when families, community members, service providers, policymakers and other key players share their knowledge and expertise with each other. For this to happen, people need to feel safe to share their views and believe that their perspective will be taken seriously.

Exploring the partnership's beliefs and values about expertise and data helps to surface assumptions that can get in the way of respectfully learning from each other. It provides an important opportunity for the partnership to reflect on why the perspectives of different people are needed as part of learning, reflection and action.

How to prepare for learning together

The partnership's work during **Start** and **Build** has already started to prepare the partnership for learning together. In particular, a Working Together Agreement (see **Build | Step 2**) is essential for preparing to learn together and should be undertaken before commencing the tasks of exploring assumptions and empowering community members.

Explore assumptions about expertise

Local parents have valuable first-hand experience of raising children, living in the community and using local services. Their lived experience and wisdom is valuable expertise. People who hold this experiential knowledge will contribute greatly to the Platforms process. Other people in the community will also hold valid expertise, such as local organisations or service providers working with young children and their families.

Working in partnership requires everyone to work alongside each other and use diverse forms of expertise to make decisions. Some professionals (and some parents) may not fully appreciate the value community members bring to the process. It is therefore important to draw attention to the expertise of parents to prepare people for this way of working together.

A useful way to explore the value of community members is for the partnership to discuss how they will gain a better understanding of the needs of local children and their families. The partnership should also consider who is best placed to offer this information. Those involved can quickly come to understand that the experiences of families living in the community is an important source of information and that families themselves are best placed to offer these insights. Questions may include:

- What is it like for families with babies and young children living in this community?
- What are the good things for families living in this community?
- What do you think they might struggle with?
- What do families in this community experience when they visit services for their children?
- What can get in the way of a positive experience visiting services?

These questions should be posed as general 'wonders' for all involved. They should not be directed to individual community members to provide a personal response. It is critical that service providers exercise restraint in offering assumptions based on their practice experiences and avoid becoming defensive if negative service experiences are shared by community members.

Explore assumptions about data

Learning about the community involves sharing data. There are two main types of data, qualitative and quantitative.

- Qualitative data is expressed in words, such as family stories.
- Quantitative data is expressed as numbers, such as census or demographic data.

Members of the partnership are likely to have different understandings about data and different experiences using data. To help everyone feel comfortable and confident to engage in conversations about data, it can be helpful to frame data as information. It can also be helpful to discuss:

- what data means
- different types of data (e.g. qualitative and quantitative data)
- different sources of data (e.g. parents/carers, service providers and community members)
- the role different types of data play in learning (e.g. quantifying or describing).

It is important for the partnership to appreciate that all forms of data have a role to play in learning about the community and confirming or questioning assumptions.

Empower community members to contribute their expertise

The ecological model of child development (see Figure 4), is a powerful tool for learning about the broad range of factors that influence children's development. It can also be used to help parents and carers appreciate the unique insights they offer and the expert knowledge they hold. This realisation can help to boost parents and carers' confidence about the role they play in learning about the community.

A useful way to introduce the ecological model is to have a conversation with the partnership. Questions to consider may include:

- What story do you think this diagram tells?
- What does it suggest about closeness (proximity) to the child?
- What might the child and family depend on from other rings (systems) outside of the family?
- What are the strengths and difficulties in each ring (system) that can help or hinder the best possible outcomes for children and families?

This conversation begins the process of hearing from the community (see **Learn | Step 2**) and highlights the important influence of family and community on child development. The conversation will also help to identify topics for further exploration and learning by the partnership.

See **Principle in practice | Taking an ecological approach** for more information about the ecological model.

PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE: TAKING AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

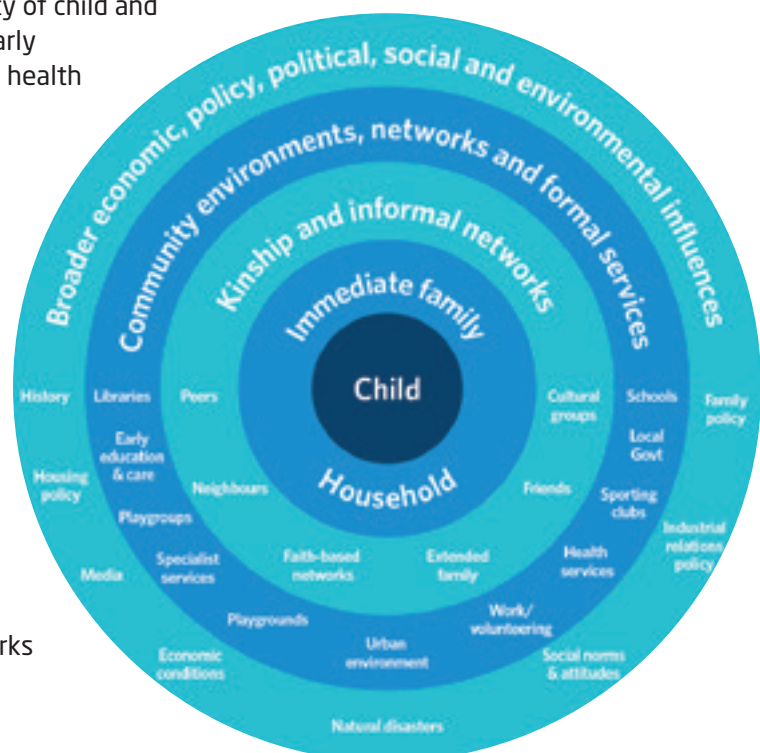


The ecological model of child development is a powerful tool for exploring and understanding the range of factors that influence children's wellbeing in a community. It can be used as a high-level framework to ensure the partnership takes a holistic, multi-level (or multi-ring) approach over time. Subsequently it is important for all members of the partnership to become familiar with the model and ecological theory.

Some ways to explain the ecological model include:

- Every child, with his/her unique characteristics (e.g. gender, disposition, genes), will be influenced by a range of environmental and societal factors.
- Those factors closest to the child will have the strongest influence on his/her wellbeing (i.e. immediate family and their characteristics, such as parents' level of education, employment).
- Surrounding the family are informal networks such as the child's peers, neighbours and other communities the family belong to.
- The community environment (e.g. safety of streets, availability of green space) and range and quality of child and family services (including schools, early childhood education, playgroups and health services) encircle informal networks.
- Furthest is the broader economic, political, social and physical environment, including the status of the economy, social policy and natural disasters.

A limitation of the ecological model is that it does not draw attention to the power dynamics within and across the systems. Power dynamics, such as decision-making powers, can hinder families' abilities to provide optimal environments and opportunities for children. It can be useful to explore power dynamics and other aspects of systems thinking by using complementary frameworks or tools such as Theory U.





STEP 2

Hear from the community

This step starts to identify community strengths and opportunities for change. It engages community members and hears their stories and experiences. It often involves a community forum that brings together a broad range of people to exchange views (see **Hold a community forum**).

Why is hearing from the community important?

It is vital that community members are involved in identifying community strengths and opportunities for change for several reasons:

- As a democratic principle, decisions about the community should be informed by the community: 'nothing about us, without us'.
- Community members are context experts who hold valuable knowledge and experiences that can contribute to the partnership's work. Their input will help the partnership focus on what matters most and create breakthroughs in thinking about the issues and solutions.
- Sharing positive stories and exploring the strengths of the community helps to build the enthusiasm, excitement and commitment of community members, who may commonly only hear about the problems or issues experienced by their community.
- Community members have a vested interest in improving community conditions and their ongoing involvement is likely to strengthen the sustainability of the partnership.
- Conclusions drawn from quantitative data alone can be put into question or proven inaccurate when considered alongside the lived experiences of community members.

How to hear from the community

Take a strengths-based approach

Taking a strengths-based approach to community engagement involves exploring the community's strengths and celebrating the good things that already exist in the community. It can help to build knowledge about local assets and resources that will enhance the work of the community partnership. It can also facilitate community engagement, motivation and empowerment. This helps to counterbalance the necessary focus on things that are unhelpful for children and families in the community.

Plan for engagement ahead of data collection

This step will collect valuable information from the community about strengths and opportunities for change. However, most importantly it should engage a broad range of families and community members in the change process. It is important to let the aim of community engagement, instead of rigorous data collection, guide the focus of all tasks in this step.

Other considerations

It is helpful to consider who to engage, what information to collect, how to collect it and what are your available resources before commencing engagement.

Who: There are likely to be many families and community members who you may wish to engage and who can provide useful insights and information. The range and number of people to involve – and the best methods to use – will depend on many factors. It is generally best to make sure that people from different parts of the community all have the opportunity to contribute, especially those whose voices are rarely heard.

What: Before holding conversations with families and community members, it is helpful to list the information you wish to collect and how you will use the information. The rings of the ecological model can provide a useful way of thinking about and organising this information. For example, list the information already known or available against each ring of the ecological model. Consider if all five rings are represented and what other information might be needed to form a comprehensive picture of the community. Try to collect enough information to be able to identify one community priority, which you can explore more deeply in the next phase, **Act**.

How: Common ways to engage and hear from community members include:

- conversations
- interviews or focus groups
- community workshops
- community forum (see **Hold a community forum**).

It can be helpful to use a combination of these methods to ensure a wide cross section of the community has been engaged.

Resources: Collecting information from many people is both time and resource intensive, however it provides an important opportunity to hear about the experiences, views and preferences from people who may not engage in surveys or whose voices are not always heard. It is important to be clear from the beginning if there are any restrictions about the amount of time or resources available for hearing from the community. This will help to ensure planning is realistic and achievable.

Deliver the plan

Once you have developed your plan it is time to put it into action. It is important to remember that learning is embedded throughout all phases of Platforms and there will be further opportunities to collect information about the community. The purpose of hearing from the community is to engage community in the process. It is not to develop an exhaustive picture of all of the factors affecting children's wellbeing in the community at this point in time.

HOLD A COMMUNITY FORUM

Hearing from the community often involves organising and holding a community forum that brings together a broad cross section of community members, services and organisations.

Why is holding a community forum important?

A community forum seeks to spark interest, share information and knowledge, and identify a community priority (or priorities). It provides an opportunity to build a shared understanding and help those involved gain an overall understanding of how the initiative is forming and how they may contribute to the partnership into the future. Most importantly, a community forum:

- models partnership processes
- provides an opportunity for people to experience partnership processes
- sets expectations about future partnership processes.

Done well, the community forum should help people relax and feel confident that they will be heard, respected and valued. It is important to remember that a community forum is one strategy for engaging community and is not an end point in itself. The community must be engaged as a genuine partner in all phases of Platforms.

How to hold a community forum

There are many things to consider when planning an effective community forum. Key elements are discussed in this section and a range of resources to support your preparation are listed in the **Learn | Resources** section.

Design the agenda

A community forum usually seeks to achieve multiple objectives related to engagement, modelling partnership processes, exchanging information and building shared understandings. It may also involve identifying a shared priority (see **Learn | Step 3** for more detail). It is important to reflect on which of these objectives are most relevant to your partnership at this point in time, and to design the event in a way that will meet your objectives.

Prepare the information to be shared

The community forum should provide community members and professionals with access to relevant and meaningful information that builds their knowledge about the community. All information collected so far should be shared at the community forum. It needs to be collated, analysed and organised in a way that will be easy to understand. Alongside community stories and experiences, it may be useful to share other sources of data such as:

- population outcomes data, e.g. AEDC and NAPLAN
- demographic data, e.g. ABS data about population growth and trends
- administrative data, e.g. early childhood centre quality ratings
- insights from research reports.

The ecological model provides a useful way of collating and organising information for sharing at the forum. For example, you can map collected information against each of the rings of the ecological model (children/families and households/community groups and services/broader economic, political and environmental factors) to prompt forum discussions. It is important to share 'just enough' information to encourage engagement and discussion between community forum participants. Presenting too much data can be overwhelming and negatively affect engagement.

Consider the venue

The venue for the community forum can influence the level of engagement and participation from community members. It is important to ensure the venue is welcoming, easy to access, inclusive and child friendly. Providing childcare and catering can help to encourage community member attendance and demonstrate that the time and efforts of participants is valued.

Engage and invite participants

There are a range of strategies that can be used to promote the community forum and invite community members and other participants. One of the most effective ways is to ask different people with connections to the community to personally extend invitations. To manage power dynamics at the forum, it can be helpful to ensure there are more community members present than service providers. Service providers can be made aware of this goal in advance of the forum and their attendance negotiated, dependent on the final number of community members planning to attend.

Deliver the forum

The forum provides an opportunity to help participants experience and understand the nature of a Platforms partnership. It should demonstrate respectful forms of facilitation that stakeholders will become familiar with throughout all phases of Platforms. It should also provide an opportunity for participants to debate, discuss and ask questions.

Importantly, there should be time for the partnership to interpret or make sense of the 'big picture' together. This involves developing a shared understanding about the factors influencing children's wellbeing in their community, areas of strength and areas for improvement, and building commitment to taking action together.

See **Principle in practice | Learn and reflect** for more tips on building shared understandings.

PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE: LEARN AND REFLECT



A critical starting point for building a culture of learning and reflection is to make sure that everyone involved feels safe and that their contributions are acknowledged, valued and taken seriously.

Practical strategies for supporting respectful and inclusive reflective learning include:

- give everyone involved time to think before responding
- purposefully pull apart the meaning of what is being shared rather than assuming everyone is on the same page
- incorporate thinking and reflection at key points in discussions as standard practice
- encourage participants to break regularly into pairs or small groups to think, work and respond together
- create space for less assertive participants to contribute their thoughts, opinions and experiences
- listen intently to and value everyone's contributions equally
- build in opportunities to explore assumptions that shape how people think and act
- summarise and scribe key points
- emphasise the fact that there are no right or wrong responses to most questions when examining people's experiences and opinions
- model reflection.

These strategies might feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable for some participants because they may conflict with their everyday practices and efforts to meet competing demands. It may be necessary to explain the intended shared culture of reflective learning to service providers or policymakers prior to the partnership meetings and request their support to model appropriate behaviours to help build a culture of reflective learning.

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, smiling and looking up at a baby he is holding. The baby is wearing a striped onesie. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent green overlay. The text 'STEP 3' is written in large white letters on the left side of the image.

STEP 3

Select a shared priority

This step requires the partnership to identify a single shared priority, such as the first 1000 days of a child's life, family violence or children's language and literacy. This step provides an important bridge between the work of the partnership in **Learn** and the next phase of **Act**.

Why is selecting a shared priority important?

A shared priority identifies something that matters to the community and sends an important signal that the partnership is listening and respects the views of community members. Selecting a single shared priority can make the scope of the partnership easier to manage and help the partnership practice working together in new ways. As the partnership gains skills and confidence in this new way of working, you may re-visit this step to select another shared priority that extends the work of the partnership.

How to select a shared priority

A shared priority can be framed as a shared goal, outcome or aim. It may reflect the change the partnership would like to make (e.g. an outcomes statement) or it may define the current situation or topic (e.g. the opportunity or problem). Choose a term that best resonates with your partnership.

There are two critical parts to selecting a shared priority:

- identify and define an issue that it is important and relevant to the community
- build consensus and agreement across the partnership.

Identify and define an important and relevant issue

This task involves synthesising the information gathered in previous steps and building a shared understanding of what it means in partnership with community members. Questions that may be helpful to explore include:

- What is the information telling us?
- How do the different sources of information fit together or contradict each other?
- What might be the central issue or priority? How might we frame it in a strengths-based way?
- What might be the cause(s) of the issue?
- How are the community's strengths informing the selection of our priority?

Build consensus and agreement

Priorities are likely to be influenced by:

- the motivations, interests and perspectives of those involved
- political and policy opportunities
- available resources
- partnership expertise.

It is vital that the views of community members are heard and respected, and not overshadowed by the views of service providers or people who may traditionally hold more power. This is particularly important in the early days of a partnership when trust is still being built with community members. Sometimes it may result in the partnership selecting a priority that has little formal data to indicate its importance, but holds great significance for the community.

It is important to clearly document why and how the priority was selected to provide transparency about decision making and build a historical trail for new partnership members into the future.



A young child with dark hair, wearing a grey hoodie and a dark scarf, is sitting on a swing. The swing has a white seat with small holes and is suspended by black chains. The background is a grassy field. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green box containing the text for Step 4.

STEP 4

Pause and reflect

This step requires the partnership to reflect on the journey so far, including key insights, lessons, achievements and how well the partnership is working together. It uses this information to celebrate progress and consider what improvements might be needed during the next phase.

Why is pausing and reflecting important?

Pause and reflect provides the opportunity for the partnership to:

- clarify and document what has been done, learnt and agreed. This provides transparency about decision making and creates a written record to share with the broader community, funders or new partnership members
- consider how well the partnership is working together
- identify next steps.

How to pause and reflect

Clarify and document what has been learnt

This task involves collating and summarising relevant information, such as key achievements, lessons and decisions about the shared priority. It also includes making time to discuss the information together as a partnership. The partnership's conversation helps to ensure different views are represented in the summary and helps to build shared understandings between partnership members.

Check on the partnership

Now is a good time to review the partnership's Working Together Agreement and how well people feel they are working together. It provides an opportunity to check for conflicting views or emerging tensions, and how things could be resolved or enhanced. The partnership should also reflect on the overall level of engagement in its work so far. For example, are any groups or sectors missing from the partnership?

Identify next steps

Any required actions or agreements should be documented by the partnership before moving onto the next phase. A work plan can be used to keep track of the agreed tasks, timelines and people responsible.



CHECK AND REFLECT

Have you:

- ☐ established a **shared understanding** of the factors that affect children's wellbeing in the community?
- ☐ provided balance by **identifying community strengths** as well as issues that could be addressed?
- ☐ planned and conducted a **community forum**?
- ☐ heard from **diverse members of the community** about experiences and opportunities for change?
- ☐ reached out to those that were missing from the forum to ensure the **broadest possible contributions**?
- ☐ agreed upon a **priority for action** the partnership will design, test and implement solutions against in the next phase?
- ☐ taken the time to **pause and reflect** on the progress of the partnership - what has been achieved and where to next?
- ☐ established a partnership that **enables negotiation and compromise**?
- ☐ created a **summary** that captures the work and intention of the partnership?
- ☐ revisited and reflected on the **Working Together Agreement**?

RESOURCES

FACT SHEET

Community data

This fact sheet provides an overview of community data, including types of data and how to gather it.

TIP SHEET

Planning and running an inclusive meeting

This tip sheet provides strategies for planning and conducting inclusive and effective community meetings.

TIP SHEET

Qualitative data analysis

This tip sheet describes the types of qualitative data and outlines ways you can collect and use it.

TIP SHEET

Secondary data sources

This tip sheet describes where to go for existing secondary data and other sources to consider.

TIP SHEET

Quantitative data analysis

This tip sheet provides support with collecting, interpreting and presenting quantitative data.

TOOLKIT

Ecological approach to planning community mapping

This toolkit contains information and resources to guide you with planning community mapping.

SUPPORT

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Platforms Training

A training program designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to implement Platforms.

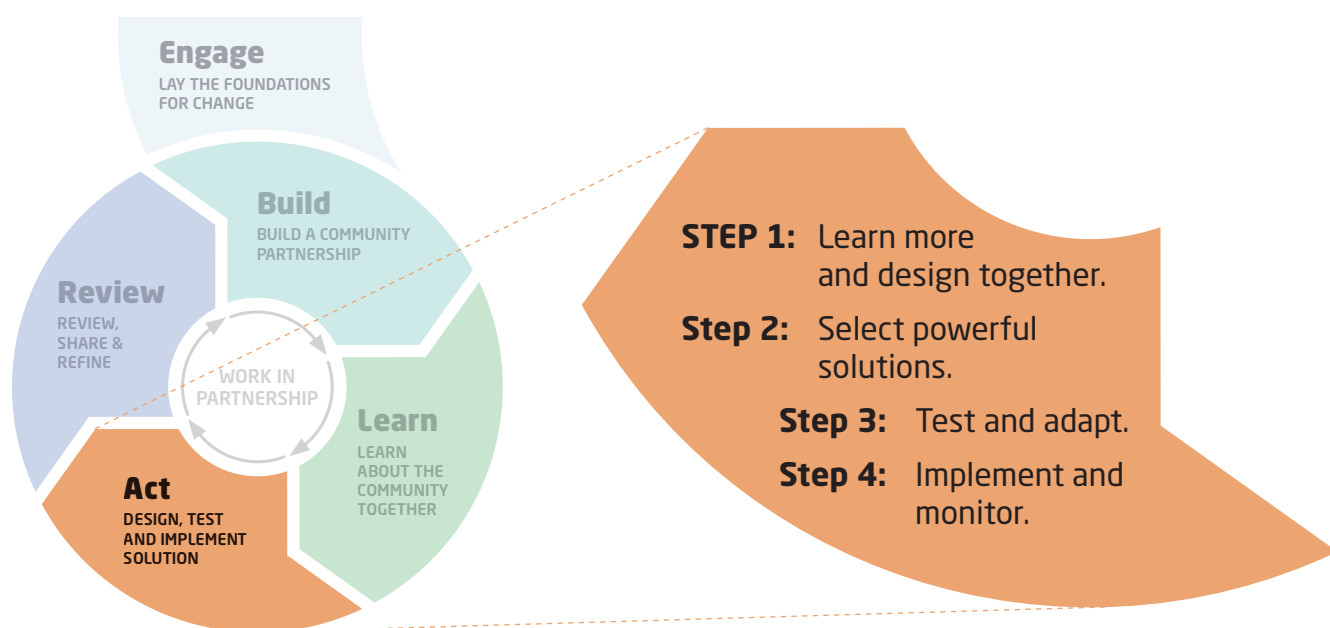
Consultancy

CCCH specialists are available to provide guidance and support for developing ways of learning alongside community members.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

ACT

Design, test and implement solutions



OVERVIEW

This phase invites the partnership to take action together by designing, testing and implementing solutions. It begins by focusing on the community priority agreed in **Learn**. As the partnership builds trust and momentum, the process of designing, testing and implementing solutions can be expanded to other community priorities. This phase requires skilled and thoughtful coordination to ensure people are well supported and that community members continue to contribute as equal partners throughout the process.

By the end of this phase, the partnership will have:

- gained **new insights and shared understandings** about the change required
- **generated and tested** possible solutions
- **implemented** solutions into everyday practice
- embedded ways to **monitor and improve**
- strengthened the culture of **continuous learning and reflection**
- enhanced **trust and connections** between members of the community partnership.



STEP 1

Learn more and design together

This step involves learning more about the selected community priority and designing the changes to be taken together.

Why is learning more and designing together important?

Learning more and designing together provides the opportunity to:

- develop a better understanding of the priority
- appreciate different perspectives
- gain new insights
- create breakthroughs in thinking
- design better solutions
- practise learning in new ways
- build a strong culture of continuous learning and reflection.

Bringing together different perspectives and sources of knowledge helps to build a 'big picture' view about the priority. It also changes the nature of the conversation and can generate different ways of thinking about causes and solutions. By bringing different perspectives together, you will gain a better understanding of the priority and be able to design more effective and appropriate solutions.

How to learn more and design together

Consider what to learn about the priority

This step should extend upon the information previously collected in **Learn**. It can involve:

- gaining a more in-depth understanding of how the priority is experienced by different people in the community
- understanding different aspects or dimensions of the priority in more detail
- exploring data about the priority's size, significance and trends
- exploring the root causes of the priority
- understanding community resources and assets, such as services, supports, infrastructure and skills, related to the issue
- exploring how different beliefs and values, power dynamics, practises and policies influence the priority
- exploring the existing research and evidence about how to respond to the priority.

Decide on the approach/es to learn more and design together

The most suitable approach will depend on a number of factors such as the:

- complexity of the priority
- knowledge held by different stakeholders
- expertise of the facilitator/s
- partnership preferences
- suitability and quality of existing evidence.

Potential approaches for learning more and designing together are summarised in Table 2. While these approaches overlap in many ways, they tend to emphasise different aspects of learning and designing. In practice, the approaches are often mixed together to create 'hybrid' approaches best suited to the local community. Toolkits that can support this step are listed in the **Act | Resources** section.

TABLE 2: APPROACHES FOR LEARNING MORE AND DESIGNING TOGETHER

Type of approach	Description	Examples	Areas of emphasis
Design approaches	Creative approaches to problem-solving	Human centred design Co-design Design labs	Use creative processes to build excitement and engagement Understand the issue from different perspectives and build empathy Encourage innovation and experimentation
Participatory learning approaches	Cyclical learning approaches to problem-solving	Action research Action learning	Deepen individual and/or group knowledge Support practice changes Encourage sharing of knowledge across participants
Quality improvement approaches	Systematic approaches to continuous improvement	The Model for Improvement Six Sigma Lean thinking Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle	Support practice and/or service changes, especially those on the 'front line' Real-time measurement to motivate participants and promote learning
Systems approaches	Tools and methods to better understand systems and respond to complex situations	System labs Social network analysis System dynamic analysis Soft systems methodology Outcome mapping	Gain different perspectives to help build a holistic understanding of complex situations or issues Consider root causes and strategic points of intervention

The selected approach/es should aim to deepen the partnership's understanding of the priority and begin to generate possible solutions or changes to processes, practises or programs. Most importantly, the approach should ensure that people most affected by the priority continue to be a central part of the process and are involved in decision making.

The approach/es may incorporate other steps in **Act** such as selecting powerful solutions (**Step 2**), testing (**Step 3**), and implementing (**Step 4**). Use your judgement about the most appropriate next step to take.

Make time for learning and understanding as a partnership

It is common for partnerships to undertake some learning exercises during this step in smaller groups. To ensure learning occurs across the whole partnership, it is important to make sure the partnership comes together as a whole to:

- share new knowledge and information
- ask questions
- critically reflect
- build shared understandings about the priority and possible solutions.



PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE: USING DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVIDENCE



It is important to take into account multiple forms of evidence when selecting ideas and assessing the extent of supporting evidence. Different forms of evidence include:

- Best available research, the interventions or programs that have been shown through rigorous formal testing to be effective in achieving the desired changes.
- Practice expertise, the skills, knowledge and wisdom of local professionals gained through practice experience.
- Experience, the views of people intended to benefit from the change, which determines what goals are important, what solutions are acceptable, and how effective these are.

Evidence-informed decision making refers to a process of deciding how to address a particular issue identified by a family or community based on different sources of evidence. These decisions draw upon three sources of evidence: client values, knowledge and circumstances; evidence-based programs; and practice-based evidence (see Figure 5).

There are practices that need to be in place to elicit all forms of evidence and evidence-informed decision making. These practices are embedded into Platforms and include:

- Building a partnership with intended beneficiaries - in this case the community - which is strengthened through ongoing interactions over time.
- Exploring what outcomes are important, including understanding the experiences and circumstances of community members and what achievable change would make the most difference to their lives.
- Agreeing on a focus of work together.
- Exploring possible ideas or strategies with community members.
- Agreeing on which ideas are acceptable to the community given the local circumstances.
- Testing the ideas and responding promptly to any challenges.
- Gaining feedback about the proposed solutions, changes and the process.
- Monitoring the effects.

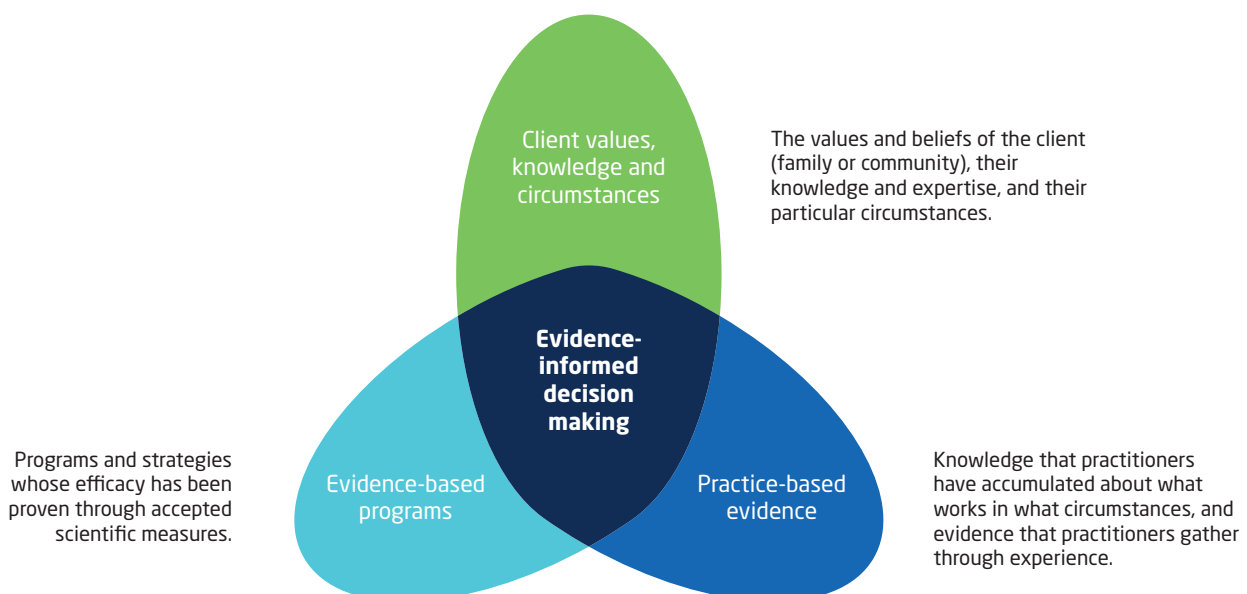


Figure 5: The components of evidence-informed decision making



STEP 2

Select powerful solutions

This step involves finding agreement on which solutions should be pursued and how this will happen. Sometimes it is important for the partnership's momentum to get going and learn by doing, especially when there is little certainty about which solution may work best. In this situation, you may choose to briefly **Reflect on and refine the solutions** and then jump ahead to **Step 3 | Test and adapt**.

Why is selecting powerful solutions important?

While it is not always possible to know which solutions are most likely to make a positive difference to children and families, this step encourages the partnership to think carefully about the changes that might have a better chance of success and to justify the choices made. A thoughtful selection process helps to encourage strategic thinking and the selection of solutions that are likely to be most appropriate or suitable for the local community. It also helps to ensure the partnership uses its resources wisely.

How to select powerful solutions

Reflect on and refine the solutions

The first task is to critically reflect on the ideas or solutions that have been generated by the partnership and consider their suitability to the community's circumstances and priorities. This may include thinking about alignment between the solution and factors such as:

- community values and beliefs
- available resources and funding
- partnership skills and knowledge

- motivations and interests of key stakeholders
- political and policy context
- the root causes of the priority
- research evidence.

Solutions should be discussed, refined and prioritised. Reasons why the solutions were selected should also be recorded. For high intensity solutions, such as those involving high levels of resourcing, high numbers of people or significant change, it may be important to ensure there is consensus about the solution across the partnership. It may also be helpful to develop a theory of change for high-intensity solutions to ensure there is agreement about the intended outcomes and how the solution will 'work'. For more information see **Develop a theory of change**.

Decide whether to test or implement

Next, the partnership should decide whether the solution is ready for testing or partnership-wide implementation. Solutions with high levels of supporting evidence, high levels of certainty about their suitability to the community's circumstances and high levels of confidence about the partnership's expertise can progress to implementation. Most solutions, however, will need to be trialled and refined with a small group of people or in a small number of settings, or be broken down into smaller parts before they are stable and are ready for implementation. In complex situations, some solutions may never be ready for implementation and may continue to require testing due to constant changes in staffing, the community or the issue.

A useful framework for deciding the scale of testing is shown in Figure 6. This framework considers:

- the degree of confidence that the change will lead to improvement
- readiness to make the change
- the cost of failure.

The framework indicates that changes with lower levels of confidence and readiness, or high costs of failure, should be tested (see **Act | Step 3**). Changes with high levels of confidence and readiness, and a low cost of failure, can be implemented widely (see **Act | Step 4**).

Current Situation		Readiness to Make Change		
		Not Ready	Indiffernet	Ready
Low Confidence that current change idea will lead to improvement	Cost of failure is large			
	Cost of failure is small			
High Confidence that current change idea will lead to improvement	Cost of failure is large			
	Cost of failure is small			

Very Small Scale Test

Small Scale Test

Wide Scale Test

Implement

Figure 6: Deciding the scale of testing. Source: The Improvement Guide, Langley et. al (2009). © John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

DEVELOP A THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change provides an explanation of how a program, initiative or solution is thought to work and its intended benefits. Theory of change can be used as a process of inquiry to build shared understanding about desired changes and how they will be achieved.

Why is developing a theory of change important?

Broadly, theory of change can help to improve planning, implementation and/or evaluation. More specifically, developing a theory of change can assist you to:

- clarify the difference you want to make
- choose strategies and activities that are known to be effective
- critically reflect on the conditions needed for the strategies and activities to be effective
- manage expectations about how quickly change may occur
- design how you will monitor and/or evaluate the change.

Done well, the process of developing a theory of change builds shared understandings, commitment and critical thinking. However, there is a need to ensure the process does not become overly technical and time consuming, which can negatively affect engagement and momentum.

How to develop a theory of change

There is no 'one size fits all' approach for developing a theory of change and there are many resources that provide advice. The process will usually involve bringing people together in a workshop to explore questions such as:

- What is the issue we want to address?
- What change do we want to see? For who?
- What evidence is there about what works in addressing the issue?
- What might we need to do to achieve the desired change?
- What activities will we need to implement?
- What resources might we need?
- When might we review the theory of change?
- How will we keep it updated?

It can be helpful to engage someone with theory of change experience to facilitate this workshop. Other strategies to consider as part of developing a theory of change include:

- Be clear about why you are developing a theory of change. Is it to support planning, implementation or evaluation? The answer to this question will shape the process you use, who is involved and the level of detail required.
- Be clear about who will use the theory of change. This may influence who is involved in the development process and how the theory of change is depicted.
- Involve people who will be responsible for implementing the change or are affected by the change.
- Establish agreed definitions of terms used in theory of change, such as outputs, activities, outcomes and impact at the outset.
- Be prepared to make trade-offs to support engagement with the theory of change. For example, more detailed theories of change can be difficult to read and use, especially by people who were not involved in the development process.

A photograph of a man and a young child in a garden. The man is in the background, holding a watering can, and the child is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange box containing the text 'STEP 3'.

STEP 3

Test and adapt

This step involves testing the selected solution/s and adapting the solution/s, if required, through action and reflection.

Why is testing and adapting important?

Testing encourages people to try out new ideas, learn about the things that work well (and not-so-well) and to quickly incorporate new understandings into iterations of the solution. When deliberate and systematic learning is incorporated as part of testing, ideas can be developed and refined, and you can reduce the amount of time and resources spent on ideas that do not work.

Ultimately, testing helps to determine the suitability and effects of new ideas and whether they are ready to be integrated into daily practice or not. In complex situations where change is frequent, some solutions will need to be constantly adapted to the changing context and will not progress to the next step of implementation.

How to test and adapt

Select a model

There are many different models or approaches for testing solutions. At the heart of testing is a cycle of action and reflection, which typically involves:

- planning what you will do
- taking action
- learning about the action taken
- re-planning what you will do next.

Some common action-reflection models include rapid-cycle iteration (test, learn, refine), action research (plan, act, observe, reflect), and Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles (see Figure 7).

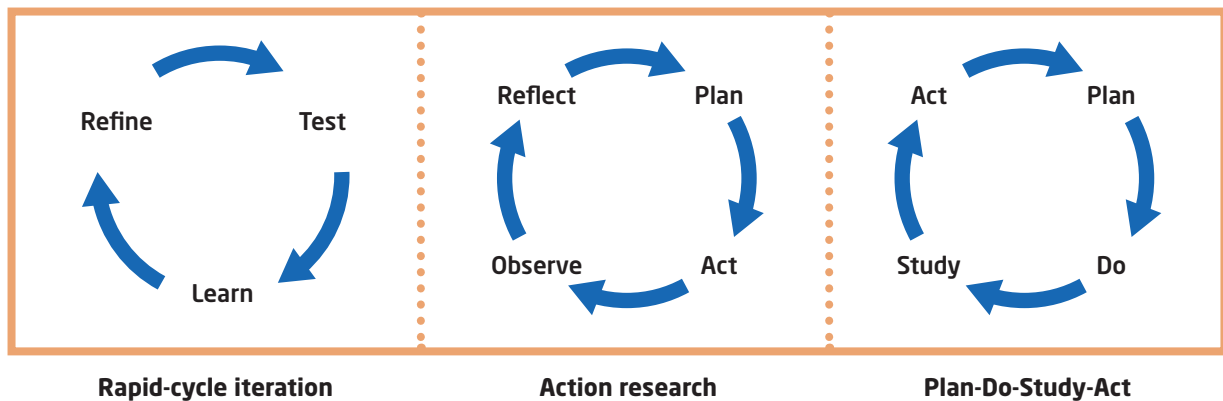


Figure 7: Common ways of testing solutions, using action and reflection cycles

Action-reflection cycles vary in size and pace and will depend on the nature of the change you wish to make. For example, solutions that involve one person making very small changes are best suited to rapid action-reflection cycles that can take place over weeks. However, solutions requiring multiple people and multiple changes may involve slower cycles of action and reflection that take place over a few months.

Selecting a consistent model for testing – such as one that is already used by members of the partnership – helps to build a common language and understanding about testing. In turn, this can accelerate learning and improve the likelihood of achieving a positive impact. Most partnerships benefit from investing time and effort in building the knowledge and skills of people involved in testing. This may be in the form of training workshops and/or coaching.

Start testing

Each solution should then begin its first action-reflection cycle. The **Principle in practice | Adapt to the local context by testing** provides an example of an action-reflection cycle using the Plan-Do-Study-Act model.

An action-reflection cycle is considered complete once a decision has been made to adapt, adopt or abandon the solution. Data, feedback or information collected as part of the action-reflection cycle should inform this decision.

Most solutions will require multiple action-reflection cycles to develop and refine the idea and build readiness to implement the solution as part of everyday practice.

Share lessons

It is important to provide opportunities for partnership members to reflect on the solution and the data they are gathering. Checklists, reflection questions, peer support, coaching or facilitated sessions are all useful ways to support reflection. Reflecting with peers can help to spread lessons quickly and is particularly helpful if similar solutions are being tested simultaneously.

Questions that can prompt reflection include:

- What is working well? What is not working well?
- Is the solution reaching the right people?
- Which parts of the solution might be contributing to change?
- What else is helping and hindering change?
- How could the solution be strengthened?
- How could the challenges be addressed?
- What else have you learnt?
- Should the solution be adopted, adapted or abandoned? Why? How?

Documenting insights and lessons from individuals or group discussions can provide useful information for future decisions and advance the partnership's knowledge over time.

PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE: ADAPT TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT BY TESTING



A Plan-Do-Study-Act (PSDA) cycle can be a useful framework for testing changes to advance new ideas, seeing if they are suited to the local community and whether they result in improvement. A cycle involves four steps.

Step 1: Plan

Develop a simple, small plan to test the change idea, including:

- **What:** Clearly define the tasks that will be undertaken to achieve the idea.
- **Where:** Where will the plan be executed? Where is the improvement intended to take place?
- **When:** When will testing begin and end?
- **Who:** Who is responsible for each aspect of this cycle (e.g. implementing the change idea, collecting the data, analysing the data)?
- **Prediction:** Make a prediction of the improvement expected. This will test the link between the plan, idea and desired change. It will help to determine what data should be gathered and whether the idea was successful or not. Ask questions such as:
 - What is the prediction?
 - What is likely to happen as a result of the change idea?
 - What improvement is expected?
- **Data to be collected:** Describe what data needs to be collected to see if the improvement predicted occurred.

Step 2: Do

Carry out the plan developed in in Step 1 documenting observations and problems regarding implementation and gathering the data to test the prediction.

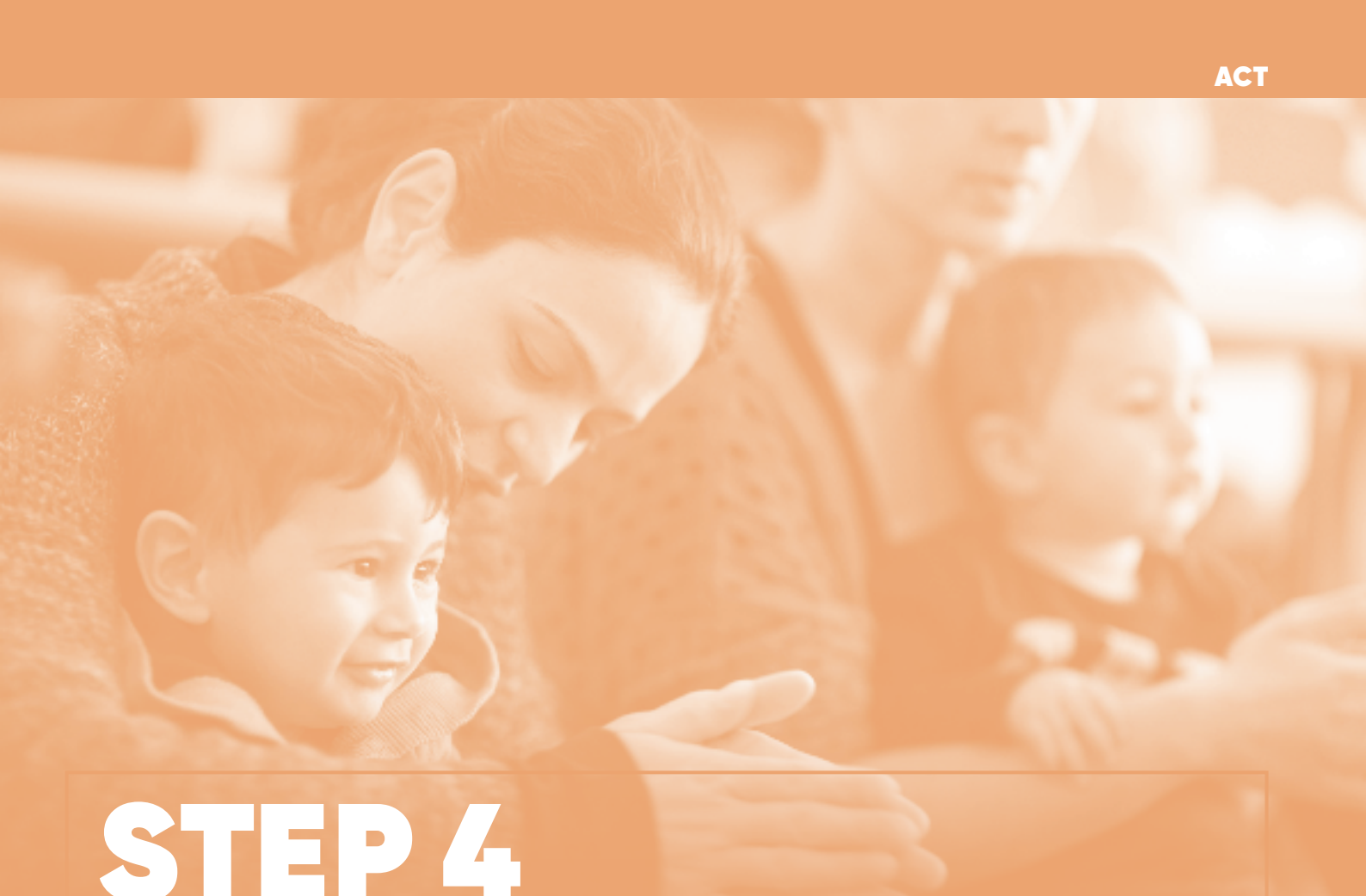
Step 3: Study

Set aside time to analyse the data you collected and study the results. Compare the data to your predictions and summarise and reflect on what was learned. Did the change idea meet your prediction? If not, why not? When carrying out the Study section of your cycle, ask:

- Has the data been analysed?
- Has there been an assessment of how well the change idea was implemented?
- Has there been an assessment of problems or unforeseen circumstances?
- Has there been an assessment of the idea's effectiveness?

Step 4: Act

Once the data has been analysed, decide with the partnership/working group/practitioners what to do in the next PSDA cycle as a result of this cycle. Will the change idea be adapted (modified and tested again), adopted (embedded into daily practice) or abandoned (discarded)?



STEP 4

Implement and monitor

This step involves implementing and monitoring the solution. Once you are confident that the solution is having positive effects, it is well suited to the community, and people are confident to make the change, it is time to adopt or implement the solution as 'business as usual'. Implementation requires an ongoing commitment to action and reflection to check that the solution is still working and to quickly address any emerging challenges.

Why is important to implement and monitor?

Undertaking this step allows you to sustain successful solutions as part of everyday practice. It also helps you to spread or scale the solution to other parts of the partnership or community if the solution continues to be successful, people have the skills and confidence to implement it, and there are sufficient resources.

How to implement and monitor

Develop an implementation plan

An implementation plan should address the following questions:

- What needs to happen for this solution to be implemented as part of everyday practice? What are the tasks? What resources and expertise are required?
- Who is responsible for carrying out each of the actions?
- What are the timelines?
- What challenges can be foreseen?
- How will we know when each task or action has been completed?

Any other information that helps to guide implementation should be included in the plan. Depending on the level of investment required for implementation, the draft plan may need to be reviewed and agreed to by the partnership as a whole.

Develop a monitoring plan

Once a solution is relatively 'stable', it can be helpful to develop a monitoring plan that strengthens the action-reflection approach undertaken during testing. This involves selecting the outcomes and processes that require monitoring, choosing indicators and identifying data sources and methods. Now is a good time to check that there is a clear theory of change underpinning the solution. For more information see **Develop a theory of change**.

A partnership member with experience in program evaluation or data collection may be best placed to lead the development of a monitoring plan. If there is no one with this expertise within your partnership, it is possible for a nominated individual to undertake this task with the guidance of resources. Alternatively it may also be useful to work with or contract an expert.

Anticipate challenges and build capacity

Before you begin implementation, it can be helpful to anticipate possible challenges and develop strategies to address these. Guides and resources on implementation outline common barriers (e.g. resistance to change) and strategies to overcome these barriers. They are a useful reference at this point in time.

Spread the solution

The decision to spread or scale the solution should be informed by your monitoring data. If the practice, process or program is achieving the desired positive effects, and these effects are consistent over time, then it may be a good idea to expand the solution to other parts of the partnership or community. This may involve going back to

Act | Step 3.

CHECK AND REFLECT

Have you:

- ☐ considered how to **co-learn and co-design** with others?
- ☐ **used evidence** to inform and select solutions?
- ☐ ensured that stakeholders are committed to participating in a reflective, cyclic, adaptive, **continuous improvement** process?
- ☐ tested, adapted, monitored and **reflected on the impact** of your solutions?
- ☐ checked that the people most affected by change and whose voices are not always heard have been **able to contribute** to the change process?
- ☐ developed an **implementation plan**?
- ☐ checked that people are feeling supported, informed and **able to implement** the plan?
- ☐ monitored and ensured ongoing **meaningful reflection** as a core component of the implementation process?

RESOURCES

TIP SHEET

Mapping community assets

This tip sheet provides advice for mapping helpful community resources.

TOOLKIT

Mapping community services and facilities

This toolkit contains templates for gathering information about child and families services and facilities, and identifying gaps that may exist.

POLICY BRIEF

Using evidence in policy and programs

A policy brief that explores the use of evidence in policy and programs to ensure that evidence-based interventions are aligned with the needs and values of clients.

RESOURCE PAPER

Implementation in action

A guide to implementing evidence-informed programs and practices by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

WORKING PAPER

Towards a model of evidence-informed decision making and service delivery

A working paper that explores the concept of evidence-informed practice.

COMMUNITY MANUAL

Kids in Community Study

The Kids in Communities Study (KiCS) has developed a manual to support communities to measure local community-level factors that influence children's development.

COMMUNICATION SUMMARIES

Restacking the Odds

Communication summaries from Restacking the Odds explore best practice and process indicators for antenatal care, sustained nurse home visiting, early childhood education and care, and parenting programs. The summaries outline the quality factors that are most impactful on children's development.

SUPPORT

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Platforms Training

A training program designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to implement Platforms.

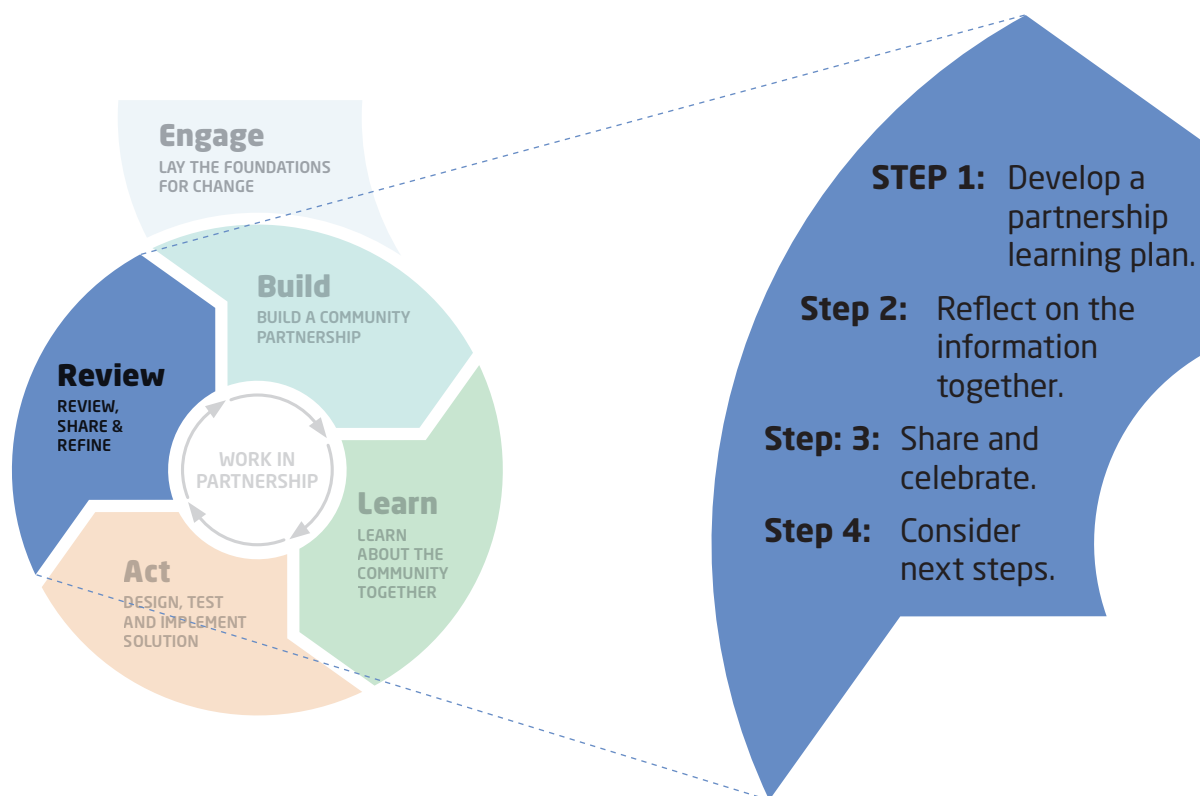
Consultancy

CCCH specialists are available to provide guidance and support for designing, testing and implementing solutions in partnership with community members.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

REVIEW

Review, share and refine



OVERVIEW

This phase invites the partnership to consider the key insights, lessons and impacts emerging across the partnership. It prompts the partnership to reflect on how the practice and culture of working in partnership is unfolding, and to share and celebrate success. Review should not be seen as the end of the process, rather as a phase that is undertaken regularly to inform the partnership's next steps to improve the lives of young children and their families.

By the end of this phase, you will have:

- established a **plan and process** for reviewing the partnership's achievements, challenges, lessons and impacts
- gained **new insights and built shared understandings** about the partnership's key achievements, challenges, lessons and impacts
- **celebrated success** with the partnership, community and other key stakeholders
- identified the **next steps** for the partnership.



STEP 1

Develop a partnership learning plan

This step considers the information needed to support the partnership's overall direction and develops ways for the partnership to review this information and learn together. It has a high-level or whole-of-partnership focus, rather than concentrating on the lessons and achievements associated with particular solutions tested and/or implemented in the previous phase.

Why is developing a partnership learning plan important?

Bringing about changes in community conditions for children and families involves many different streams of work, such as engaging a range of people, developing respectful relationships, building community leadership, enhancing learning, and designing, testing and implementing many different solutions. It is important to regularly review how all of these aspects are going and consider the 'big picture' to ensure the process is unfolding in a robust and systematic way that is consistent with the Platforms Principles. This information can guide the partnership's decision making and help to make sure the work is heading in the right direction.

Developing a partnership learning plan increases the likelihood that the partnership will:

- collect the information needed to support learning, improvement and accountability
- use high-quality and robust processes to develop a big picture view of how the partnership is progressing
- identify positive changes that have occurred and barriers to success
- meet its reporting and funding requirements
- share valuable lessons and information across the partnership to build capacity
- make data-informed decisions about what to do next.

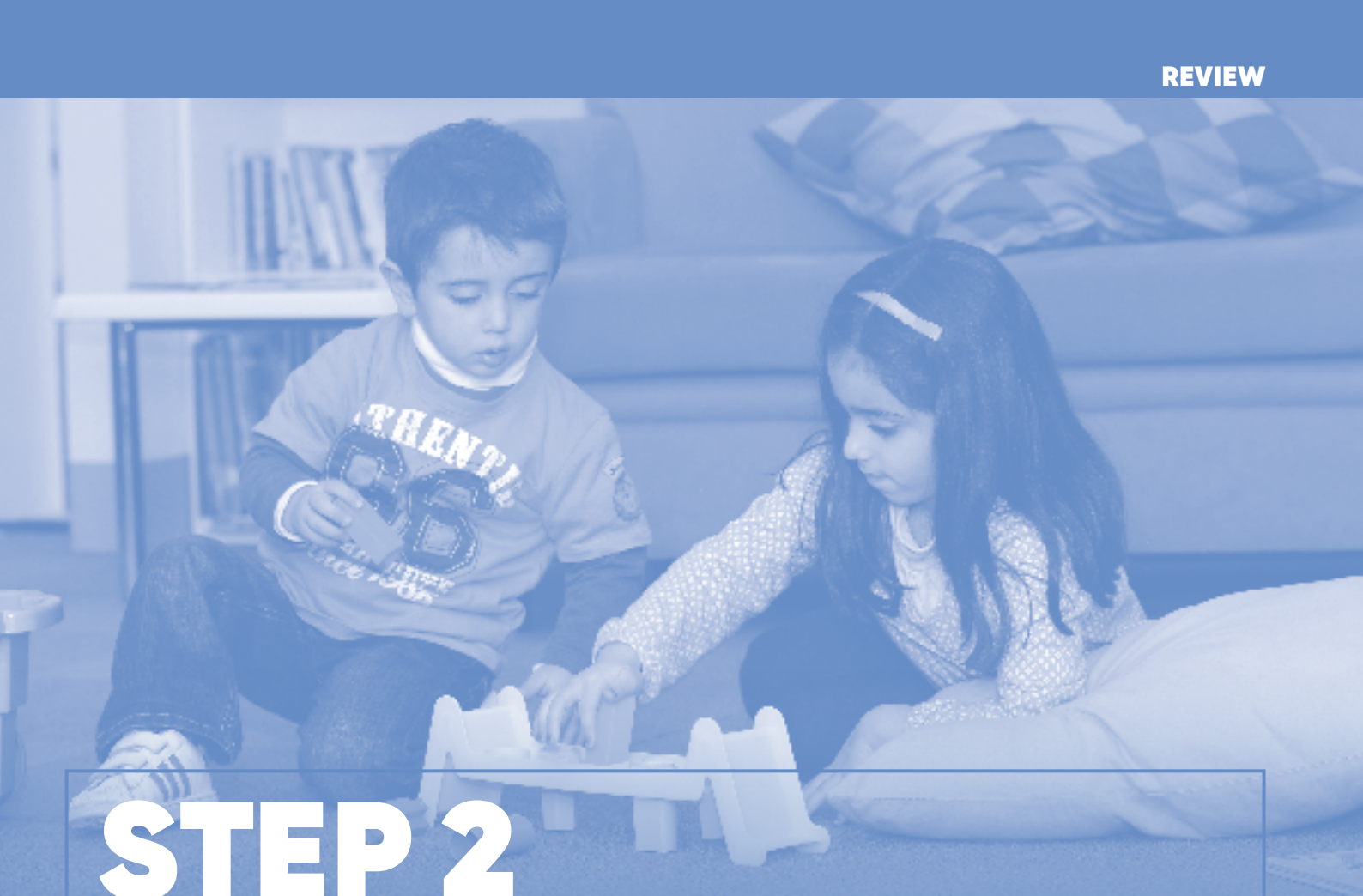
How to develop a partnership learning plan

This is a substantial step that involves many technical tasks, which are outlined in detail in other monitoring and evaluation resources and guides (see **Resources for reviewing, sharing and refining**). The Place-based Evaluation Framework and Toolkit (Dart, 2018) may be a particularly helpful resource to guide you through this step. You may also like to engage an evaluation consultant to support you with this work.

Key tasks, adapted from the Place-based Evaluation Framework (Dart, 2018), include:

- **Clarify the partnership's learning needs** - identify the mix of accountability and learning requirements, who will use the information, and the available resources.
- **Clarify how the partnership is thought to work** - check the partnership's overall theory of change and underpinning principles such as working in partnership.
- **Develop partnership learning questions and methods** - identify priority learning questions, suitable methods to answer the questions and responsibilities for implementing the methods.
- **Build ways to reflect and learn together** - consider the information to be consolidated and shared, and determine who will be responsible.





STEP 2

Reflect on the information together

This step focuses on sharing information across the partnership and building a shared understanding about achievements, challenges and lessons. It includes hearing stories and experiences from community, exploring the changes unfolding in practice and culture, and reviewing the impacts emerging for children and families in the community.

Why is reflecting on the information together important?

Bringing different people from the partnership together to reflect will help to prevent fragmentation and any siloed pockets of action, and contribute to developing a holistic view of the initiative. Sharing different views, experiences and perspectives can help to generate new insights into the factors that help and hinder the partnership's work and advance future activity. It provides an important check point about the suitability and effects of the partnership's work, and an opportunity to develop any strategies to overcome barriers.

How can you do this step?

The final task in the partnership's learning plan (see **Review | Step 1**) will outline the agreed ways for reflecting on information together and the questions that the partnership wishes to answer. Topics may cover:

- changes in the community's profile or the issue that is being addressed
- how successfully the partnership is functioning
- how well the principles or approaches are being applied
- the lessons learnt about successful and unsuccessful solutions
- the changes that are occurring in the system
- the impacts that are emerging for individual people, small groups of people (cohorts) or community wide (population impact).



STEP 3

Share and celebrate

This step involves documenting and sharing relevant information from the partnership's reflection and making the time to celebrate.

Why is sharing and celebrating important?

Sharing achievements, lessons and changes is a critical part of celebrating the work for everyone involved and will contribute to a positive working together culture. Sharing information will have short-term value - in informing immediate changes - and long-term value - in supporting the future development of other initiatives and services in the community.

Sharing the work of the initiative can also be a way of demonstrating how robust and systematic reflection has guided all of the phases of the initiative. This can be important in continuing to bring about positive outcomes for children and families in your community.

How to share and celebrate

The partnership learning plan developed in **Review | Step 1** should guide the specific tasks in this step. Broadly, after the partnership has reflected together you will need to consider the range of stakeholders you are accountable to and the information they may need or value. This includes the broader community. It will be important to consider:

- Who is your audience? Do you have multiple audiences?
- Are there deadlines that might affect your timing (e.g. a funding submission deadline)?
- What are your resources for this task?

Once these questions have been answered, you will need to decide the best way of communicating the information for the various audiences. For example, is a detailed report required, or is a one or two-page summary document more appropriate? Other options include presentations at conferences or community events, videos and/or articles in the local paper. It is also important to consider who can share the story of the community (e.g. including parents/children in a video).





STEP 4

Consider next steps

This step involves taking time as a partnership group to plan what you will do next. The plan will be based on the information shared with the partnership group and the insights gained from the partnership's reflection. At the end of this step, you may revisit the relevant phases and steps to address additional community priorities and/or to extend your work on the current priority.

Why do this step?

Changing the community conditions for children and families does not happen as a result of short-term initiatives, but as part of a long-term cycle of change. Without agreeing to the next steps, all you will have achieved is one cycle of the change process. The journey of changing the way community, services and government work together requires commitment, persistence and above all, time. **It is likely to take several cycles of working through the Platforms Roadmap before you see the change in practice and culture you had hoped for, and the resulting benefits for the children and families in your community.**

How can you do this step?

The decision regarding your next steps is one that all partnership members must agree on so it requires the participation of the whole group. The discussion will involve answering the following question:

- In order to progress our work, which steps of the Platforms Roadmap do we need to focus on and improve, and where should we start (see Figure 8)?

For example, your partnership group may:

- agree on ways to continue to engage the community in the 'change' conversation and continue to work together to identify strengths, needs and wishes, particularly if your community has experienced significant change since the first time you did this exercise

OR

- decide that you are ready to identify another community priority that builds on the achievements of the partnership so far

OR

- decide that more work is needed to design, test and implement changes on the existing community priority

OR

- combine these options by designing, testing and implementing more solutions for the current community priority as well as commencing work on a new community priority.

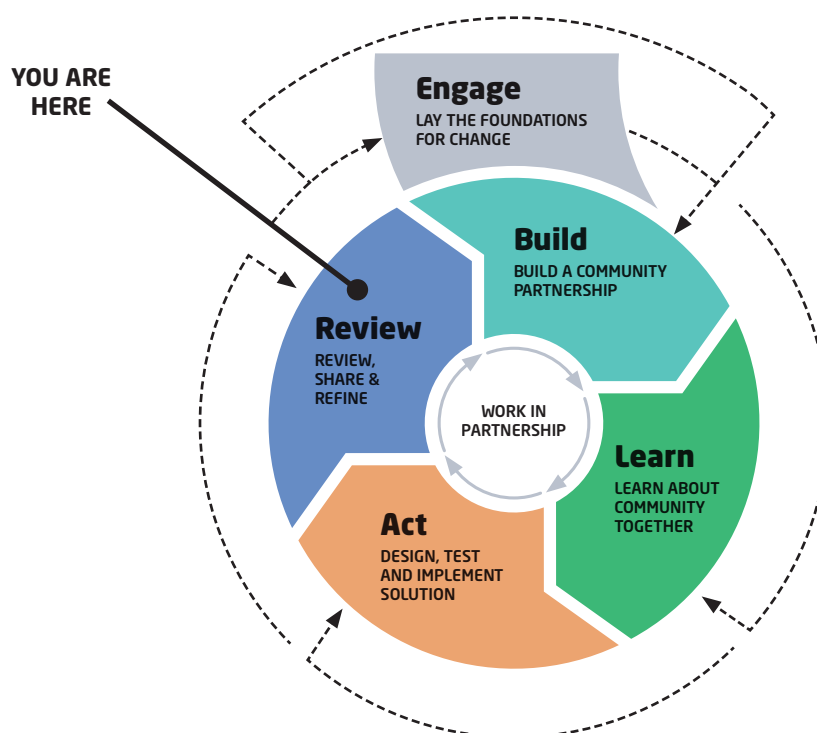


Figure 8: Consider next steps for your partnership

Once your next steps have been agreed upon, you will need to document them so that you can refer to them in the future. This is a task that could potentially be delegated to a subgroup of the partnership.

CHECK AND REFLECT



Have you:

- ☐ developed a **partnership learning plan**?
- ☐ determined what data could be useful to **demonstrate the impact** of your initiative?
- ☐ identified **potential barriers** to collecting data and how stakeholders can be supported to overcome challenges?
- ☐ considered how the **partnership may respond** if data analysis reveals limited progress?
- ☐ reflected on the **process of change** and considered if there are steps to be modified or added?
- ☐ identified ways for the partnership group to **evaluate** itself in an objective way?
- ☐ **sustained the interest** of partnership members and considered how to maintain future momentum?
- ☐ considered how best to use and **communicate the findings** of the partnership?
- ☐ established a **clear link** between this step and the next phase of your work?
- ☐ agreed to **next steps** to continue to drive community-led change?

SUPPORT



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Platforms Training

A training program designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to implement Platforms.

Consultancy

CCCH specialists are available to provide guidance and support for developing partnership learning plans and supporting the design of review and reflection processes.

To access Platforms resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms

RESOURCES



TOOLKIT

Place-based Evaluation Toolkit

A toolkit developed by Clear Horizon that provides links and resources for addressing key evaluation questions.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

From here, you can begin putting your next steps into action. Expect to revisit phases and steps of the Platforms Roadmap as you progress. As your partnership's confidence and skills grow you may expand your priorities, and as the communities needs change, so too will your response.

The Centre for Community Child Health works in partnership with others to improve the health and wellbeing of children and families. If you require additional guidance or support you will find information about services, research, expertise and resources that can assist your progress online: **www.rch.org.au/ccch**

You may also find it valuable to connect and share experiences with champions of this process in other communities. Peer support is valuable and there are several online forums and websites that can help you to make these connections.

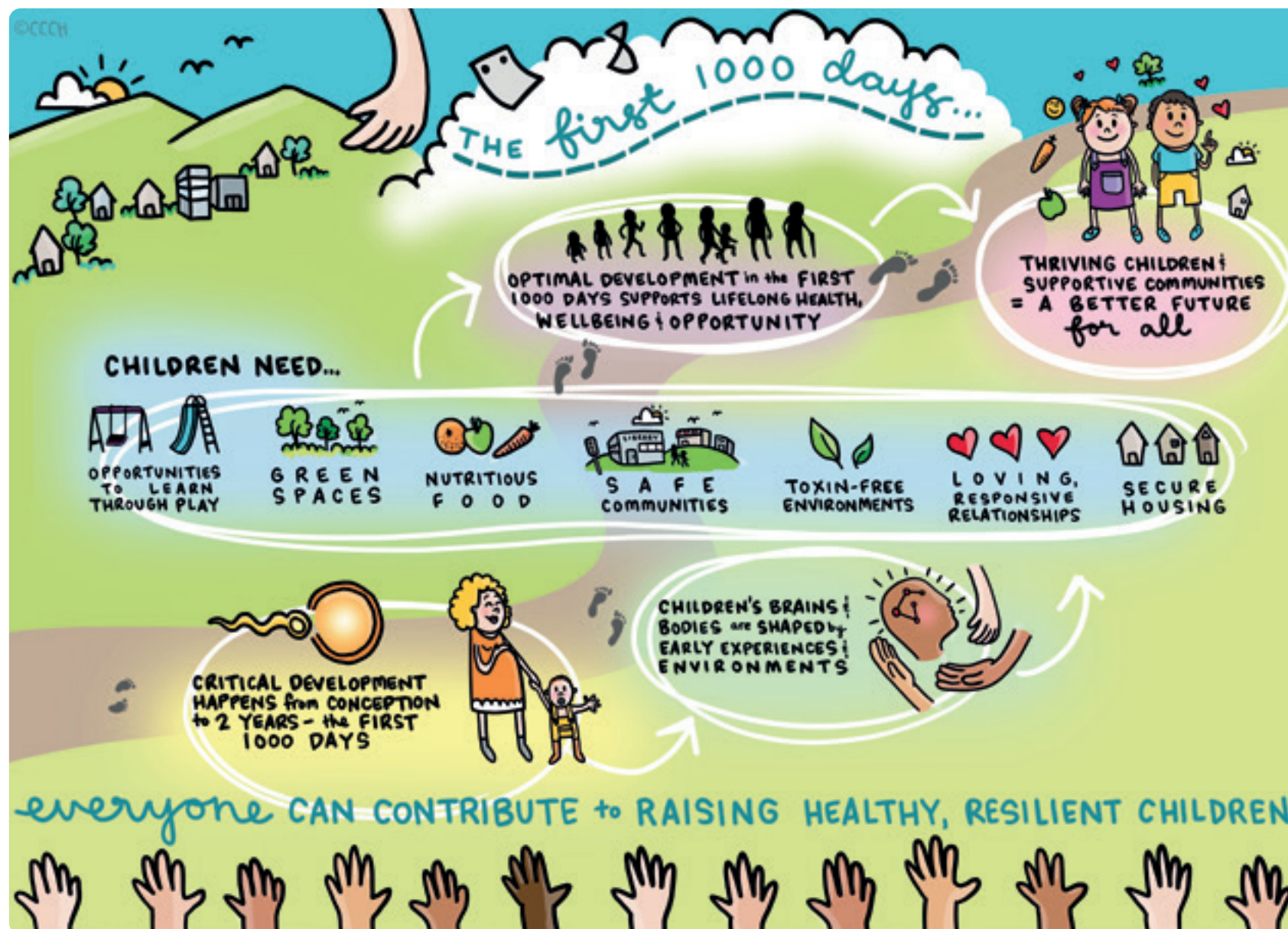
You can access links to these forums, along with a full list of Platforms resources and support at **www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms**

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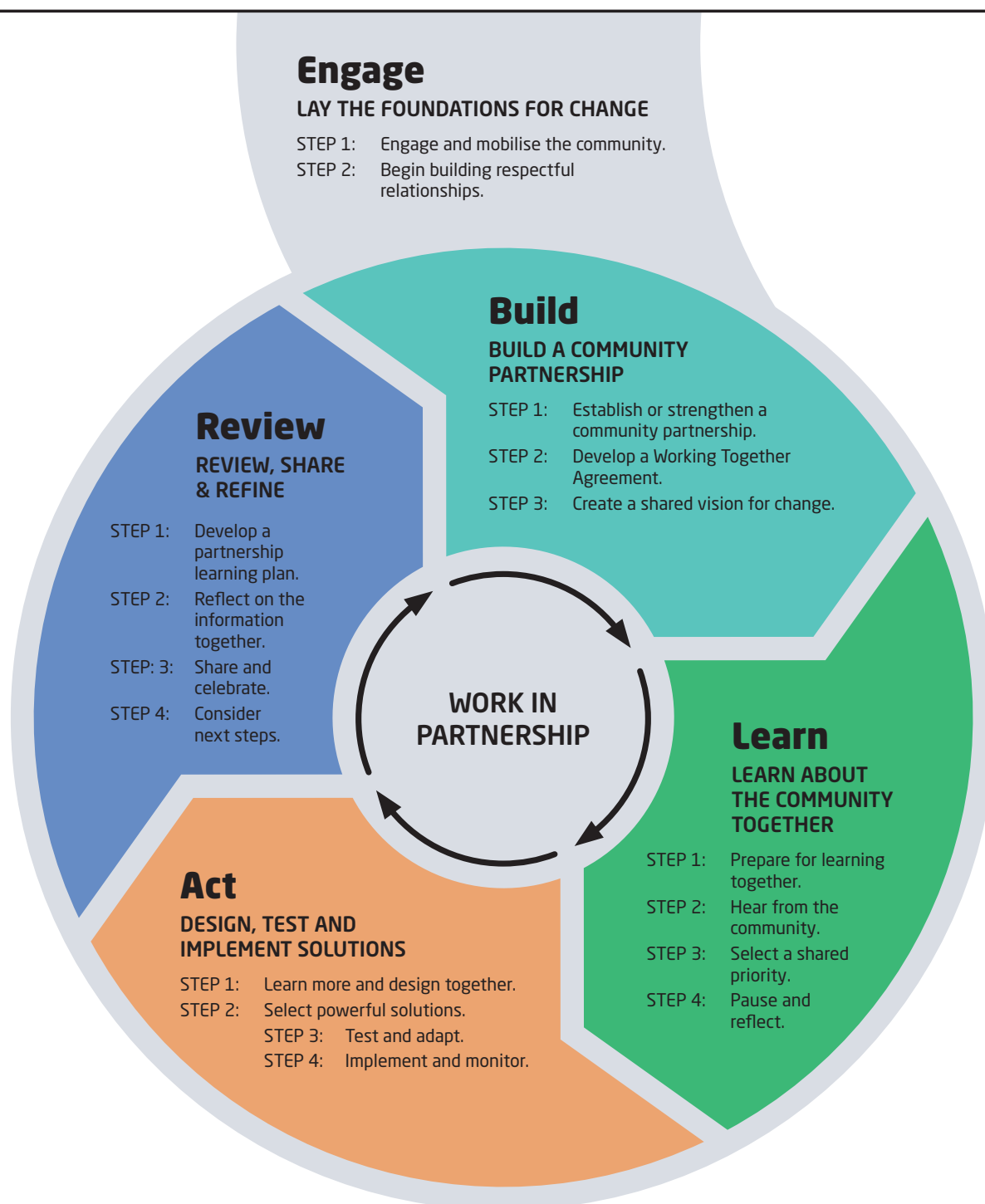
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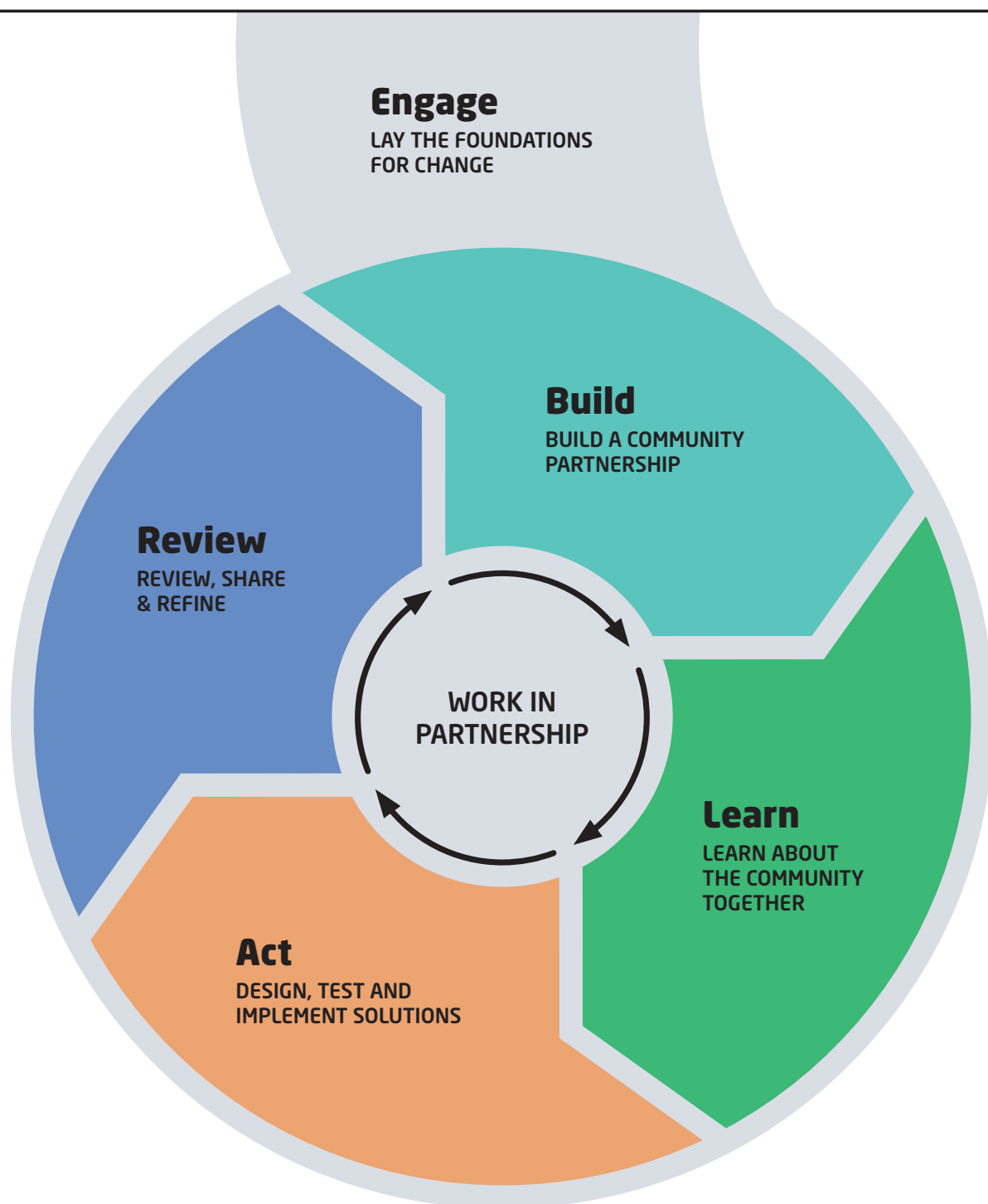
Appendix 1: Supporting health, development and wellbeing in the first 1000 days



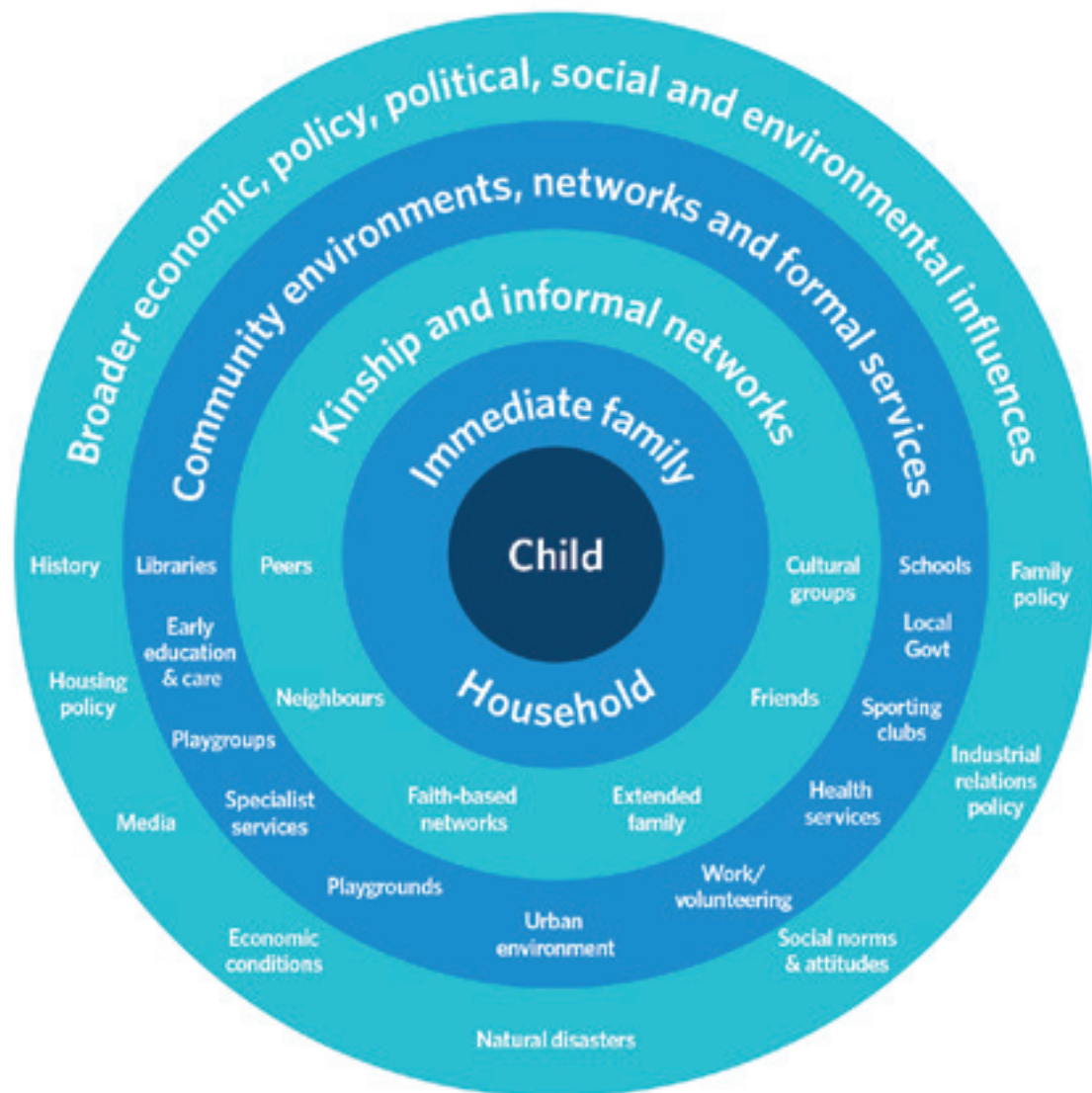
PLATFORMS ROADMAP



PLATFORMS ROADMAP



Appendix 4: Ecological model



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The Centre for Community Child Health is a department of The Royal Children's Hospital and a research group of Murdoch Children's Research Institute.