

PARTNERING IN EFFORTS TO END HOMELESSNESS: MAKING AND HAVING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Why should councils be partners in efforts to end homelessness?

Homelessness is increasingly an issue of strategic importance for councils and the local government sector.

Individually, and collectively, councils have a key role to play in ending homelessness within their communities, for reasons which include:

- of all levels of government, local government is the closest to the community they serve.
- councils have a deep understanding of the needs of their community, meaning they are well-placed to advocate for resource allocation and policy-making based on local priorities and needs.
- councils (including collectively) have the ability to advocate across multiple levels of government, as well as influencing other internal and external stakeholders.



Local government also has an important role in creating and maintaining the right enabling environment for efforts to end homelessness. This is because councils hold responsibility for the regulation of space and the built environment; for driving community and local economic development; and for supporting resident and business wellbeing in ways that communities need and desire.

Councils can play many different roles in support of ending homelessness in their communities (Pearson 2023a). Bringing stakeholders together for advocacy, action and support around ending homelessness stand out as key roles. The Collective Impact approach is a useful frame for action for councils as partners, directors or supporters of end homelessness efforts, as outlined later in this fact sheet.

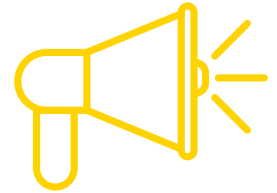
Roles can councils play in ending homelessness?

Leader

Local councils are uniquely positioned as the tier of government closest to their communities, with council staff and elected members having a visible and trusted presence within their community. This can present a natural leadership opportunity within community efforts to end homelessness. Equally, leadership of efforts can be about standing alongside others and maximising existing networks and collaborative relationships within communities, in a coordinating role or as a collaboration member.

Partner/participant

Some communities have existing networks of people and agencies already working to address or end homelessness: others are working to establish these. Local councils can be a partner or participant in such networks, offering their capacities across the areas outlined here (advocacy, raising community awareness, linking), as well as providing the physical, human and financial resources to support the operation of networks and champion the end homelessness cause.



Advocacy

Local councils can use their place within communities and with state and federal governments specifically to individually and collectively amplify ambitions, actions and impacts; to establish or harness other resources; and to influence stakeholder and community buy-in and awareness of the need to end homelessness and the ways of achieving this (see fact sheet 6).

Community awareness and education

Local councils play an important role in their communities in terms of setting community agendas for action and change, as well as supporting other efforts and actions to improve community development and inclusion. Local councils can also play a valuable role in informing the community about local efforts and actions, for example through collection, analysis and sharing of housing statistics and by sharing stories of the lived experience of community members.

Community safety and outreach

Local councils are regulators of public spaces. As part of this role, most councils have community safety responsibilities and functions that interface with people sleeping rough and people experiencing other types of homelessness. Some councils directly provide or support outreach services to assist people sleeping on the streets, in parks and cars and other vulnerable situations, or actively participate in other collaborative outreach efforts. Councils can influence community understandings and views of homelessness and 'acceptable' uses of public spaces, as well as being a doorway to support and ensuring responses to homelessness are not criminalised.

Doorways and wayfinding

Local councils provide a number of services and community-facing facilities that are or can be doorways that people experiencing homelessness walk through seeking support, such as recreation centres, council caravan parks, libraries and council offices. These places, and the people working within them, can provide a range of supports to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness: from such practical things as access to shower facilities, to direction to emergency relief services for food packages and other needs, to assistance connecting with local homelessness and other services or providing people with help to find a home (helping people find their way through the system of supports, i.e. wayfinding).

Anecdotal evidence suggests people are increasingly walking through such doorways, driven to seek support because of increasing costs of living and housing supply issues. A significant opportunity exists for councils to train their staff who serve in public-facing roles to understand homelessness and its drivers and solutions; to sensitively identify the signs of homelessness and risk of homelessness; and to help people find the locally available support they need.

Service provision

Some local governments are involved in direct homelessness service provision, for example, providing or supporting local outreach efforts or providing case management (as the City of Port Adelaide Enfield does with its [Reconnect service](#) for young people). Councils may directly provide housing and/or support crisis services such as drop-in centres in their communities. Where this is the case, there is a critical opportunity and need to align service provision with the ethos and principles of ending homelessness as appropriate for the local community context.

Other fact sheets in this toolkit provide experiences and ideas about how local government can play a role in ending homelessness.

Making and having collective impact

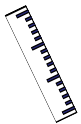
Ending homelessness efforts are fundamentally about making and having collective impact. Collective impact is the important outcome here, as the Collective Impact approach (or elements of it) is widely used among end homeless campaigns because it provides a simple framework for action (Kania and Kramer 2011; see also Resources section at the end of this fact sheet).

Collective Impact as an approach deliberately opens up space for multiple stakeholders (partners) to come together to address a complex social challenge, an important advancement that is about organisations or agencies (partners) sharing responsibility and accountability. Collective Impact initiatives move beyond traditional partnership models to an approach that is about building and sustaining deep, long-term collaboration by ensuring stakeholders in an effort agree on what they are trying to achieve, why and how.

The Collective Impact approach is defined by five 'conditions' which are considered critical for making and having collective impact or 'collective success' (Kania and Kramer 2011):



A common agenda: 'Collective Impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.'



Shared measurement systems: Alongside a common agenda, Collective Impact requires a shared measurement system to ensure alignment and consistency in actions, as well as understanding of what success (and failure) looks like, and accountability. Shared measurement systems may relate to how a challenge is understood (i.e. person-centred information collected about people's homelessness experiences and housing and support needs), as well as how an effort is tracking in terms of progress or towards goals or outcomes (or both).



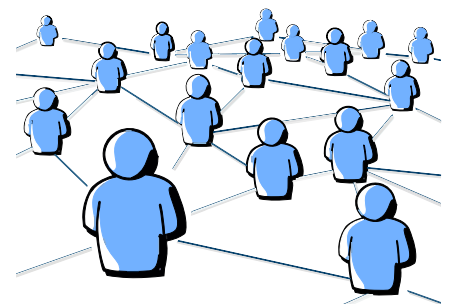
Mutually reinforcing activities: Making and having collective impact relies on a diverse group of stakeholders working together to meet an agreed agenda. Undertaking mutually reinforcing activities recognises that not all stakeholders/partners need to or will be doing the same things within an initiative, but what they do coordinates with, reinforces and does not undermine the activities of others and the collective. Such an approach allows everyone to play to their strengths, skills and resources.



Continuous communication: Commitment to continuous communication via a range of methods, to build trust, ensure openness and shared decision-making and keep skin in the game.



A backbone support organisation: Building and holding together a collective impact initiative requires a particular supporting infrastructure (and skilled staff) to keep partners on track in their collective efforts, ensure actions are aligned to the agreed agenda and measurement approaches and that communication, including analysis of evidence, supports shared goals. Resourcing backbone support presents as a challenge for many collective impact initiatives, although there are many ways backbones are and have been structured and resourced, including via externally sourced funding (for example philanthropic funding), via shared contributions from partners or as shared structure between partners and government.



'Ending homelessness has and can only be achieved by coalitions of like-minded leaders, people and organisations standing together and saying enough is enough - that we will no longer accept homelessness in our community.'
(Pearson 2023b)

Who can councils partner with?

In establishing, supporting or advancing a local end homelessness effort, there is a range of people, organisations, agencies and/or networks councils can work with, augment or bring together. Such people include council staff (for example social planners, community safety officers, community development staff, data analysts) and elected members. Such organisations and agencies include:

- The local Homelessness Alliance
- Community service/non-government organisations
- Government agencies such as housing, health, corrections, SAPOL, justice
- Domestic and family violence services
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- Faith-based organisations and networks
- Women's services
- Youth services
- Housing and accommodation providers
- Local health services and networks
- Local business associations/chambers of commerce
- Community groups and service clubs
- Community centres
- Philanthropic organisations
- Schools
- Universities and researchers
- Representatives of other local councils

In thinking about their role in ending homelessness and any ending homelessness effort, councils should also think about how they promote and reinforce their commitment within council, including ensuring policies and programs align with their mission and bringing all council employees along the journey, from counter staff in offices and libraries, right through to team leaders and executives.

How councils are partnering in efforts to end homelessness

City of Adelaide and Adelaide Zero Project

The City of Adelaide has been involved with the Adelaide Zero Project initiative to end rough sleeping homelessness in the City of Adelaide (CBD, North Adelaide and Park Lands) since project inception. Council's role with the initiative has changed over time, reflecting their changing priorities (post-election changes), the impact of the pandemic and Adelaide Zero Project resourcing and focuses.

The City of Adelaide has dedicated resources directly to the Adelaide Zero Project, including a seconded role (part-time) within the Adelaide Zero backbone organisation. A key function of this role was to drive operational activities such as the allocation of housing and support to people on the Adelaide Zero Project By-Name List. Council has also provided funding to understand particular elements of the homelessness challenge in the city, for example how to ensure people visiting the city and Park Lands from remote lands in SA and beyond are safe and supported (Pearson et al. 2021).

Another key element of Council's ongoing role with the initiative is advocacy to government about specific challenges related to homelessness in the city, as well as working with SA Police, city businesses and property owners to understand homelessness, how to help people who are homeless and how to ensure the safety of people sleeping rough (safety, amenity etc.). Council also continues to bring together key stakeholders to brainstorm how they can support an end to homelessness; willingly promotes its learnings about involvement in the Adelaide Zero Project; participates in events and networks for ending homelessness statewide and continues to resource activities in the homelessness space.

Learning from an emerging initiative: the Port Adelaide Enfield Zero Project

The Adelaide North West Homelessness Alliance and committed local agencies, including Port Adelaide Enfield Council, have worked together for some time to establish the Port Adelaide Enfield Zero Project. The initiative is focussed on ending homelessness for the increasing numbers of people sleeping rough locally, many of them for several years. Project partners, including Council, know the importance of the right housing and support, and that ending homelessness within the local government area will have significant benefits for all members of the community, including addressing concerns about anti-social behaviour.

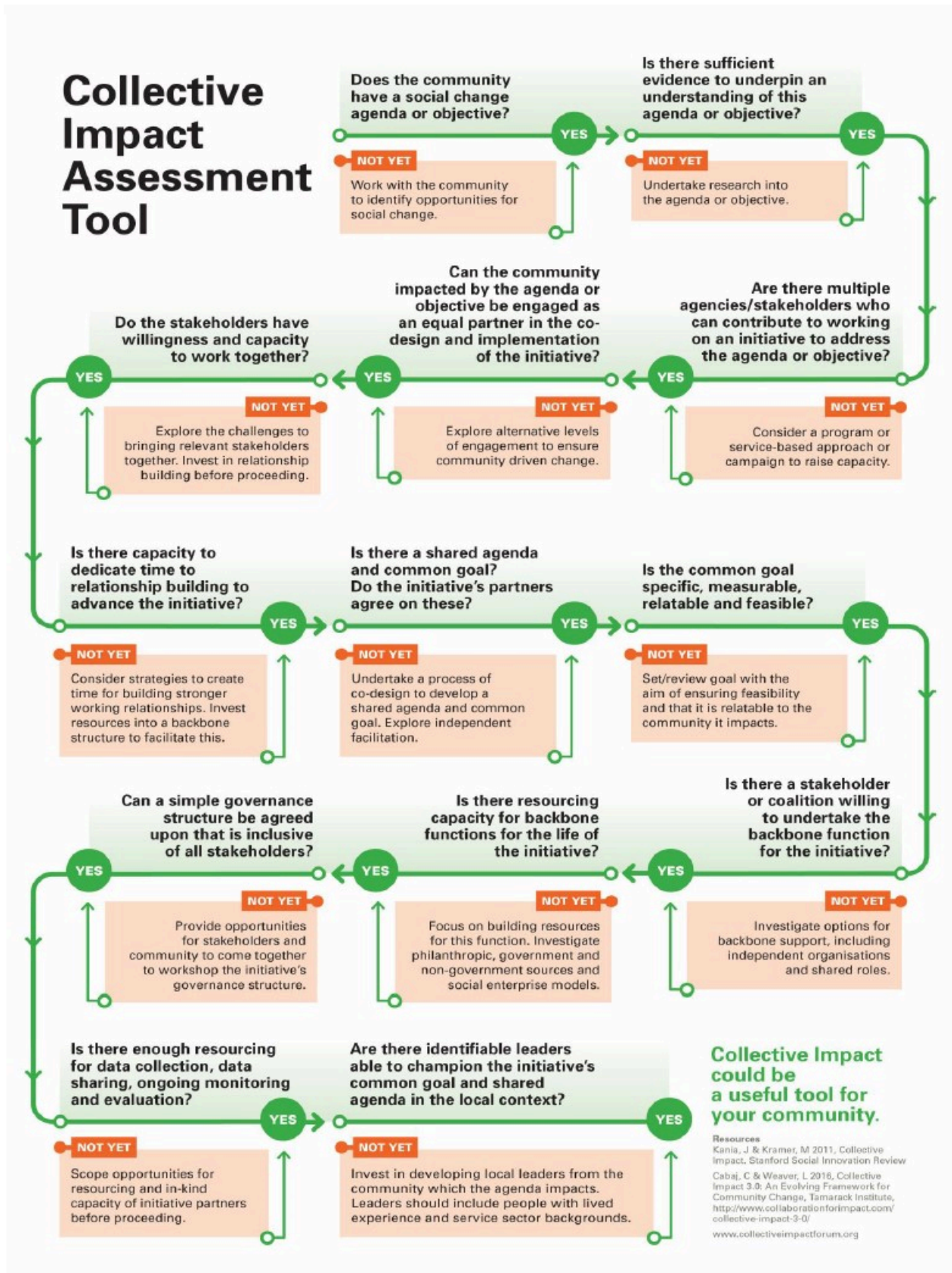
The initiative has been supported by the SA and Australian Alliances to End Homelessness and Institute for Global Homelessness, and operationalised by the local homelessness alliance and Council through a partnership approach with the alliance's outreach team and Council's Homelessness Connections Officer. Some backbone support has also been provided through the SA Housing Trust and now Department of Human Services.

Reflecting on the journey to date, stakeholders note the importance of local alliances, networks and a shared goal, in this case 'needing outcomes thinking; what we are trying to achieve collectively'. Council's role as a connector has been important, with their involvement in outreach helping broker relationships, connections and trust with and alongside other local practitioners.

As the project matures and new communication tools are developed, Council will move away from their outreach role into a strategic role focussed on coordination and facilitation. Collective advocacy and in-kind resourcing from Council have been key to getting the project up and running. The Port Adelaide Enfield Zero Project was launched in July 2024.

Starting out

For councils and communities beginning their ending homelessness efforts, the Collective Impact Assessment Tool developed by McKay et al. (2020) for the Local Government Association of SA offers a useful starting point:



Relevant resources (see also References)

- Cabaj, M. and Weaver, L. (2016) *Collective Impact 3.0: An evolving framework for community change*, Tamarack Institute, Canada.
- Cheuy, S. (2022) *Learnings From 10 Years of Collective Impact*, Tamarack Institute, Canada.
- Collective Impact Forum (2023) *How Homelessness is Solvable with a Collective Approach*, podcast with Rosanne Haggerty, Community Solutions (US).
- Collective Impact Forum (2021) *Roundtable Discussion: Reflecting on Collective Impact for Place-Based Social Change*, podcast.
- Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2012) *Channeling change: Making collective impact work*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.
- Preskill, H., Parkhurst, M. & Splansky Juster, J. (2014) *Guide to evaluating collective impact: 01 Learning and evaluation in the collective impact context*, Collective Impact Forum (via link at FSG reimagining social change, three part series).
- Smart, J. (2017) *Collective impact: Evidence and implications for practice*, Child Family Community Australia Paper No. 45 (practice guide), Australian Institute for Family Studies, Australian Government.
- Weaver, L. (2019) *The Journey of Collective Impact: Contributions to the Field from Tamarack Institute*, FriesenPress (book and ebook).
- See also Canada's [homeless hub](#) for their collective resources and toolkits for preventing and ending homelessness.

References for fact sheet 3

- Kania, J. and Kramer, M. (2011) *Collective Impact*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 9(1), 36–41.
- Mackay, T., Tually, S., Due, C. & Goodwin-Smith, I. (2020), *Rethinking community development: What does collective impact offer?*, University of South Australia.
- Mitchell, L. (2023) *Everybody's Business: What local government can do to end homelessness*, Winston Churchill Fellow research report.
- Pearson, D. (2023a) *Homelessness is solvable: How we can end it in Australia*, Winston Churchill Fellow research report.
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- Pearson, D., Tually, S., Faulkner, D. & Goodwin-Smith, I. (2021) *Aboriginal mobility data project*, The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise. University of South Australia, Adelaide.

About *Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government*

This fact sheet is one in a suite which together makes up *Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government*. *Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government* has been funded by the LGA South Australia as a practical resource for councils across South Australia to refer to in supporting community and council efforts to end homelessness.

The toolkit has been developed in consultation with the LGA, councils and stakeholders advancing end homelessness efforts in SA, nationally and beyond. The fact sheets synthesise what we know from the ever evolving academic and practice evidence about homelessness and how we can end it. The toolkit has been designed with both regional and metropolitan councils in mind. The fact sheets are sensitive to the different contexts in which councils operate, the ways in which homelessness presents for people and within communities and knowing that councils and communities are all at different stages in their ending homelessness journeys.

Other fact sheets in *Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government*

Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government comprises nine fact sheets that work together to provide a practical guide for councils interested in or working towards ending homelessness with their communities.

Fact sheet 1: Understanding homelessness: A guide for local government

Fact sheet 2: Ending homelessness: Why and how?

Fact sheet 3: Partnering in efforts to end homelessness: Making and having collective impact

Fact sheet 4: Ending homelessness brightspots

Fact sheet 5: Ending homelessness: Culturally safe practices

Fact sheet 6: Local governments, advocacy and ending homelessness

Fact sheet 7: Local government, disaster resilience and homelessness

Fact sheet 8: Helping to prevent homelessness: ideas for local government

Fact sheet 9: An ending homelessness glossary

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