Outcomes Framework Report

wacoss
WA COUNCIL of SOCIAL SERVICE

Ways to make a difference

Report July 2018

Outcomes Framework Overview

At the heart of the community services sector is the desire to improve outcomes for people in our State.

With the current focus on outcomes across government and the sector, there has been an increasing recognition of the benefits a cross-sector, cross-government outcomes framework would provide to coordinate our efforts. The development of an outcomes framework for Western Australia provides an opportunity to drive better outcomes by articulating shared goals for the wellbeing of all Western Australians, and by enabling us to measure our collective impact. This is particularly important as we seek to collaborate more effectively to assist those experiencing hardship and entrenched disadvantage.

An outcomes framework for WA will contribute to better outcomes for Western Australians by driving:

- flexible, targeted, collaborative approaches to service design and commissioning;
- innovative service delivery;
- improved service responsiveness;
- a more consistent and effective whole-of-government and whole-of-sector approach;
- more effective evidence-gathering about the efficacy of early intervention strategies; and
- more effective evaluation of the return on investment of our services.

Our intent is to develop an evidence-based framework that meets these objectives, is supported by community stakeholders, is fit for purpose, and of value to the WA government in assessing community need and making service system investment decisions. This framework will provide the high-level architecture to organise and articulate population-level outcomes. Its implementation will be supported by the development of outcomes and indicators at the system and program levels that are meaningful in a service delivery context. This outcomes framework is also intended to provide individual organisations with a structure they can adapt for their own service evaluation and continuous improvement.

This report provides recommendations for an outcomes framework for WA, drawing on the findings of a desktop review of good practice from within our State and across other jurisdictions. These proposals will be tested with stakeholders from government, the sector and the community to ensure our outcomes are clear and meaningful for all users of the framework.

Summary of Preliminary Recommendations

Structure of the Framework

- The Framework is organised by domain, to maximise clarity and practicality;
- The Framework breaks domains and high-level outcome statements into population-level outcomes, to enhance accountability and measurability;
- Short and medium-term outcomes are developed as part of agency, system and program-level frameworks that sit underneath this overarching framework;
- The Framework does not include a separate level for measures;
- The Framework is structured according to domains and high-level outcome statements, population-level outcomes and indicators.

Domains

- Stable
- Safe
- Healthy
- Equipped
- Connected
- Empowered

Note, these are because these domain areas are interrelated, agencies will ideally consider more than those most clearly relevant to their respective portfolios

Outcomes

- Outcomes are long-term and aspirational;
- Outcomes are framed as outcomes for people, rather than community or system-level outcomes;
- Consideration is given to including family, community and system-level outcomes in a separate framework;
- A small, manageable number of outcomes is included for each domain;
- Outcomes are separated into discrete areas linked to separate indicators, rather than combining multiple population-level outcomes;
- The Framework includes some mechanism for transparently identifying Government priorities; and
- Outcomes are developed, tested and refined with significant input from agencies, the sector and the community.

Indicators

- Indicators are specific and measurable, linked to appropriate data sources;
- Headline indicators are identified, to be reported in the Our Communities report; and
- A wider bank of indicators is developed, with input from data experts, to provide a comprehensive picture of progress against high-level outcomes.

Summary of Preliminary Recommendations

Cohorts

- All domains and outcomes in the Framework are framed at a whole-of-population level as a starting point;
- Consideration is given to including appropriate cohort-specific indicators, framed by cultural or linguistic group, age or place; and
- Consideration is also given to including a section in the Our Communities report that relates to specific priority cohorts, comparing outcomes against the wider population.

Interaction with other State Government initiatives

- This Framework operates as an overarching framework, with system and program-level outcomes articulated underneath a high-level structure of population-level domains, outcomes and indicators;
- To facilitate alignment and draw on existing expertise, outcomes and indicators outlined in the Framework are developed with significant input from relevant agencies and providers, as well as the wider community;

- Where agency-specific outcomes frameworks need alignment under this cross-government framework, timing could be staged according to planning and reporting cycles for those agencies; and
- The Management Group work together towards long-term integration of the domains and population-level outcomes in this outcomes framework and in the draft Department of Communities outcomes framework, with appropriate direction from central government.

Glossary

Domain

The category of wellbeing used to organise the outcomes in this outcomes framework.

Indicator

The direction of change needed to progress towards an outcome, answering the question: how will we know if we are progressing towards the outcome?[1]

Input

A statement of resources allocated to a program, service or project.[2]

Outcomes framework

Articulates a set of outcomes with an internal logic that provides a coherent view of what is to be achieved, enables data collection for each outcome,[3] and that provides an approach for monitoring and reporting progress.[4]

Output

A statement of what is delivered (milestones, products or services).[5]

Outcome (population)

Aspirational improvements in wellbeing for the whole of the Western Australian population.

Targets

Specific results to be achieved by a specified time.[6]

[1] Victorian Department Health and Human Services (2016) Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework
[2] SVA consulting (2017) 'Outcomes measurement and monitoring and outcomes-focused performance monitoring and management – Literature Review'
[3] SVA consulting (2017)
[4] Victorian Department Health and Human Services (2016) Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework
[5] SVA consulting (2017)
[6] Victorian Department Health and Human Services (2016) Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

Types of outcomes frameworks

Population-Level

An outcomes framework that articulates outcomes for the whole population. This report relates to the development of a population-level outcomes framework.

System-Level

An outcomes framework that articulates outcomes for a service system, such as an outcomes framework for children in out-of-home care, or for family and domestic violence.

Program-Level

An outcomes framework for all services being delivered under a particular funding program, for example, the pilot outcomes framework developed for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Agency-Level

An outcomes framework developed for a particular government agency, for example, the Framework developed by the Department of Social Services. Agency-level frameworks can be population-level, system-level or program-level.

Service-Level

An outcomes framework developed for a particular service, such as the outcomes approach for Foyer Oxford.

Background

1. Project brief

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) has commenced the development of an Outcomes Measurement Framework for Community Services in WA (the Framework) as a partnership project. Stage One of the project includes conducting desktop research on existing frameworks and identifying options for their adaptation to the WA context. This report summarises this desktop research, providing analysis of good practice in other jurisdictions. It recommends a structure and high-level contents for the Framework to be tested and refined in dialogues with government, the sector and the community.

2. Where we came from

Over the last decade there has been growing interest in the area of outcomes measurement for community services. In particular, for governments and the community services sector, there has been an increased focus on the need to demonstrate not only how much service delivery is happening, but the effectiveness of services in achieving positive outcomes for people. A number of jurisdictions have developed population-level outcomes frameworks which seek to:

- identify outcomes for people in the relevant jurisdiction; and
- establish an approach to measuring the extent to which outcomes are being achieved.

In 2011, the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy was introduced in WA, and included a focus on outcomes in community services commissioning.[7] In 2016 and 2017, the then Partnership Forum worked on the development of an outcomes framework to support the government's Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy. NOUS group was engaged to facilitate a Partnership Forum workshop to capture sector feedback on that framework.

- clear and simple;
- positively framed and aspirational;
- measurable;
- practical; and
- accountable.

In its 2017-18 Pre-Budget Submission, WACOSS recommended that the framework developed by the Partnership Forum be revised and used to provide a guiding and reporting framework across all human services.[8] Over 2016 and 2017, cross-government population-level outcomes frameworks have been developed in Victoria[9] and New South Wales,[10] adding to the growing body of outcomes frameworks being implemented internationally.

This draft Framework seeks to build on that body of work. In particular:

- draw on good practice across Australia and internationally;
- build on previous work to develop an outcomes focus for community services in WA;
- where possible align with existing outcomes approaches in place in WA; and
- appropriately reflect the WA reform context.

The above features of effective outcomes statements have been used as criteria to assist in the evaluation of frameworks from other jurisdictions.

[7] Department of Finance (2011) Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy

[8] WACOSS (2017) Pre-Budget Submission

[9] Victorian Department Health and Human Services (2016) Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

[10] New South Wales Department Health and Human Services (2016) Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

3. Types of outcomes frameworks

An outcomes framework should articulate a set of desired outcomes, providing a coherent view of what is to be achieved, and enabling data collection for each outcome. [11]
Outcomes frameworks can identify outcomes for the whole of a given population, or for people receiving services in a particular system, funded program or service. [12]

At the service level:

- A service may formulate its own framework for outcomes measurement. For example, Foyer Oxford is using Results Based Accountability to capture outcomes for its residents. This includes measuring the proportion of residents securing long term positive accommodation after leaving Foyer Oxford.[13]

At the program level:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme developed a pilot for a program-level outcomes framework.[14]

At the system level:

- In 2016, the then WA Department for Child Protection and Family Support developed a system-level outcomes framework for children in out of home care.[15] Outcomes include children living safely in a stable care arrangement.

At the population level:

- Scotland's outcomes framework articulates outcomes for all Scottish people, encompassing all areas of government activity, including health, efforts to address poverty and international affairs.[16]

[11] SVA consulting (2017) p9
[12] SVA consulting (2017) p10, citing National Performance Management Advisory Commission (2010)
[13] Foyer Oxford - results
[14] National Disability Insurance Agency (2015) Outcomes Framework Pilot Study
[15] Department for Child Protection and Family Support (2016) Outcomes Framework for Children in Out-of-Home Care in WA
[16] Scotland's National Performance Framework (2017)

This paper relates to the development of a population-level outcomes framework for community services in WA. This population-level framework will seek to articulate and organise high-level, long-term, aspirational outcomes for all Western Australians. It is anticipated that, as in other jurisdictions, frameworks for particular agencies, service systems and programs will be developed within the architecture of this overarching framework.

Cross-government population-level frameworks in New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, New Zealand[17] and Scotland have been reviewed, along with a cross-government framework for children and young people in the Australian Capital Territory.[18]

Outcomes approaches in large community and human services agencies have also been considered, including the Department of Social Services,[19] Tasmania[20] and Queensland.[21] While these are not cross-government frameworks, they feature population-level domains and/or outcomes which have assisted in the development of domains for this Framework. The major population-level frameworks reviewed are summarised and compared at **Attachment 1.**

[17] New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (2015) Community Investment Strategy Results Management Framework

[18] Australian Capital Territory Government (2016) A Picture of Children and Young People

[19] Commonwealth Department of Social Services (2014) Using SCORE to report outcomes

[20] Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (2014) DHHS Funded Community Sector Outcomes Purchasing Framework

[21] Queensland Department of Communities, Disability Services and Senior (2015) Investment Reform Performance Framework

Key findings from desktop review

1. Structure

(a) Desktop review

Frameworks in NSW and Victoria establish top tier domains, categories or headings such as 'health', 'community' and 'safety' which are each linked to a high level outcome statement. For example, the NSW health domain includes the statement: "all people in NSW are able to live a healthy life". These outcome statements are higher order outcomes which summarise the more specific outcomes in each category (e.g. 'improve mental health and wellbeing'). Domains and outcome statements provide a clear structure for organising outcomes, particularly in frameworks that seek to articulate a wide range of outcomes. Each domain and outcome statement is linked to multiple outcomes, which in turn are linked to multiple indicators. Victoria has also incorporated measures and targets into its framework, which include the kind of detail found at the indicator level in other jurisdictions.

Scotland's National Performance Framework uses a similar structure, with eleven outcomes covering all areas of government activity, including international affairs and environmental protection. Each outcome has a heading, such as 'education'.
Eighty-one indicators are included in the framework, linked to the respective outcomes. These outcomes are high level, and are similar to the overarching outcome statements in NSW and Victoria. However, the Scottish framework does not break each of these eleven outcomes into more specific outcomes and instead links them directly to indicators. For example, the Scottish education outcome is "we are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society".

New Zealand follows a similar structure to these first three jurisdictions, but has three separate frameworks for particular priority cohorts. This approach will be discussed under 'cohorts' below. Each framework begins with a key result area to focus the framework, for example "supporting vulnerable children and children in hardship, and reducing maltreatment". Each of the three frameworks then articulate 'cross-agency outcomes', for example, "improving children's physical and mental health, and cultural and emotional wellbeing". Underneath these are intermediate outcomes such as, "family and caregivers have the knowledge and skills to nurture children and keep them safe and healthy". These are linked to population indicators. As a result of the three New Zealand frameworks being broken down by cohort, they are able to focus in on shorter-term outcomes without becoming too large or complex. Adding this layer of detail to a single population-level framework in WA would potentially add significant complexity.

The ACT Children and Young People's framework is structured according to 'layers of influence' which operate like domains to organise outcomes. Underneath these are outcomes and indicators.

(b) Analysis and recommendations

Consistent with the criteria outlined above, it is recommended that WA adopt a Framework that is clear and simple, practical, positively framed and aspirational, measurable and accountable. These criteria are at times in tension with each other and need to be appropriately balanced.

Frameworks in NSW, Victoria, New Zealand, Queensland and Tasmania include some kind of top-tier categories, domains or high-level outcomes to organise the rest of their frameworks. Given WA's population-level framework will encompass a wide variety of outcomes, it is recommended that WA's Framework be organised by domain, to maximise clarity and practicality.

Like NSW and Victoria, WA should break each domain into multiple, long-term, aspirational outcomes. This contrasts with the Scottish approach, which includes a single high-level

outcome per domain. While the Scottish approach is particularly simple and memorable, some accountability is lost, as the high-level outcome statements combine a number of outcomes, which should be individually tracked and reported on. For example, the statement "we are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society" includes three separate outcomes, which will be evidenced by different indicators. Data could suggest that a high proportion of children are well-educated, but that school leavers are not equipped with appropriate skills to obtain employment. It is therefore recommended that the WA Framework break domains into more specific population-level outcomes, to enhance the accountability and measurability of the Framework. This will enable particular indicators to be linked to particular outcomes, so that performance reporting can differentiate between different outcome areas.

To enhance the clarity and simplicity of the WA Framework, outcomes should be long-term and aspirational. Short and medium-term outcomes provide transparency in setting out how we intend to achieve our long-term outcomes, and are an essential link in our theory of change. These should be developed, but to enhance clarity and simplicity, it is recommended that they be included in the agency, system, program and service-level frameworks developed underneath this population-level framework. Excluding medium and short-term outcomes from the population-level framework is consistent with the approach in Victoria and NSW, and contrasts with New Zealand's approach. However, it should be noted that the three New Zealand frameworks are framed to focus on priority cohort areas. This enables each framework to drill down to shorter-term outcomes without becoming overly complex.

Finally, it is recommended that WA's population-level framework not include a separate category for 'measures' like the Victorian framework. If the indicators are appropriately specific and measurable, then this additional level of detail should not be required. This will simplify and ensure clarity for the Framework.

The proposed structure for the WA outcomes framework is therefore as follows:

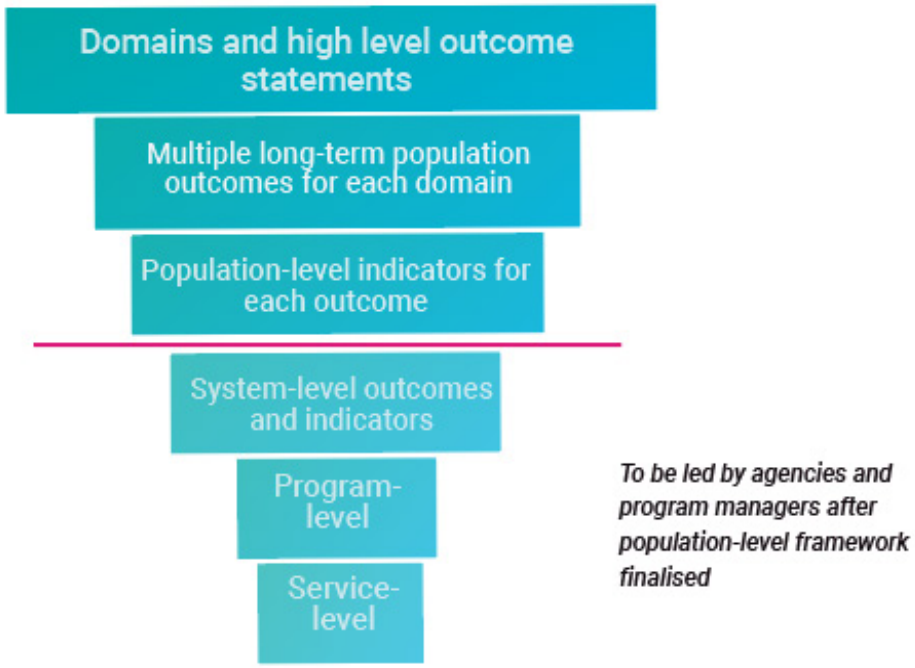


Figure 1: Proposed structure of the framework

2. Domains

Because this Framework focuses on outcomes for people, it is essential that it establish meaningful categories that relate to individual wellbeing, rather than being designed around service areas or agency portfolios.

To inform the development of appropriate domains for the WA framework, domains in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, New Zealand, the Department of Social Services, Queensland and Scotland have been reviewed, along with a number of system-level and program-level frameworks. This desktop review has also considered a range of other research on wellbeing, such as the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's wellbeing indicators,[22] Maslow's hierarchy of needs[23] and Deakin University's Quality of Life indicators.[24] Drawing on this research, six domains have been developed and refined (see Figure 2).

These proposed domains:

- are positive and aspirational;
- have been framed to focus on individuals, and therefore use adjectives
- (e.g. 'stable') rather than nouns (e.g. 'stability');
- are not necessarily agency-specific, and are intended to relate to all community services at some level; and
- are connected and often overlap.

Most population-level frameworks include somewhere between four and seven domains. Some agency-level frameworks include more domains (for example, the DSS SCORE framework includes eleven domains). This may be more appropriate when domains and outcomes are intended to be incorporated directly into service agreements, rather than articulating a cross-government outcomes framework. To enhance the clarity and simplicity of the Framework, it is recommended that this Framework be structured around a small number of domains.

[22] Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2014) The Nest In Action

[23] A.H. Maslow (1943) 'A Theory of Human Motivation' Psychological Review, 50, 370-396.

[24] International Wellbeing Group (2013) 'Personal Wellbeing Index: 5th Edition'. Melbourne: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University

We propose the six domains set out at Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proposed domains and outcome statements

These proposed domains have been mapped and tested against the domains in place in other population-level frameworks, as well as the domains identified in various research on wellbeing **(Attachment 2).** With some variation, most other outcomes frameworks and theories of wellbeing categorise outcomes along similar lines. In particular, most frameworks include domains or high level outcomes that map closely to 'safe', 'healthy', 'equipped' and 'connected'.

Desktop review of domains in other frameworks identified three features where there was more variation between frameworks:

(a) 'Housing' domain

- A number of jurisdictions have a domain specific to 'housing', which maps to our proposed 'stable' domain.
- For WA's population-level framework, the higher-level domain of 'stable' has been proposed, to capture not only housing needs, but the need for stable income and basic material needs.
- This draws from the approach in the Victorian framework, the Queensland Council of Social Services' Wellbeing Report[25] and the Mental Health Commission's outcomes statements.

(b) 'Empowered' domain

- The proposed 'empowered' domain appears least frequently in other frameworks.
- The equivalent to this appears in some other frameworks, including NSW and New Zealand. In the framework for Children in Out-of-Home Care, this is expressed as 'children are included by the systems that support them'.
- On Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this corresponds to self-actualisation.
- This domain should be relevant to all service systems, but has particular relevance for mental health and disability services.

[25] Queensland Council of Social Service (2016) Queensland's Wellbeing 2016 Report

- While there is overlap between the 'equipped' and 'empowered' domains, 'equipped' relates particularly to education, training, learning and skills, whereas 'empowered' is oriented towards enabling people to exercise their existing capacity by removing barriers to participation and self-determination. This domain is particularly relevant for services that seek to give individuals a voice in decision-making.

(c) 'Quality of life' or 'wellbeing' domain

- A number of system-level frameworks include high-level domains such as 'quality of life' and 'wellbeing'.
- Quality of life' or 'wellbeing' could be understood as an umbrella term to summarise the six domains that have been proposed for the Framework.
- The Deakin University Personal Wellbeing Index breaks up 'quality of life' into seven domains very similar to those proposed for this Framework. [26]
- Because the function of the domains in this Framework is to provide meaningful categories to help organise population-level outcomes, a broad domain for 'quality of life' or 'wellbeing' has not been proposed.

One of the objectives for this Framework is that it drives greater collaboration between government agencies and the sector. It has the potential to facilitate joined-up service delivery that recognises the interconnected nature of individual needs across program or agency lines. It should also assist government agencies and the sector to better quantify the value of services by identifying indirect contributions to a wider set of outcomes. The potential overlap between example services and multiple domains is illustrated at **Attachment 3**. It is therefore essential that in the application of the Framework, agencies and providers do not assume that only one or two domains are relevant to their programs.

[26] International Wellbeing Group (2013)

3. Outcomes

The population-level outcomes included in the Framework are examples only, to illustrate the kinds of outcomes considered appropriate. It is recommended that the outcomes in the Framework should have the following key features:

(a) Long-term and aspirational

Development of long-term, aspirational outcomes is consistent with the Partnership Forum's 'positively framed and aspirational' criterion for outcome statements.

Identifying the short and medium-term outcomes which will contribute to progress against the long-term outcomes is an important part of developing a clear and transparent theory of change.

As noted above under 'structure', short and medium-term outcomes should be developed in the system and program-level frameworks developed underneath this Framework.

(b) Person-centred

Outcomes frameworks seek to articulate what is intended to be achieved, and can be framed in a number of ways, for example:

- the DSS' SCORE approach includes both client and community outcomes, such as "community structures and networks to respond to the needs of targeted clients / communities";
- Scotland's National Performance Framework articulates outcomes at a range of levels, for example, the 'economy' outcome is framed as "we have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy";
- the WA Primary Health Alliance is developing an outcomes framework which includes outcomes at the person, clinical, system and provider levels.[27] The system outcome is described as "all services cooperate and coordinate the planning and delivery of care for people, their families and communities in partnership within teams and across services"; and

[27] WA Primary Health Alliance (2018) Outcomes Framework

- the Australian Capital Territory's outcomes framework for children and young people is structured in terms of 'layers of influence', and includes outcomes at the individual, family and community levels.

Articulating the change we want to see in families, communities, the economy and the service system is important, and will often be linked to the outcomes we are seeking to achieve for people.

Particularly when defining outcomes for a particular cohort such as children, framing outcomes at individual, family and community levels may be appropriate and feasible in a single framework.

However, there is a risk that by attempting to capture different layers of outcomes in a single population-level framework, we will fail to clearly identify the difference we are trying to make in people's lives.

This is consistent with the approach taken by NSW, Victoria and New Zealand and in a number of system-level frameworks, including the Mental Health Commission's outcomes statements, and the Framework for Children in Out-of-Home Care.

Where evidence suggests that particular conditions for families, communities or the economy are linked to a population-level outcome in the Framework, this is likely to be included as an indicator for that outcome. For example:

- Outcome: people are connected to their local communities;
- One indicator could be: proportion of community venues rated as accessible.

(c) Manageable number of outcomes per domain

Consistent with the approach in a number of other jurisdictions, it is recommended that the Framework include long-term, aspirational outcomes for each domain.

It is also recommended that the Framework break domains into multiple outcomes. This has been discussed above in relation to the structure for the Framework.

The appropriate number of outcomes will depend on the domain, but the number should be kept manageable, noting that these population outcomes may be reported against in the Our Communities report. As a guide, each NSW domain sets out two to four outcomes, and each Victorian domain sets out two to three outcomes.

While the number of outcomes should be kept low, outcomes should be separated out into discrete outcomes that can be linked to individual indicators.

For example:

- "Western Australians have improved physical and mental health" would more appropriately be broken down into two outcomes, each linked to their own indicators;
- "Western Australians are engaged in schooling and transition to further training or employment" captures two different outcomes. The data may show that engagement in schooling is improving, but transition to further training or employment is declining, and so these outcomes should be individually tracked and reported on.

(d) Include some mechanism for transparently identifying government priorities

The Victorian literature review notes that there is a trade-off between taking a wide and a narrow outcomes focus. While a narrow focus enables us to focus on what is most important, this provides an incomplete picture of what we are trying to achieve.

Breakthrough Britain recommends a consistent, evidence-based mechanism for prioritising potentially endless lists of goals into a clear and organised hierarchy. [28]

If the Framework only focuses on priority outcomes, this restricts the Framework's longevity. However, it is acknowledged that government needs to make decisions about the outcomes that are to be prioritised at a given time, in light of the most pressing needs and the available resources.

Given these decisions are being made, there needs to be some mechanism for clearly identifying those priorities.
Therefore, it is recommended that:

- the Framework articulate the full range of high-level outcomes we are trying to achieve for people in WA; and
- to maximise transparency, some mechanism be included to signal the government priorities that will guide investment decisions.

This indication of priorities could be included in the Framework itself, in reporting against the Framework or using some other mechanism.

In New Zealand, the entire outcomes framework is built around three priority cohorts. However, this leaves a significant gap in the formulation of outcomes for other groups of people, and significantly limits the lifespan for the outcomes framework.

The NSW framework has recorded priorities at the indicator level by denoting particular indicators as "Premier's priorities" and "State priorities". These are framed as targets, for example "increase the proportion of students in the top two NAPLAN bands by 8%".

[28] Breakthrough Britain (2011) Outcome-Based Government p20-22

An appropriate mechanism for recording government priorities requires further discussion with the members of the Supporting Communities Forum Outcomes Working Group.

This should be considered in the wider context of the Service Priority Review's recommendations for the introduction of whole-of-government targets.

(e) Developed with significant input from relevant agencies, sector and community

The outcomes included in this Framework are examples only, to illustrate the kinds of outcomes proposed to be included in the Framework. These examples are also not exhaustive.

It is acknowledged that outcomes are already embedded in the practice and governance of many government agencies and service providers. A population level Framework needs to build on and be informed by this work.

It is therefore recommended that appropriate population-level outcomes be developed and refined in close partnership with relevant government agencies and providers, and tested with the wider community.

The proposed Framework including example population outcomes is at Figure 3.

Outcomes Framework WA

Domains and outcome statements:

Stable
We have suitable and stable homes and are financially secure

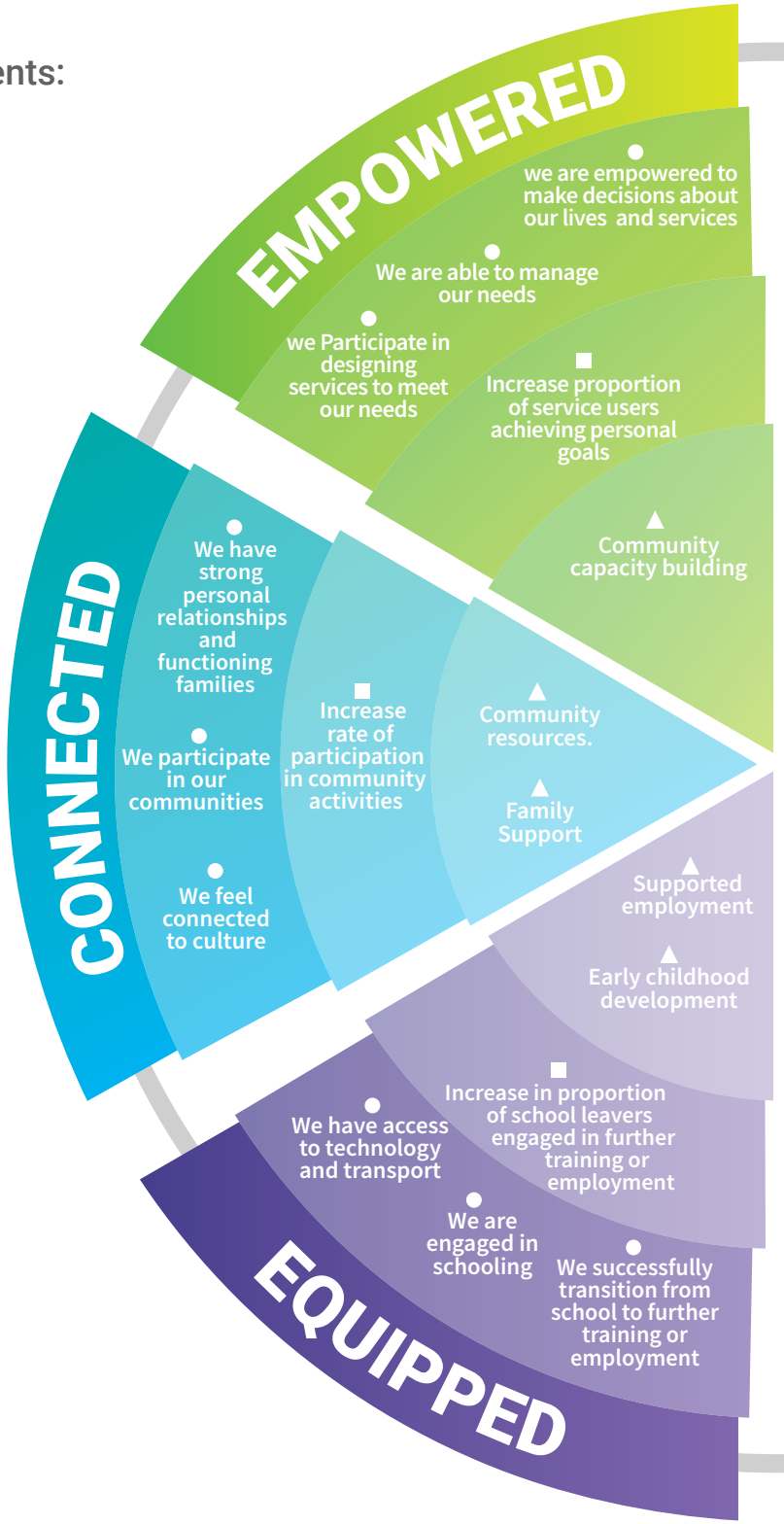
Safe
We are safe and free from harm

Healthy
We are healthy and well

Equipped
We are equipped with skills and resources to participate and contribute

Connected
We have strong relationships and are connected to culture and community

Empowered
We are empowered to exercise our capacity



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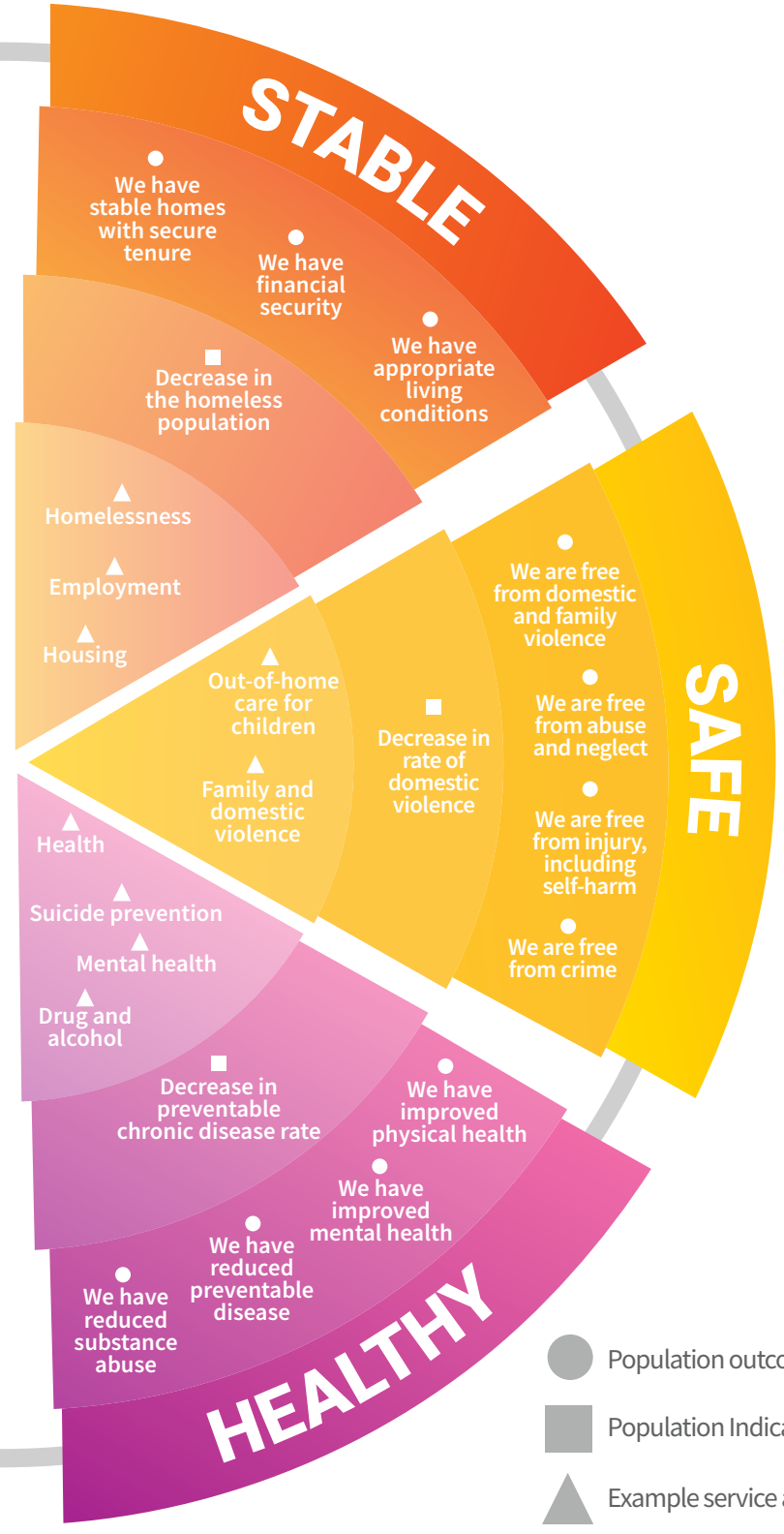

Domains and outcome statements: Framed to focus on people's needs, not agency portfolios. Aspirational.

Population outcomes: Examples only. Long-term, aspirational. To be developed and prioritised with input from relevant agencies, providers and the community.

Population indicators: Examples only. To be developed with input from relevant agencies, providers and the community. elect indicators to be reported in Our Communities Report.

Example service areas: Many service areas likely to cross multiple domains. E.g. suicide prevention = safe and healthy.

4. Indicators

(a) Desktop review

Indicators should provide information about the extent to which outcomes are being achieved, and are essential in ensuring the Framework is measurable and accountable. The SVA literature review identifies a set of criteria for the development of appropriate measures:[29]

- Validity – the indicator should provide valid information about whether the outcome has been achieved;
- Reliability – the indicator should be defined in the same way over time and should reliably return the same result;
- Timing – appropriate timing should be considered for measurement of the indicator;
- Resourcing – data from the indicator should be collectable with available resources;
- Credibility – the indicator should meet the needs of stakeholders and those using the Framework; and
- Observable -- the indicator should be quantifiable where required.

In its report on Outcomes-Based Government, Breakthrough Britain also notes that indicators must avoid the extremes of being too vague, or being too focused on outputs.[30] For example "people are safer" would be an inappropriate indicator under the 'safe' domain, because it is too vague and impossible to measure. Conversely, "more people are receiving domestic violence services" is not necessarily a reliable indicator about reduction in domestic violence, because it is too output-focused, assuming that an increase in output will result in greater achievement of outcomes. A more appropriate indicator against a family and domestic violence outcome would simply be "decrease in rate of

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[29] SVA consulting (2017) p15

[30] Breakthrough Britain (2011) p66

domestic violence", along with other related indicators such as "decrease in domestic violence reoffending". There is an obvious logical link between these indicators and the population-level outcome of being free from domestic and family violence.

Frameworks in NSW, New Zealand, Scotland and the Australian Capital Territory all include indicators which are specific and measurable, and NSW, Scotland and the ACT clearly link indicators to appropriate data sources.

In contrast, the Victorian framework includes a number of indicators which are difficult to define or measure, such as "increase healthy start in life" and "increase mental wellbeing". The Victorian framework then builds in an addition level of "measures", which incorporate the kinds of specific, measurable data that other jurisdictions include at the indicator level. In Victoria, a data dictionary has been developed which explains how data will be collected.

Scotland provides an example of good practice in the area of indicator reporting, where a 'National Performance' website records data against the 81 Scottish indicators. The website is interactive, and allows users to view progress for particular cohorts. The website also summarises the proportion of indicators where performance is improving, maintaining or worsening. The ACT framework similarly publically reports on its indicators on its website.

(b) Analysis and recommendations for WA Framework

To maximise the clarity and simplicity of the Framework, and consistent with good practice, it is recommended that indicators in the WA Framework are specific and measurable, avoiding the need for an additional level of "measures" to be built into the Framework.

To maximise accountability, it is also recommended that indicators are publicly reported on at appropriate intervals. One of Government's objectives for this Framework is that it provide a basis for information to inform a biennial

Communities report. To maximise simplicity, and consistent with this direction, it is recommended that the Framework include a manageable number of headline indicators, to be reported in the Our ***Communities*** report. It is recommended that these are developed in partnership between government agencies and the sector, and would provide a quick snapshot of progress against the population-level outcomes in the Framework.

In addition to these headline indicators, it is recommended that data experts from government agencies and the sector contribute to a larger bank of indicators linked to each of the relevant outcomes. These indicators will maximise our understanding about how we are tracking against our population-level outcomes as a State. This approach is broadly consistent with the NSW approach, where Premier and State priority indicators are listed in the high level depiction of the framework, but a more comprehensive indicator bank has been developed to sit behind the Framework.

5. Approach to particular cohorts

(a) Desktop review

While system-level frameworks will necessarily focus on a particular group of people, a population-level framework needs to capture outcomes for all people in the jurisdiction. However, it is important to consider how the Framework will capture and monitor progress on outcomes for particular cohorts.

This is particularly critical for vulnerable groups, as the Framework can assist in identifying gaps between outcomes for these groups and the wider population.

Frameworks have taken a range of different approaches to capturing outcomes for particular cohorts:

- In the NSW framework, domains and high-level outcome statements are framed at a whole-of-population level. However, some population-level outcomes have been included for particular cohorts. For example, the health domain includes a specific outcome on improving Aboriginal health outcomes, and the safety domain includes an outcome on the safety of children;
- Under the Victorian framework, all outcomes are framed at a whole-of-population level, and only two indicators relate to a specific cohort. Particular cohorts are included at the 'measure' level;
- New Zealand's framework takes the most cohort-specific approach to its framework, with a separate structure developed for each of the three priority cohort groups: children, vulnerable young people and victims and perpetrators in the justice system;
- The Scottish performance framework is generally focused on the whole population but includes one outcome that relates to 'growing up'. Some of the indicators under the 'health' and 'education and skills' outcomes also relate specifically to children.

(b) Analysis and recommendations for WA Framework

The approach to identifying outcomes and measuring progress for particular cohorts is a complex issue requiring significant input from government agencies, the sector and the community.

As a starting point, it is proposed that all domains and outcomes in the Framework are framed at a whole-of-population level, and that consideration is given to including appropriate cohort-specific indicators. These cohorts could be framed by cultural or linguistic group, age or place. This approach would enable the Framework to articulate aspirational wellbeing outcomes for all Western Australians, while requiring transparent tracking and reporting of progress for vulnerable cohorts.

Consideration should also be given to including a particular section in the biennial ***Our Communities*** report that relates to specific priority cohorts. For example, following reporting against outcomes and whole-of-population indicators, the report could include a section on 'children and young people'. This could provide a snapshot of the wellbeing of children and young people, drawing data from across all domains, and comparing this to whole-of-population data.

6. Interaction with other State Government initiatives

(a) Desktop review

At present, a significant number of reforms are underway in WA that are related to the design and implementation of the Framework. Relevant State Government initiatives and reforms include:

- wider work of the Supporting Communities Forum, including work to develop a biennial Our Communities report;
- recommendations of the Service Priority Review, including the development of whole-of-government targets;
- release of the second version of the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy;
- embedding of the 2017 Machinery-of-Government reforms;
- development of agency-specific outcomes frameworks, including by the Department of Communities;
- existing approaches to outcomes-based management across State Government agencies; and
- Sustainable Health Review.

While a population-level framework has not yet been developed for WA, over the past decade there has been an increased focus on outcomes for State Government agencies and for the community services sector. The Department of Treasury's Outcome-Based Management performance management framework (OBM Framework) sets out government goals and provides for the development of agency level desired outcomes. These are then linked to key performance indicators against which agencies are to report.

Existing agency-level outcomes frameworks, outcomes approaches and strategic plans have been considered as part of this desktop review, including:

- Mental Health Commission's 2012 outcomes framework;[31]
- WA Health's Performance Management Framework;[32]
- Framework for Children in Out-of-Home Care, developed by the then Department for Child Protection and Family Support in 2016;
- Department of Communities' draft outcomes framework (currently under development);[33]
- 2012-2017 Youth Strategy (new framework currently under development); and
- Department of Education's Strategic Plan.[34]

The desktop review has also considered:

- WA Primary Health Alliance's draft outcomes framework; and
- draft framework developed under the 'standardising outcomes' project.

While some of these documents are now out of date, they have assisted in developing and refining appropriate domains.
In addition, Chief Executive Officers of public sector agencies are subject to CEO performance agreements under s47 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994. These establish priorities and key performance indicators which are intended to drive agency activity and hold agencies accountable for their performance. These may inform the development of outcomes for the Framework.

[31] Mental Health Commission (2012) Mental Health Outcomes: Indicators and Examples of Evidence
[32] Department of Health System Performance Management framework
[33] Department of Local Government and Communities (2012) Youth Strategic Framework 2012-2017
[34] Department of Education (2016) Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2016-2019

Driven by a desire to understand the difference that services make to people's lives, and informed by a strong body of literature and good practice, many service providers have also progressed significant work to develop their own outcomes approaches. In 2011 the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy contributed to an increased focus on commissioning for outcomes, which has continued to drive a stronger focus on outcomes in the sector

(b) Analysis and recommendations for WA Framework

As noted above, outcomes frameworks can be developed at the population, system, program or service level. This paper relates to the development of a population-level framework which cuts across government agencies. The Supporting Communities policy recommends the development of an agreed-upon framework to measure outcomes across the community services sector. This is intended to give government a clear picture of funding effectiveness, and should assist the sector to provide more targeted, flexible and innovative services. The policy notes that while outcomes are already being measured, there is a lack of uniformity in approaches.

To ensure that the Framework can deliver on these objectives, it is recommended that this population-level Framework operate as an overarching framework, so that system and program-level outcomes are articulated underneath this high-level structure of population-level domains, outcomes and indicators. Consistent with this approach, in NSW the Department of Family and Community Services has worked on the development of an outcomes framework for social housing underneath NSW's wider population-level framework.

Similarly, in Victoria an outcomes framework for family and domestic violence has been developed under the wider population-level framework. While Victorian's population-level framework includes the indicator 'reduce prevalence and impact of family violence', the family violence framework provides a much greater level of detail on how this will happen and how it will be measured.

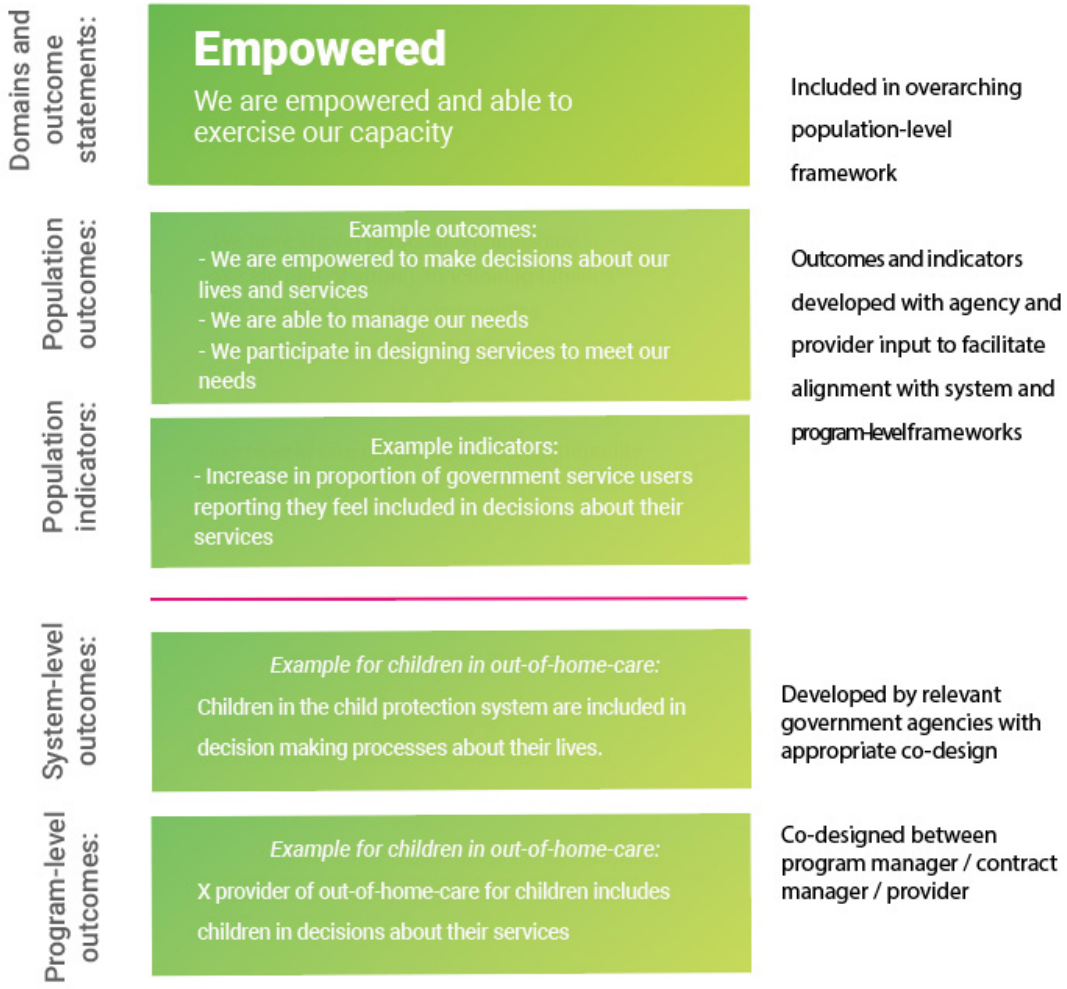

Figure 4: Hierarchy of population, system and program-level outcomes

Strategies to facilitate alignment

As noted above, significant work has already been undertaken by the sector and by government agencies in relation to outcomes and measurement. It is important that implementation of a population-level framework does not result in agencies and providers having to start again in designing outcomes approaches.

To mitigate these risks, it is recommended that the outcomes and indicators outlined in the Framework be developed with significant input from relevant agencies and providers, as well as the wider community. This will assist in identifying opportunities to align existing work, as well as ensuring that the Framework is informed by expertise across government and the sector. This is consistent with the NSW approach, where relevant agencies have assisted in the development of an indicator bank.

As part of the mapping exercise at **Attachment 2**, the proposed domains have been mapped against existing system-level outcomes approaches in WA. This demonstrates that the proposed domains and example outcomes are broadly consistent with the kinds of outcomes developed in a number of agency-specific frameworks, particularly the Mental Health Outcomes Statements, the draft Department of Communities outcome statements and the outcomes framework for Children in Out-of-Home Care. It is therefore anticipated that in many cases, agencies' existing approaches to outcomes will be able to line up under the domains of this population-level Framework without significant redesign.

Where agency-specific frameworks may need some alignment under this Framework, it is proposed that the timing for this could be staged according to planning and reporting cycles.

Department of Communities

WACOSS has engaged closely with Department of Communities to facilitate the alignment of a cross-agency population-level framework with the Department's own draft outcomes framework. Although these remain two separate pieces of work, with slightly different objectives, governed by different groups and requiring input from a range of stakeholders, there is already significant overlap in the top tiers of these frameworks, and both frameworks are capable of further structural alignment.

It is important to ensure ongoing and close dialogue between the two frameworks, and to work towards long-term integration of the domains and population-level outcomes. Establishing a single and unifying population-level framework for community services in WA will be an important step in supporting successful implementation of the Framework across the State. It is possible that this will become the work of the Management Group, comprised of WACOSS, Communities, as well as central government representatives from DPC and Finance.

Implementation

The desktop review and related conversations with counterparts in other jurisdictions have confirmed that planning and investment in implementation are essential. Consideration needs to be given to an appropriate implementation strategy for the Framework, so that it can be effective in driving a stronger focus and on and commitment to outcomes across community services in WA. A comprehensive implementation strategy is outside the scope of this report, but some initial observations have been included as they have emerged from the desktop review.

Further clarity is required on the intended scope for the Framework, including the scope of 'community services', and how the Framework will encompass government-delivered services, as well as government-funded services. It is suggested that to drive consistency, collaboration and transparency at the highest level, the scope of the Framework be as wide as possible.

The SVA literature review outlines a range of levers which governments may be able to use to improve performance against outcomes, including performance-based contracting, incentive funding and publication of performance data. However, it notes that there is little guidance on which approach is best.[35] It also identifies some lessons emerging from the literature on using outcomes to manage service delivery, including the importance of:

- having baseline data available;
- program-level outcomes in contracts being capable of attribution to the service provider;
- strong leadership within organisations, and a culture and capacity that supports measurement; and

[35] SVA consulting (2017) p25

- managing risks of 'gaming' tactics (e.g. providers choosing clients for whom outcomes will be easiest to demonstrate). [36]

In its 'Managing to Outcomes' guide, SVA also identifies likely concerns for providers, including:

- increased costs and administrative burden;
- decrease in funding security; and
- a requirement that providers solve all of the problems in people's lives. [37]

In designing an implementation strategy, consideration needs to be given to these concerns. It is anticipated that implementation concerns will continue to be raised during the public engagement phase.

Attention will also need to be given to the timing for implementation of the Framework. The SVA Literature Review outlines two different options: a 'big bang' approach and a staged approach. [38] There are particular benefits to the latter approach, as this enables learning and adaption before widespread implementation occurs. This can encompass piloting implementation of the Framework in a particular location, in a particular branch in a government agency, or for a particular program. This would enable testing in relation to how this population-level Framework can provide a structure and high-level direction for the definition of system and program-level outcomes.

[36] SVA consulting (2017) p20-21, 23, 35
[37] SVA consulting, Managing to Outcomes: a guide to developing an outcomes focus, p9
[38] SVA consulting (2017) p37

Preliminary Summary of next steps

- Consideration, feedback and high level agreement from the Supporting Communities Outcomes Working Group;
- Sector engagement process managed by WACOSS, DPC and relevant framework partners to test and capture input on the proposed domains and high-level outcome statements
- Close engagement with relevant agencies and providers to assist in the development of draft population-level outcomes;
- Close engagement with relevant agencies and providers (including data experts) to assist in the development of draft population-level indicators; and
- Work with the Management Group towards appropriate long-term integration with Department of Communities Framework;
- Engagement with the working group working on the Our Communities report.

References

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