# Department of Human Services

# Social Impact Framework

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The South Australian Government acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the State’s first people and recognises their traditional relationship with Country. We acknowledge that the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their traditional lands and waters, and that the cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws are still of importance today.

## The Social Impact Framework

Supporting service providers and government funders to assess how well a program is meeting the evidence-based conditions for social impact.

The Social Impact Framework represents a significant shift in thinking about how government:

assesses and optimises the impact that community sector and government activities have on society.

builds collaborative partnerships with the non-government sector.

Research, provider expertise and the lived experience of people accessing services show that a program, initiative or service has the best chance of creating social impact if they are:

Aligned to clearly defined purposes and outcomes

Meets best-practice service design criteria

Delivered through a partnership with service providers.

## How was the framework developed?

The Social Impact Framework has been developed with the Department of Human Services (DHS) by the Australian Alliance for Social enterprise (TAASE) at the University of South Australia and informed by:

national and international literature and research

best practice case studies in human service reform and contemporary commissioning practice

feedback from the Social Impact Steering Committee, with representation by DHS and community services sector leaders

targeted consultation with DHS contract managers, policy developers and procurement advisers

community services sector survey inputs from January 2019 and sector consultation on the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES)

the DHS Strategic Plan

South Australian Not for Profit Funding Rules and Guidelines (SANFRAG) Principles, now known as Premiers Circular 044

DHS Commissioning Strategy

a review of all program logic and outcomes for funded programs in DHS community and family services.

## Sector consultation

Following initial development, the draft Social Impact Framework was refined and strengthened with input from the sector and the strategic guidance of DHS-funded peak organisations.

The following consultations were also held:

4 focus group sessions with community and family services peak organisations

2 provider ‘think-tank’ sessions with 16 non-government providers of community and family services

targeted provider engagement with additional 4 non-government providers

feedback sessions with Critical Sector Friends with extensive expertise across human service fields (and no current funding arrangements with DHS)

feedback session with Aboriginal-controlled organisations and advisers

a testing and trial of the framework with 2 providers, one a multicultural organisation with predominantly CALD clients.

**100 per cent of peak organisations and 94 per cent of providers were willing to work with DHS to utilise the framework.**

**100 percent of peak organisation and providers were postie about the potential of the framework to:**

Assess DHS funded programs in a more consistent manner

Build knowledge, capacity and collaboration within the sector.

## How will it be used?

**The framework can be used by both government funders and service providers to better articulate what the actual impact is coming from the activities we are investing in.**

The framework provides an opportunity for government funders and service providers to better understand how a program or service is generating social impact.

This means impact that is:

positive and meaningful for people seeking support

extended in scope beyond individuals to include families, communities and societies

future-focused with the potential to lead to sustainable change in lives and communities.

For providers, the framework presents an opportunity to assist government to better understand constraints and strengths in how services are being delivered and enables them to identify challenges and risks, as well as areas where additional government support or capacity building would be beneficial.

It also encourages providers to highlight successful approaches or innovations that could usefully be up-scaled or more broadly shared across a program or the wider sector.

For government, the framework provides a consistent and evidence-based mechanism to assess the individual, community and societal impacts that are being returned through its investment.

DHS can use the framework to:

review existing funding to enhance alignment and collaboration between funded programs and create greater whole-of-system coordination

assess initiatives or proposals for funding for their potential to generate social impact

identify provider strengths and common areas where capacity building is required to strengthen impact potential

assess investment across multiple programs (within a place-based location, across DHS or even other government agencies).

The Social Impact Framework acknowledges the inter-dependence of government and non-government providers. Relationships are at the core of its success.

## What difference can it make?

The framework will promote and enhance:

alignment and coordination of activities to achieve agreed outcomes

clarity in expectations about what funding is really trying to achieve

the partnership between government funders and service providers by creating new forms of accountability

the importance of informal networks, community strengths and the central role communities play in achieving broader social impact

people-centred, strengths-based approaches to service provision that are informed by lived experience and the voices of people accessing services

evidence-based interventions informed by data and local, community and provider knowledge

innovation and targeted approaches to supporting a community

our joint capacity to describe the impact we are looking to achieve for and with the people who access services

collaboration and referral connections amongst service providers and other community organisations

relationship-based commissioning and contract management that is open, based on trust and supports innovation and experimentation

the potential for impact by identifying areas for capacity building and encouraging continuous improvement and best practice.

## How does it work?

The Social Impact Framework provides the basis for government funders to have conversations with providers about their program and how they are working to meet each of the evidence-based conditions for social impact.

There are **three key elements** to the Social Impact Framework:

Aligned to outcomes – Social impact objectives

Designed for impact – Design criteria

Developed in partnership – Partnership principles

These three elements are underpinned by a **Social Impact Assessment Tool** that covers a range of discussion points, designed to spark deeper shared understanding of how a program, initiative or service is generating impact for individuals, families and communities.

## Aligned to outcomes – Social impact objectives

The Social Impact Objectives (the Objectives) act as outcome clusters across investment in DHS to ensure there is a mechanism for greater whole-of-government coordination and assessment. These Objectives also provide a broader framework for reporting purposes.

The Objectives are aimed to:

**enhance** strengths-based approaches to service support recognising assets

**reflect** place-based and community development principles

**capture** how individuals can improve the quality of their own life and contribute to broader social and economic outcomes.

Underpinning this shift toward outcomes-led investment is the need to foster more collaborative, cross-organisational approaches to tackling complex social problems and entrenched disadvantage within families and communities.

**Five objectives** underpin quality of life, however it is only when we take a system level view of investment that we see where and how individual programs, policies and strategies are contributing.

**Belonging** to communities that are inclusive, equitable and resilient

**Connecting** with opportunities to engage and participate

**Building** resources and skills for self-direction and a fulfilling life

**Aspiring** toward economic social and civic empowerment

**Creating** safe environments and wellbeing.

At a system level, achieving all five objectives will require a well-coordinated eco-system of interventions, with regular review to detect potential gaps, and in response, identify opportunities to create or extend partnerships to address those gaps.

## Designed for impact – Design criteria

The Design Criteria seeks to ensure individuals can access a continuum of support to meet their needs within a family, community, and place-based context.

The Design Criteria aim is to:

enshrine best practice approaches to community and family services support across human services investment

systemise collaboration and partnerships.

The Design Criteria is organised into three categories, which encompass a range of elements proven to enhance the effectiveness of program and service decisions, design, and delivery. These are:

evidence-informed

people-centred approaches

systemised alliances.

**Evidence informed**

community and provider knowledge of needs, strengths and gaps

service design and innovation led by community and people with lived experience

place-based analysis of population data, priority groups, needs and service provision

research on risk factors and evidence-led best practice interventions.

**People-centred approaches**

individual and family context and needs of each person

centrality of client experience and voice

strengths-based approach that recognises and develops individual agency

culturally appropriate and responsive.

**Systemised alliances**

building alliances across Social Impact Objectives

valuing existing place-based networks and assets

strong referral partnerships for Continuum of Care

managed transition points and connection into community for sustainable outcomes.

## Developed in partnership – Partnership principles

The Partnership Principles reflect:

**Premiers Circular 44** (previously known as South Australian Not-for-profit Rules and Guidelines)

**Australian productivity Commission’s** recommendations on contemporary commissioning practice in Human Services.

The Social Impact Framework provides a mechanism for enacting these principles in collaboration with the sector to build shared accountability, co-contribution and capacity building.

The aim is to enable joint stewardship of system quality so that service delivery is more responsive and effective in generating social impact.

**Shared accountability**

Transparency, data sharing, clear parameters for funding and purpose

Agreement on co-contribution not attribution.

**Coordinated and aligned**

Build understanding of program in context of related funded programs

Increase coordination and connection with other government agencies and services.

**Relationship-based**

Authentic, open relationships between funders and providers

Build understanding of the conditions for program and service delivery.

**Innovative and responsive**

Improve access to quality services, meet emerging and changing needs

Increase capacity to seize opportunities, new ideas and partnerships.

**Robust evidence and evaluation**

Assess and build data reporting capabilities and evidence base

Establish evaluation frameworks and processes.

**Capacity for improvement**

Establish strong foundations for quality (accreditations and workforce)

Identify and strengthen capacity to meet the conditions of social impact.

## Social Impact Framework Assessment Tool

The Assessment Tool is used to assess and optimise the social impact potential of investment in community and family services.

Each of the nine steps cover a range of discussion points, designed to spark deeper shared understanding of how a program, initiative or service is generating social impact.

The Social Impact Framework is not designed to be a compliance tool and is intended to provide greater value than simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers.

Steps 1–6 assist with assessing the capacity of an initiative or overall investment to generate social impact.

### Aligned to outcomes

Step 1: Government priorities

Step 2: Social impact objectives

Step 3: Outcome indicators.

### Designed for impact

Step 4: Evidence informed

Step 5: People-centred approaches

Step 6: Systemised alliances.

Steps 7–9 are systems-orientated and are focused on supporting optimisation of service delivery to generate maximum social impact.

### Developed in partnership

Step 7: Shared accountability

Step 8: Relationship-based

Step 9: Capacity for improvement.

## Thank you to our partners

The Social Impact Framework has been developed by The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise (TAASE), the Department of Human Services (DHS) and sector partners. Thank you to everyone involved in developing the framework. Your invaluable input and insight will continue to inform the implementation of the framework as we move forward in partnership.

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