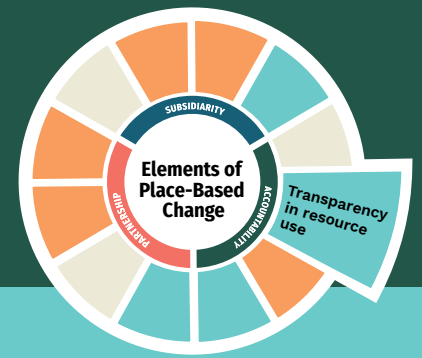


Accountability: Communities must be able to hold systems and services to account. This requires more than consultation. It means building governance structures that embed community voice and oversight in decision-making, ensure transparency in how resources are used, and create shared responsibility for outcomes.



2.2 Transparency in resource use

Clear and accessible information is available about how resources are allocated, decisions are made and outcomes are measured.

What is transparency in resource use in the context of place-based change?

Transparency in resource use is an enabling process that ensures decision-making about resource allocation, use and performance is visible, inclusive and understandable to those affected.

In practice, this means that communities know what and who is being funded, how the decisions were made, and how performance and outcomes are being assessed.

Place-based change initiatives function best when transparency is evident across multiple domains, including governance, funding and resource allocation, measurement and reporting, and partnerships.

Clear structures and systems, such as terms of reference, theories of change, feedback loops and defined roles, help clarify how and why decisions are made and allow scrutiny. When information about governance, decisions and performance is shared openly, it strengthens legitimacy and trust between communities, service providers and governments.

Transparency in funding and resource allocation requires open, accountable processes for allocating and managing financial, human and material resources. Communities should be able to see how funds are distributed, understand why and influence priorities. Co-commissioning, participatory budgeting and shared investment frameworks are examples of transparent practice in action.

Transparency in measurement and reporting ensures communities can access and use relevant data to understand progress, and shape shared measurement frameworks. A key enabler is having clear data protocols that define how information is collected, interpreted and shared between partners. Cultural protocols and data sovereignty should be a key consideration. Shared data can help reduce duplication in collection, build confidence in results and create a shared evidence base for decision-making.

Having different channels and systems that makes the allocation and distribution of resources visible sustains trust within the

partnership, and shifts accountability from being about compliance to a shared responsibility with communities.

Why transparency in resource use is important in place-based change

Transparency is a core principle and practice in place-based change. It underpins trust, accountability and effective collaboration to address complex local challenges.

In place-based work, transparency is more than communication; it's the practice that turns shared intent into shared action. By opening the flow of information about decisions, resources and results, transparency enables the adaptive learning and accountability that sustain local change.

When communities can trace how priorities are set and resources move through the system, they gain the authority to challenge inequity and contribute to better co-designed solutions. Transparent processes shift the power dynamic from 'consultation' to joint stewardship, reinforcing that resources are held for collective

outcomes, not institutional interests.

In mature place-based initiatives, transparency can be operationalised through co-developed data and investment protocols, public reporting that is locally interpretable and regular community reflection forums. These mechanisms ensure that progress and spending data inform ongoing decisions rather than static reports. This fosters motivation among stakeholders

to continue participating in collective initiatives. Transparent data practices also help correct historical imbalances where data has been used to portray deficit-based views of communities experiencing disadvantage. This helps ensure that data is a tool for empowerment rather than control.

Transparent practice also strengthens system learning. When funders, service providers and community leaders share performance insights and

limitations openly, they replace defensive compliance with continuous improvement. This openness allows cross-sector partners to coordinate investment, align goals and adapt. Together, these are key conditions for place-based transformation.

In short, transparency in resource use is what keeps all partners accountable and facilitates ongoing learning. It turns information into a shared resource, linking community trust with systemic change.

Key takeaways

- **Design transparency into governance from the start**

Make decision-making visible and inclusive by documenting and publishing governance structures, terms of reference and decision rationales.

- **Adopt participatory and co-commissioning approaches to funding**

Move beyond traditional reporting to create processes where communities see, influence and review how resources are used. Mechanisms like participatory budgeting or shared investment frameworks demonstrate that funds are being distributed equitably and for agreed purposes.

- **Develop shared data protocols and ensure community data sovereignty**

Co-design data agreements that specify what is collected, who owns it, and how it is shared and interpreted. Honour cultural protocols, especially for First Nations communities, so that data builds trust and local capability rather than reinforcing control.

- **Create regular, two-way reporting and reflection cycles**

Complement reporting with community reflection forums and accessible reporting channels that enable dialogue, not just compliance. This helps translate data into shared learning and keeps all partners accountable for results and resource use.