



**Strengthening
Communities
Alliance**



Measures of Community Strength project

Tracey Delaney and Linda Barach



Key summary



VISION

Communities have access to a free tools and support to determine their strength and track how this data changes over time.

Communities are trained and supported to build their research, data and evaluation skills and capability.

Community members are paid for their work, and this work is valued.

Communities use their data to identify areas to improve their strength and to plan together to make a positive impact.

The project



- A collaborative initiative by Alliance organisations to develop a replicable measure for understanding and tracking how communities grow stronger over time.



- Grounded in the lived experiences of local communities and informed by evidence.
- Build local capacity through a community researcher model
- Will deliver a tried and tested measure that can be open-sourced for other place-based initiatives to use.

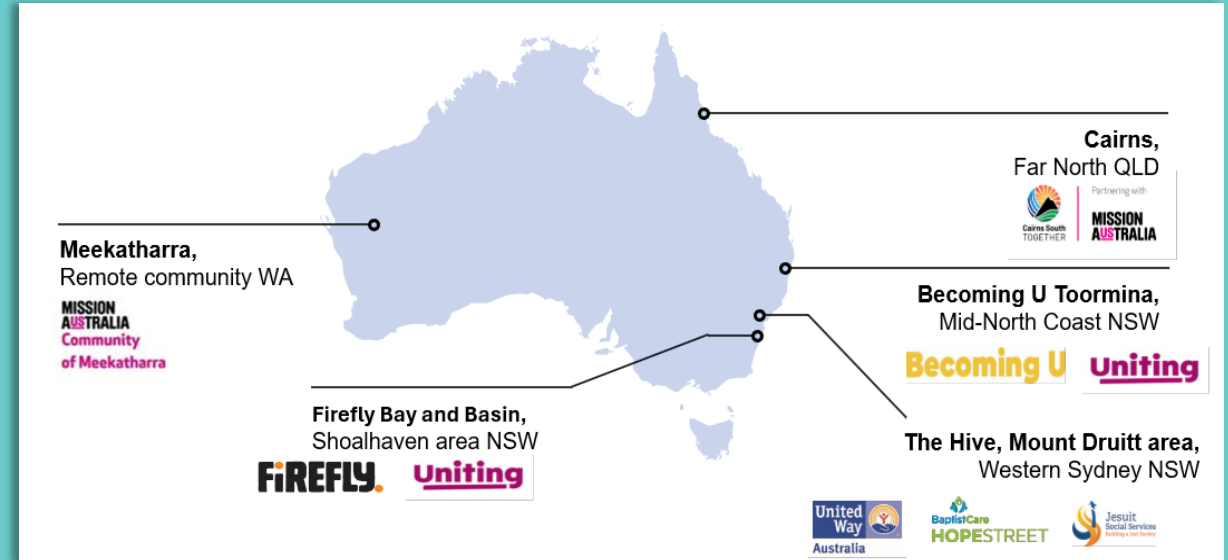
Connecting with communities to activate the project



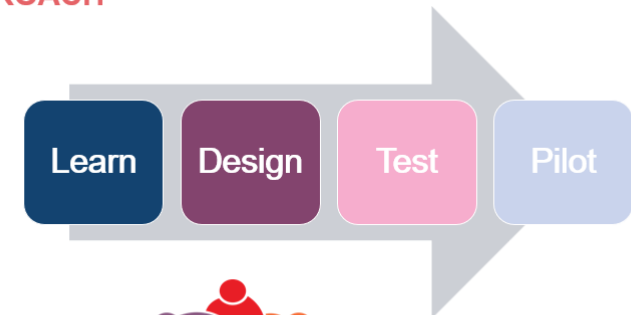
The glue: Local backbone teams



Roles funded and supported by Mission Australia, United Way and Uniting NSW.ACT

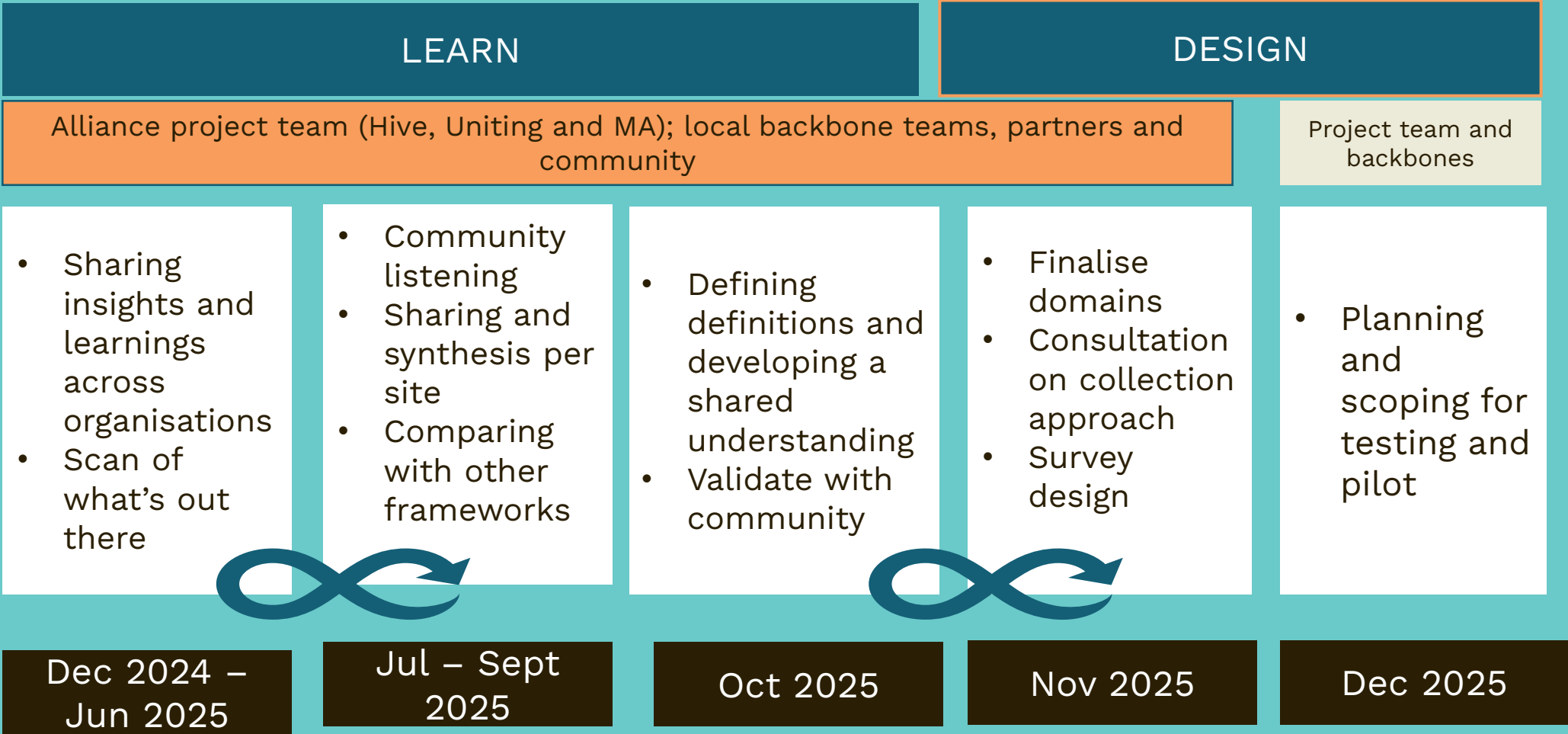


APPROACH



With community

Our journey last year

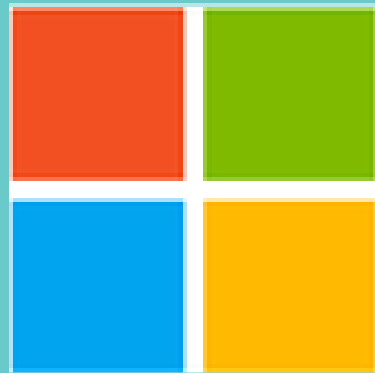


What we heard



Mapping to
frameworks

**COMMUNITY
VOICE**



Community Strength Survey Domains



SENSE OF BELONGING



**DIVERSITY INCLUSION
AND OPENNESS**



**SOCIAL SUPPORT AND
NEIGHBOURLINESS**



INFLUENCE AND VOICE



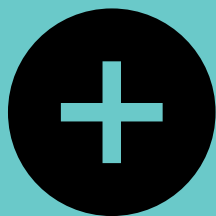
**PARTICIPATION AND
ENGAGEMENT**

Mapping themes against frameworks

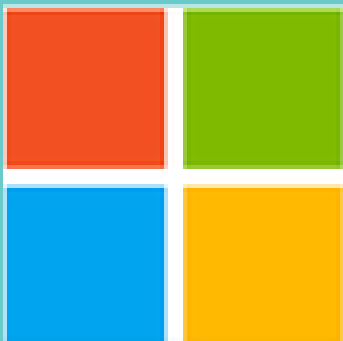
1. Key Indicators of Community Connection	1. Key Indicators of Community Strength
Sense of Belonging / Community Attachment: how much people feel like they are a part of their community. MDPI+2Psychology Roots+2 Influence / Voice: whether individuals feel they have a say in what happens in their community. Psychology Roots+1 Social Support: the perceived or actual support people receive from others in the community (friends, neighbors). IP3+1 Trust: trust in other community members, local institutions, or neighbours. AIHW+1 Social Participation / Civic Engagement: involvement in community organisations, volunteering, local decision-making, events. Health Victoria+2AIHW+2 Safety / Perceived Safety: how safe people feel in their local area, which affects willingness to connect. Scanlon Institute+1 Mutual Concern / Reciprocity: sense that people in the community care for one another, help each other. PubMed Central Shared Values / Social Cohesion: common norms, solidarity, and emotional connectedness among community members. MDPI Time in Place / Length of Residence: how long people have lived in the community can affect their ties. Health Victoria+1	Social Capital / Social Networks Trust, reciprocity, and cooperation among community members www-sre.wu.ac.at+2OUP Academic+2 Bonding networks (close personal ties), bridging networks (wider community groups), and linking networks (connections to institutions) socialplanningtool.net.au+1 Participation in formal and informal structures (clubs, volunteering, governance) www-sre.wu.ac.at Social Cohesion / Community Cohesion - Sense of solidarity, social ties, belonging, shared values OUP Academic+21Library+2 - Respect for diversity and acceptance of difference epress.lib.uts.edu.au+1 - Rootedness vs alienation (how “placed” people feel) OUP Academic Safety and Informal Social Control - Perceived safety in the community (e.g., walking at night) 1Library+1 Neighbourliness, mutual support, willingness of residents to intervene or help epress.lib.uts.edu.au Civic Participation / Engagement - Volunteering; membership of local groups and associations 1Library - Participation in local decision-making, having a voice in community governance National Library of Australia+1 Institutional & Governance Capital - Relationships with local institutions and governance structures (“linking” social capital) www-sre.wu.ac.at - Formal norms and structures that support collective action www-sre.wu.ac.at Resilience / Well-Being - Capacity to cope with stress, change or crisis Torrens University+1 - Subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, perceived quality of life as outcomes of strong community www-sre.wu.ac.at Social Infrastructure - Availability and use of “third places” (public/community spaces) where people can meet and form social bonds Foundation for Social Connection - Institutional support for social connection (e.g., community centres, councils) National Library of Australia

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Survey



Where we are now



TEST

Alliance project team (Hive, Uniting and MA); University Partner, local backbone teams, and community



Face validity of survey questions – backbone teams, community and SMEs

- External validation in partnership with: UQ Institute of Social Science Research
- Reviewing the progress to date and make recommendations on survey
- Provide expert guidance on testing sample and process.

- Data collection with our communities to generate a sample of responses for Validation

- Undertake statistical validation of the survey to determine construct validity and reliability.
- Make recommendations to the Project Reference Group on how the survey can be refined and strengthened



Jan – Feb
2026

Apr – Jun 2026

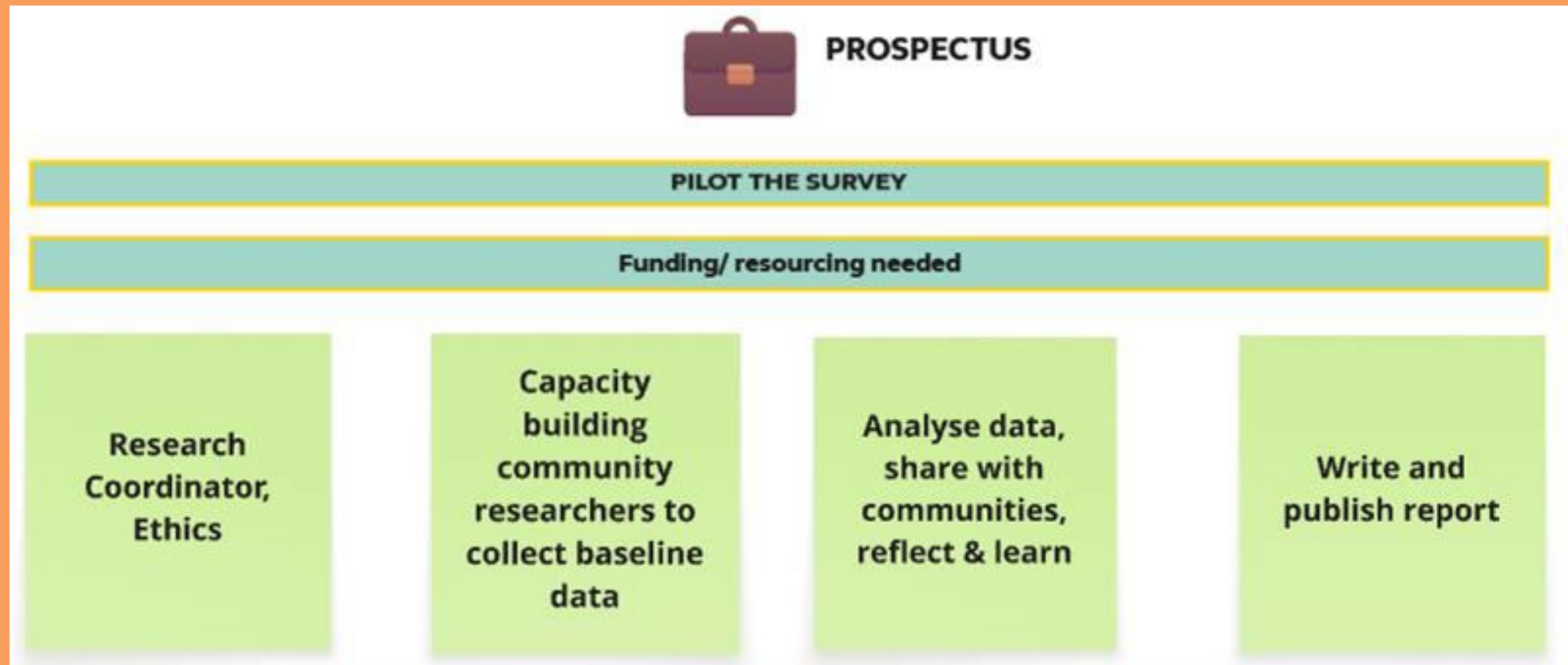
Jul 2026

Aug -Sept 2026



Thinking ahead to piloting our validated tool

Funding is being sought to fund the piloting of the community measures survey in the five communities. This will ensure the indicators are **meaningful, culturally appropriate and fit-for-purpose** across diverse contexts. At the same time, the pilot will **build capacity of local communities** in data collection and **provide a baseline for the selected communities** against which to measure change and inform future planning.





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Thank you!

Visit us at the marketplace to find out more