

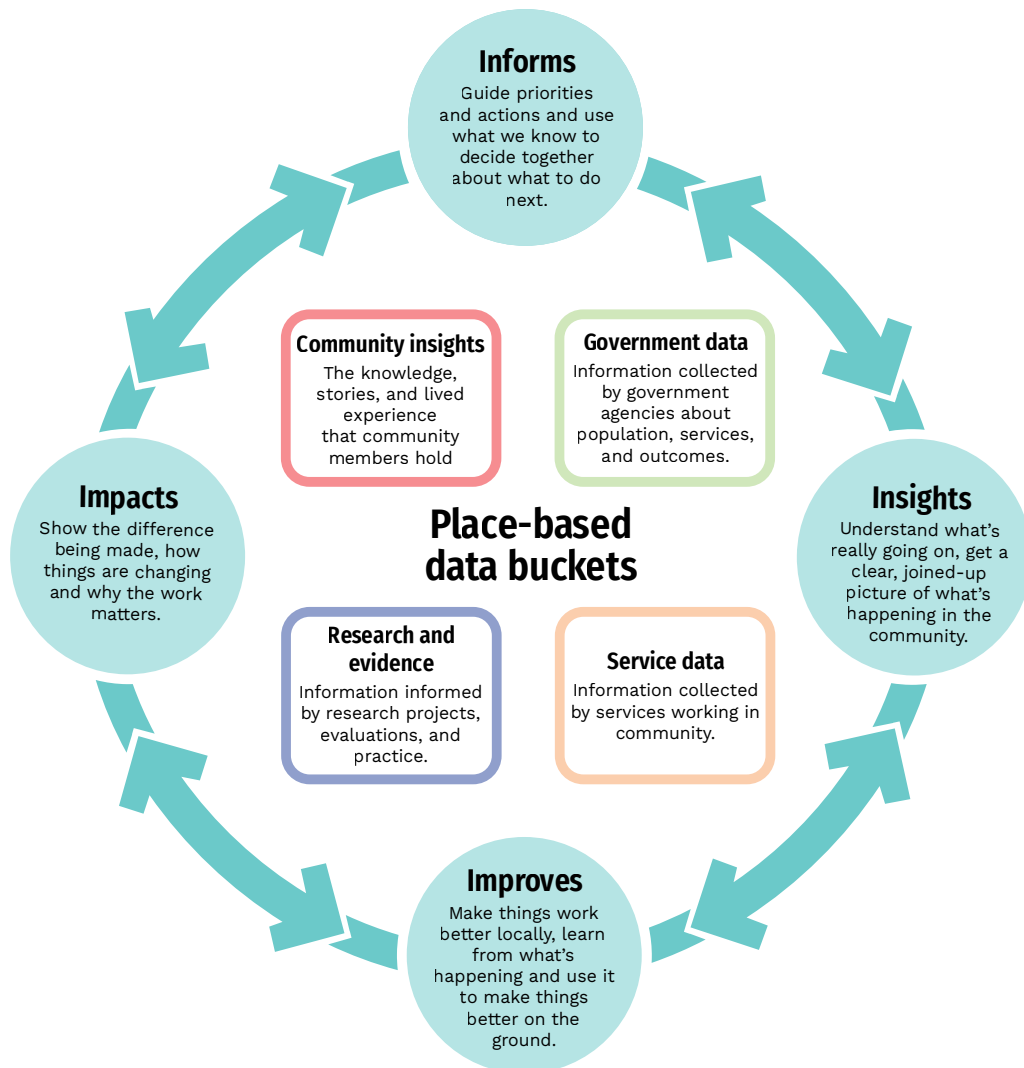
Empowering communities through data

A framework for understanding, using and sharing data in place-based initiatives

Data is an enabler for place-based change. It helps communities understand what's happening, track progress, make better decisions, and demonstrate impact.

This framework shows how the four different types of place-based data contribute to place-based work, and the outcomes that strong data practices can enable. It's designed to support place-based initiatives to think about what data they need, where to find it, and how to use it for community-led change.

Place-based data framework



Adapted from the work of the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership - Data Catalyst Network - Place-Based Data Framework.

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The four buckets of place-based data

1. Community insights:

This is the knowledge, stories, and lived experience that community members hold and is often the most valuable data.

Examples of community insights:

- What people know about their place
- People's experiences of services and systems
- People's priorities and aspirations, and
- The changes people are seeing

Community insights may be gathered through yarning circles, community conversations, story collection, surveys, and everyday interactions.

2. Government data:

This is information collected by government agencies about population, services, and outcomes.

Examples of government data:

- AEDC child development outcomes
- ABS Census data
- Crime and violence data
- School attendance
- Health statistics
- Child protection notifications
- Housing data

Government data can show lag indicators over time and enable comparison between areas, but it often doesn't reflect local experiences or context.

3. Research and evidence:

This information is drawn from research projects, evaluations, and practice elsewhere.

Examples of research and evidence:

- Academic research
- Program evaluations
- Evidence reviews, and
- Documented practice wisdom from other communities

Research and evidence can help avoid reinventing the wheel by showing us what's worked in other places. This is a useful guide – but what works in one place won't always work in another. This type of information is most useful when communities can decide what's relevant to their own context.

4. Service data:

This is information collected by services working in community.

Examples of service data:

- Who services are reaching
- What services are delivering
- Participation numbers
- Referral patterns
- Client feedback
- Outcomes data

Service data can provide insights into whether individual programs are working but can be fragmented across different providers and policy areas.

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How data is used as an enabler of the 4I's

When the four data sources are brought together through strong relationships and are used well, they enable place-based initiatives to:



INFORMS: To guide community priority setting and shared decision-making.

Make better decisions, use data and community knowledge to guide priorities and actions and use what we know to decide together about what to do next.

Some ways to inform the work:

1. Setting priorities based on real needs and focus on what matters most to the community. For example:

- Using local data and community feedback to prioritise initiatives and/or services
- Identifying a key issue e.g. youth mental health based on rising service demand and what young people are saying
- Shifting the focus e.g. focus on housing support after seeing increasing housing stress
- Choosing to invest in transport solutions because it's a common barrier raised by the community

2. Supporting shared decision-making across partners. Making decisions together, not in silos. This may be achieved through:

- Government, services, and community groups jointly agreeing on priorities and actions
- Regular partnership meetings where data is reviewed and decisions are made together
- Using a shared data dashboard to guide conversations and planning
- Different organisations aligning their efforts instead of duplicating services

3. Making sure community voices are part of decisions. Nothing about the community without the community. This may be achieved through:

- Including community members in governance or decision-making groups
- Using yarning circles or community meetings to shape decisions
- Testing ideas with the community before rolling them out
- Acting on feedback from people with lived experience



INSIGHTS: See progress, trends, and emerging needs.

Understand what's really going on, get a clear picture of what's happening in the community.

Some ways to gain and gather insights could include:

1. Bringing different types of data together to see the full picture - don't rely on just one source - connect the dots. For example:

- Looking at school attendance data alongside what families say about barriers (e.g. transport, cost, cultural safety)
- Combining health data with community stories about access to local services
- Bringing together service data (who is attending programs) with community feedback to understand who is not using a service and why
- Using local knowledge to explain why government data looks the way it does

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2. Seeing patterns and trends over time - noticing what's changing (or not changing). This could be achieved through:

- Tracking whether youth disengagement is increasing or decreasing over several years
- Seeing seasonal patterns (e.g. higher demand for services during certain times of year)
- Noticing that more families are needing support over time
- Identifying long-term improvements after a new initiative starts

3. Understanding what people are experiencing day to day - going beyond the numbers by undertaking some of the following:

- Listening to community members describe how hard it is to navigate multiple services
- Hearing from young people about boredom or lack of safe spaces
- Understanding the impact of transport, cost of living, or housing stress on daily life
- Gathering feedback about how people feel when they use services (welcomed, judged, supported)

4. Spotting new or growing issues early - picking up on warning signs before they get worse, for example:

- Services noticing an increase in referrals for mental health support
- Community members raising concerns about rising food insecurity
- Early signs of increased school absenteeism in a particular group
- Frontline workers noticing changes in who is seeking help

5. Building a shared understanding - getting everyone on the same page. This might be achieved by:

- Community, services, and government agreeing on the key issues and priorities
- Creating a shared “picture” of the community using both data and lived experience
- Using workshops or yarning circles to reflect on what the data means together
- Developing a common language about challenges and strengths



IMPROVES: Adapt and respond to local needs.

Make things work better locally, learn from what's happening and use it to make things better on the ground.

Some examples of improving may be:

1. Adjusting services to better meet local needs. Changing how things are delivered based on community needs. For example:

- Changing service hours so working families can attend (e.g. evenings or weekends)
- Moving programs to locations that are easier for the community to access
- Adapting environments and initiatives to be culturally safe and appropriate
- Offering outreach or mobile services in areas where people can't travel easily

2. Fixing what isn't working and build on what is - learning from experience and aiming for continuous improvement. For example:

- Pausing, stopping or redesigning a program that has low participation
- Expanding a program that is getting strong results
- Using feedback to improve how services or initiatives engage with people
- Trialling small changes, learning from them, and scaling up what works
- Improving referral pathways between organisations

3. Ensuring people's experiences shape the design. Designing with the community, not just for them. This may be achieved through:

- Involving community members in designing or redesigning services

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- Using regular feedback to improve service delivery
- Hiring local community members or peer workers and community researchers
- Acting on what people say about what helps and what doesn't



IMPACTS: Understand, measure, and communicate change.

Show the difference being made, demonstrate how things are changing and why the work matters.

Some ways to demonstrate impact:

1. Identifying some indicators and tracking progress and outcomes over time. For example:

- Comparing school attendance rates each term or year
- Tracking how many families are accessing early years services over time
- Monitoring changes in employment rates in the community
- Looking at trends in housing stability or homelessness
- Keeping a timeline of key changes or milestones in the community

2. Showing what's improving for community, and communicating positive changes and outcomes such as:

- More children are starting school ready to learn
- Fewer people needing crisis services
- Increased participation in community programs or activities
- Shorter wait times for local services
- More people reporting they feel safe and connected

3. Use simple and accessible ways to share these positive outcomes with community, funders and partners. For example:

- Community meetings or yarning circles to share updates
- Simple one-page reports or newsletters
- Infographics that show key results in an easy way
- Presentations to local partners, councils, or funders
- Social media updates or community noticeboards
- Posters displayed in community spaces

4. Telling strong, evidence-based stories of change and thinking about how you bring the data to life. Some examples include:

- Combining statistics with real community stories
- Producing case studies showing how a person or family's situation has improved
- Before-and-after snapshots of a program or community
- Quotes from community members alongside data
- Showing how different data sources (community, service, government) all point to the same change
- Explaining not just what changed, but why it changed e.g. "Over two years, school attendance improved by 7%. Families say this is because of the new breakfast program and stronger relationships with the school."