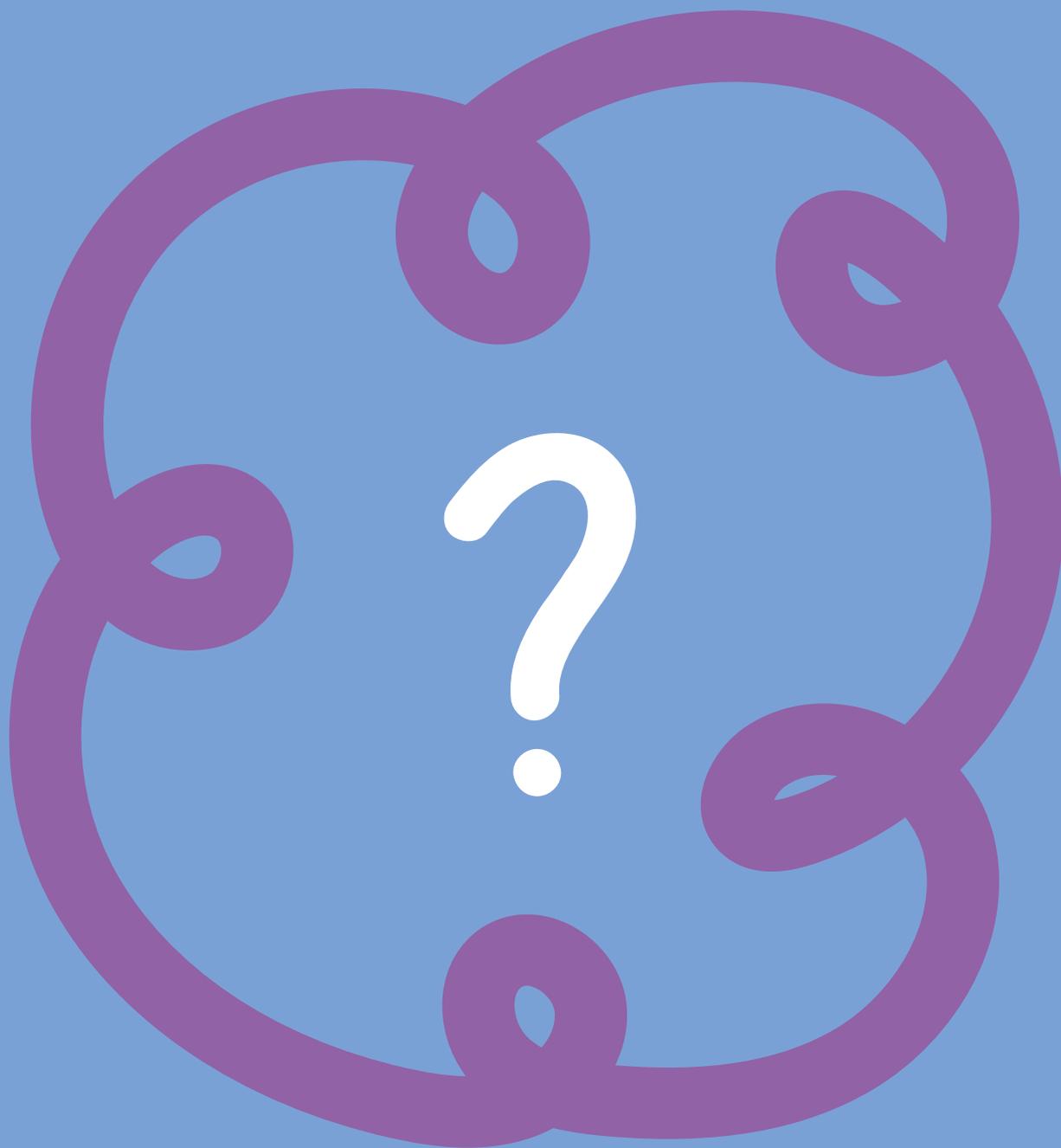


# Toolpack

## **Reflective questions**



**Our  
Town**

# Three tools to accompany 'Our Town: Catalysing communities to lead local change'

After a year of working with rural and regional towns, the Our Town Support Team reflected on what we did, what we learned and what we'd do differently next time.

These tools, for people starting community-led initiatives, were developed to guide our future practice.

With some adaptation, we hope you'll find them useful too.

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## 1 Reflective questions

Prompts to help anyone planning a community-led initiative.

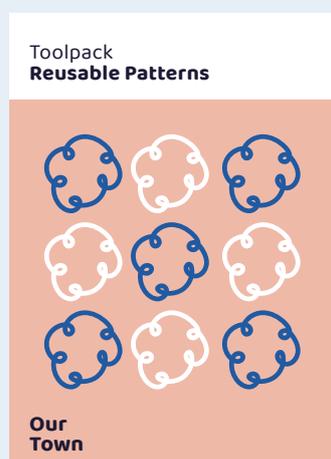
[View questions](#)



## 2 Guiding strategies

A set of principles and practices to improve the outcomes of community-led initiatives in the early years.

[View guide](#)



## 3 Reusable patterns

Inspiration for practical strategies based on what we did in Our Town in 2020.

[View patterns](#)

# 1 Reflective questions

**Prompts for anyone planning a community-led initiative, based on what we learnt in the early years of Our Town.**

## **How will we connect to a systemic perspective?**

What is the system of outcomes we're working to change (eg a system of mental wellbeing, learning or employment)?

How will we get a well rounded understanding of the current-state of the system, trends over time, and people's lived experience?

What is our ambition: To alleviate symptoms, to stabilise existing systems, to improve existing systems, or to transform?\*

How long will it take to see change to happen? Think about the time needed to get established, the time to introduce new actions in communities, and the time for those activities to create outcomes.

What is the unique role our organisation could make: funder, champion, peer, coach, entrepreneur?\*

What are the roles that communities can play in transforming this system?

How will we create space for imagining the preferred future state?

How would taking a more systemic approach help, or hinder, our ambition?

## **How will we anchor ourselves through complexity?**

What principles do we want to hold ourselves to in the initiative?

What do these principles look like in practice?

What do they not look like in practice?

What routines would help us hold to our principles (and refine them over time)?

How would taking a principles based approach help, or hinder, our ambition?

## **How are we transitioning power and responsibility?**

How are we distributing financial control, over what timeframe, through what transitions?

How are we distributing decision-making control, over what timeframe, through what transitions?

How are we supporting communities to build their capabilities to lead local innovation and change?

How are we supporting community teams to build their power-base?

How are we distributing and connecting-up learning between communities and different parts of the initiative?

What time will we allocate to build relationships between all parts of the initiative, including with communities?

How can communities, intermediaries and funders work together as allies in creating broader change?

How would taking a more power distributing approach help or hinder our ambition?

## **How will we use innovation to accelerate learning and ownership?**

What are your 'critical assumptions'; the things that are critical to success that you don't (yet) know enough about?

What routines will help you test your critical assumptions and refine them over time?

How will you bring together lived experience, data, research evidence and practice wisdom and best / leading practice to inform your decision making?

What can you learn from other communities who have led change?

How will you learn from marginalised voices?

How will data inform ideas, without overwhelming teams?

How will you create time and space for inspiration, imagination and invention?

How will you support innovation practices on the ground?

How would taking a social innovation approach help, or hinder, our ambition?

## **How are we including the full diversity of communities / community members?**

What cultures and perspectives are not represented at the program team level, and how could we mitigate the risks that creates?

Who do our existing processes unintentionally exclude? Who don't they encourage?

What do we need to do to reach out and connect into communities/community members who have been unintentionally excluded?

What routines and rituals might we introduce to create a safe space for a greater diversity of community members?

How could we support community teams to engage with the full diversity of their communities?

How would taking a more actively inclusive approach help, or hinder, our ambition?

## **How are we leaving good behind at every stage?**

What kinds of value are we creating at every stage of the process?

What are the top five points in our process at which people may feel left out, hard done by, or stressed, and what can we do to mitigate that risk?

What feedback loops can we set up to know if work is at risk of causing distress?

What would it take for our team to model mentally healthy working?

How well equipped are we to work with people who have experienced trauma, or are living with mental illness?

How would taking an approach that 'leaves only good behind' help, or hinder, our ambition?

\* For more questions relevant to funders see the conversation tools available in TACSI's [report Philanthropy, systems and change](#) written with Paul Ramsay Foundation, Perpetual and the Dusseldorp Forum.

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