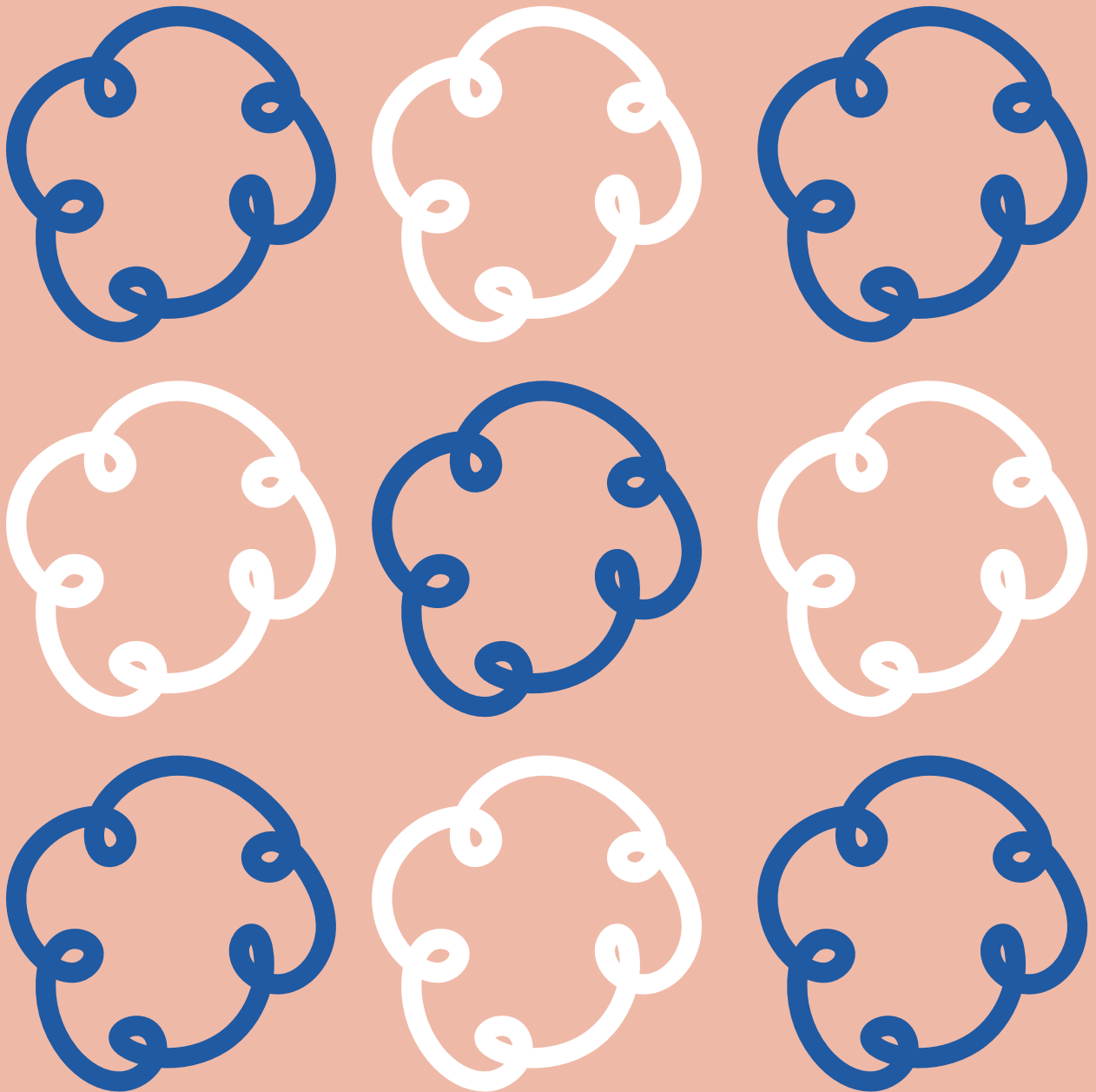


Toolpack

Reusable patterns



**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.

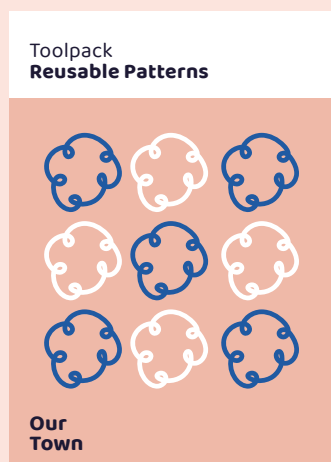
[View questions](#)



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](#)

3 Reusable patterns

Inspiration for practical strategies based on what we did in Our Town in 2020,. These patterns can be re-combined and remixed, and are presented in no particular order.

Acknowledgement

Acknowledging the traditional custodians of the lands you are on – in meetings, online and at other opportunities – is respectful, contributes to creating a safer space for First Nations participation and is a small step towards reconciliation.

_To learn more about an acknowledging country [see here](#).

Adaptive initiative brand

An easy to use brand, developed with communities and designed to adapt to their unique identity, can help communities feel part of something, support tailored local messaging while maintaining the integrity of initiative level brand.

_The Our Town brand was designed to be flexible and for towns to execute it using easy to use design tools like Canva.

Values aligned, complimentary skilled partners

Place-based work takes a diversity of skills and a commitment to some non-standard values. For example, giving power to communities.

_In Our Town, the partnership was divided between funding, communications and systems connections (Fay Fuller Foundation), evaluation (Clear Horizon) and community capability building (TACSI). All partners worked on initiative design and evolution. There was no mental health partner - that expertise was brought in as needed from a diversity of sources.

Learning report

Write periodic learning reports that create the opportunity to reflect on the progress and also document learning over time.

_In Our Town, Clear Horizon created learning reports for the Support Team every two months based on their developmental evaluation approach.

Shared multi-website

Document the progress of the initiative in a way that adds value to participating communities.

_The [Our Town website](#) serves as an archive for the whole initiative as well as providing pages that share materials relevant to individual towns.

Developmental evaluation

Improve the quality of learning at an initiative or community level by assigning someone to run ongoing reflection and learning sessions.

_In Our Town, Clear Horizon played the role of developmental evaluator, facilitating regular reflection sessions with the initiative team, with a focus on checking alignment to the initiative principles.

Big and warm data discovery

Inform the direction of an initiative (at a national or local level) with research that combines data with qualitative insights into existing systems from experts and people with lived experience.

_The Fay Fuller Foundation commissioned the Health needs and priorities report – the insights from which informed the shape of Our Town.

Unique contribution

Ask yourself what's the unique contribution your organisation / collaborative can make to the situation.

_The Fay Fuller Foundation saw that they were uniquely placed to provide long-term funding to communities on under supported issues (mental health and rural towns).

Long-term funding

Enable communities to focus on change and get local commitment by providing funding that lasts as long as is needed to create outcomes.

Learning based funding agreements

Enable communities to stay responsive to local needs, while maximising value beyond the community by making funding conditional on participation in ongoing learning activities.

_In Our Town, the towns' contracts with Fay Fuller are conditional on participation in learning and communications.

Deliberate transitions

Support initiatives to become community-led through designed transitions in financial control, decision making, knowledge and capability.

_Only at the point at which towns received funding for their plans, after a year of capability building, did Our Town switch from a support team-led initiative to a town-led initiative.

Opt-in

Give communities choice over participation by allowing communities with the energy and interest to opt into initiatives (rather than choosing specific communities where an initiative will happen).

_Potential Our Town town teams opted into the initiative through a simple EOI.

Let experts design

When commissioning specialist partners for an initiative (intermediaries), describe the outcomes you are seeking, rather than prescribe the process and timelines. Work with partners to find and implement the best fit approach together.

Unexpected events

Expect unplanned events. Disasters, community catastrophes and divisions and cultural activity are all likely to impact place-based work and affect energy, resources and time.

2 Reusable patterns

Level-up, don't knock out

Design any selection process to add value to participating communities at every stage - even if they don't progress to the next stage.

_In Our Town, towns that received town visits but did not progress said they still got value from participating - because it gave them the opportunity to raise the profile of mental health in their towns.

Bring values aligned stakeholders with you

Bring stakeholders that may add value later somewhere along the process and along for the whole journey so they can learn with communities. Choose stakeholders for their values and interest over their seniority or role.

_Our Town brought two mid-level government employees on the journey who were passionate about mental health. They went on to secure funding for their departments that enabled more towns to participate in our town.

Non-organisational teams

Support the participation of non-formalised teams so that local change can be led by energy and commitment rather than institutional status. Support teams to formalise as part of the process if that's required - eg to receive funds.

Go where they are

Improve the awareness of your initiative by promoting it in the places communities go.

_The Our Town call for expression of interest was promoted on Facebook and local radio stations.

Diversification process

Support community-based teams to evolve their membership to include a greater diversity of people, especially non-institutional players. Support core teams to engage with the full diversity of their communities - so ideas are grounded in the reality of lived experience.

Build community capability

Build team capabilities so they have the expertise to do what is often a new kind of work.

_Our Town built capabilities in mental health, community organising and social innovation processes.

Innovation capability

Build innovation capability so community teams can understand the systemic issues in their community, learn from a diversity of community members, blend that insight with data and then develop creative responses to the issue. Testing assumptions about the problem and the issue along the way.

Step-in, step-out governance

Create resilient and mentally healthy governance models that allow people to step in and out of the role based on personal well-being, family needs, cultural business and work commitments.

_Two Our Town towns are using governance models, inspired by Aboriginal yarning practices, that enable teams members to easily step into, and out of, roles as required.

Discovery process

Support communities to take a systemic view of situations through a discovery process that combines lived experience data and imagination.

_In Our Town communities were supported to uncover the dynamics that maintained poor mental wellbeing in their locality.

Backstage capability

Support towns to build new capabilities and confidence by moving through cycles of being frontstage, working alongside, and then being backstage - letting towns practice their new capability.

Modelling inclusion

Support others to develop more inclusive behaviours by modelling them yourself eg by using pronouns or an acknowledgment of country.

Build in conflict

Create stronger teams bringing opposing community views into the fold.

_In Our Town, the Kimba team deliberately sought to include people who had voted 'yes' and 'no' to the nuclear storage facility, they found they had more in common than they thought.

Anchor in principles

Use a set of principles to anchor partnerships and initiatives through complexity.

_Our Town started with eight principles that were later refined to four: Model mentally healthy practice; Community led and owned; Learning our way through change; Seeing the big picture.

Relationship time

Create time to get to know each other as people, without an agenda. Take time to build trust.

Data pack

Make data accessible. Let communities determine what they want to know and then present data in accessible ways that can stimulate conversations.

_In Our Town, the Support Team created a simple representation of key data the towns had asked to know more about.

Two track planning

If communities are in a competitive process, support them to create a plan they can enact without additional resources, as well as one with additional funding, so they have a back-up if they don't receive full funding.

Accessible EOI

Reduce the barrier to entry for EOIs by allowing people to submit in the format of their choosing, and not giving preference to the written word.

Commission research

Support town teams to address gaps in knowledge by creating the conditions for them to commission research or literature reviews.

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