

**NINTI ONE** STRONGER  
COMMUNITIES  
FOR CHILDREN

# Measuring local change for SCfC

**A guide for participating communities**



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FOR **CHILDREN**

Second edition, 2021  
Published by Ninti One,  
Alice Springs

Written by Steve Fisher

With thanks to participating communities  
for their consent for the photos  
that appear in this publication.

## 1 The purpose of this guide

This guide provides information to communities participating in the Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) Program about measuring local change, which is sometimes called impact assessment. It explains what is involved in the work and how the Ninti One collaborates with communities to strengthen their capacity to measure the difference that SCfC activities are making.

The content of this guide is adapted from a process developed by Steve Fisher of Community Works, a partner organisation of Ninti One. The model was first used at Minyerri on a project supported through the Communities for Children Program and The Smith Family, implemented by Enterprise Learning Projects with the people of Minyerri Arts Centre.

## 2 Why measure change

In SCfC, communities make choices about activities to support using funds provided by the Commonwealth Government. Local Community Boards (LCBs) for SCfC invest their time and use their knowledge and experience to improve services and activities for families and so that children can get the best start in life. They make decisions that reflect the choices they feel are best for the community.

But how do they know whether the choices made are the best ones? They need to be able to work out what difference new activities and services have made in the community and for the individuals using them. The methods used to achieve this are sometimes called evaluation or impact assessment. In SCfC we prefer to talk about measuring local change because it is easier for everyone to understand what that means.



### 3 Our approach to measuring local change

In the SCfC Program, we are all working to achieve outcomes for children and families. So, the best starting point for measuring change is to describe those outcomes. Let's take the example of healthy eating. A Local Community Board might decide to fund a course for parents in cooking healthy food, so they are more skilled at preparing meals for the family.

This outcome will fall under one of the priorities in the Local Community Plan, which in this case might be called 'More children to eat healthy food'. So this becomes our outcome; more children eating healthier food. The way we want to achieve the outcome is by parents learning how to cook better food through a training program.

Before we start the services or activities, we should work out what are the precise changes we want to measure, based on each outcome. Then we can decide how to collect information to measure the change. So, if we go back to the example of healthy food, we can prepare a Framework for Measuring Local Change, which is basically a table, to help us work out these details.

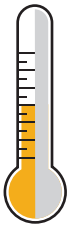
**OUTCOMES**

Desired difference to be made in the community



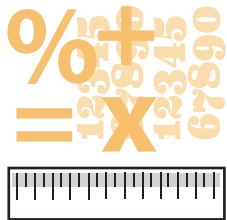
**MEASURES**

(Sometimes called indicators)  
Intended change, with a measurable numerical target included



**METHOD OF MEASUREMENT**

Method and type of information to be collected



**Example: Healthy eating**

**OUTCOMES**

More children eat healthy food

**MEASURES**

Number of children eating healthy food

**METHOD OF MEASUREMENT**

Survey families to count the number of children who are eating healthy food

In reading the framework above, it is important to note that the wording of the outcome has a big effect on the measures used. In this example, the Local Community Board has said they want to see more children eating healthy food. So, strictly speaking, this is what should be measured; how many children are eating healthy food.

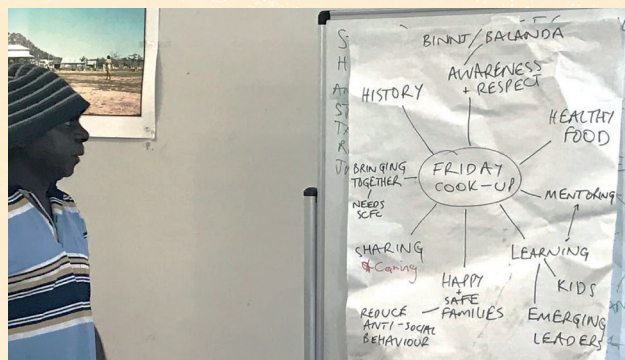


### Example: Bush Tucker Cook-Up in Gunbalanya

At the start of the measuring local change work in Gunbalanya, members of the LCB discussed their original aims in starting the activity. This became an exercise LCB in preparation for the data collection work. We wrote a mind map that enabled everyone in the group to contribute. The purpose was to make sure the survey, interview and focus group questions about the Cook-Up were informed by what the objectives of the activity were.

As can be seen in the final version below, the Bush Tucker Cook-Up is about much more than having a feed. Building respect among people within the community and providing opportunities for children to learn were also part of the plan.

This example shows the value of taking time to think about the objectives of the activity. With the information from this single exercise, we were able to develop questions that were closely connected to the purpose



of the Bush Tucker Cook-Up. This meant that the information collected was focussed on the intended positive impacts of this SCfC activity.

But it could be that other information about this subject is going to provide a better measure of change in the community, like the kinds of food children are eating, changes in their knowledge of healthy food and the improved skills and knowledge of parents who went on the training program. So, other measures could be included, like the ones below.

### Example: Healthy eating

#### OUTCOMES

More children eat healthy food

#### MEASURES

- Number of children eating healthy food
- Knowledge of children about healthy food
- Types of food consumed
- Skills and knowledge of parents on preparing healthy food

#### METHOD OF MEASUREMENT

Survey families about the changes in their knowledge and consumption of healthy food

In each case above, the measures need to be numerical, such as a number or a percentage change. We have not included them above to avoid making it too complicated too early in this guide. The next version below, in Section 4.3., includes numerical measures.

In preparing the framework, the LCB might learn that there is other information that would help them measure change in the community. If they plan to survey families, then it is not difficult to add a small number of questions that produce that information. Better knowledge of change helps the LCB to understand what is happening due to the choices they are making about the use of SCfC funds. Then they can make the same or different choices in the future, depending on what they learn from measuring local change.

One more point to make here is that it is fine for the LCB to change the wording of their outcomes if preparing the framework makes them think differently. In the example above, the original wording was 'More children eat healthy food'. The LCB might choose to change it to say 'Families and children have better knowledge about healthy food and consume more healthy food'. Or they could choose different words.

One benefit of preparing the framework is that it encourages us to think more deeply about what SCfC is trying to achieve in the community and to make improvements.

## 4 Preparing for measuring local change

### 4.1 Getting organised

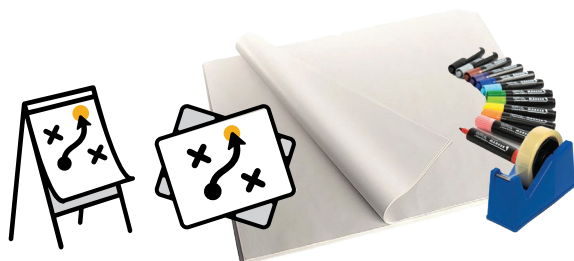
Actually measuring change involves collecting information. We have learned that it works best if collecting information is managed like a small project over 2-3 days, so that all the surveys and other information can be done in a consistent way.

For it to work well, the collection of information requires:

- A team of at least four local people from the community, evenly divided between women and men
- A room in which to meet, prepare, practise and keep materials and information. There should be tables and chairs available in the room



- Butcher's paper, sticky tape and marker pens



- Copies of the Local Community Plan for SCfC
- Someone who understands the process and can help the team do the work. We will call them the Facilitator and they could be from Ninti One or from the Facilitating Partner organisation or someone else, like a university researcher.



Ideally, copies of the Framework for Measuring Local Change should also be available. This work should not be left to the team to prepare because it needs the LCB to be happy with the framework before the information is collected.

In thinking about who should be in the team, we have found that some local people are especially attracted to this kind of work. It could be that they have an interest in how the community works, its history and its future, or if they have particular knowledge or interest in the subjects being surveyed, like ranger work or food.

For the purposes of this guide, we will call the team the Measuring Local Change Team or MLC Team. It is easier to talk about a survey team, but this is not the best term to use because the framework might not require surveys. It could be that interviews and focus groups are going to be used to collect the information and not surveys, for example.

| A Stronger Communities for Children Impact Assessment Framework for Wadeye                                                    |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Our vision is for Wadeye to be a community that is safe, and where:</b>                                                    |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Children are healthy, have regular health check-ups and good food                                                             |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| People can enjoy sports like football and softball                                                                            |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| People can enjoy their connections to the land through cultural activities such as going out bush, fishing, music and dancing |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Children are able to go to school every day and receive a good education                                                      |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Children are part of loving and safe families with good parenting practices                                                   |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Priority 1: Community safety</b>                                                                                           |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Priority 2: Children and schooling</b>                                                                                     |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Priority 3: Health and wellbeing</b>                                                                                       |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Priority 4: Capacity building</b>                                                                                          |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Priority Three: Health and Wellbeing</b>                                                                                   |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Improvement in the care of children: Parents provide better care for their children (houses)                                  |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Reduction in housing issues that are both cause and effect of violence (i.e. overcrowding, damage to houses)                  |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| SCfC Outcomes                                                                                                                 | Indicator (measure of change)                            | Suggested/potential method of measurement                                                                                                                       |
| People have a greater capacity to prepare and cook nutritional family friendly meals                                          | 10% increase in knowledge and skills in food preparation | Population survey (30 participants from softball teams, taking 15 participants from Dockers team, who have completed Bushwok activity, and 15 from other teams) |
| People have greater interest in using bush tucker in diet                                                                     | 10% increase in people making healthy choices            |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| People have a greater health literacy around nutrition and the importance of eating healthy                                   | 10% increase use of in bush tucker in diet               |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| People have greater exposure health messages and cultural knowledge                                                           | No. of people...                                         |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                               |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |



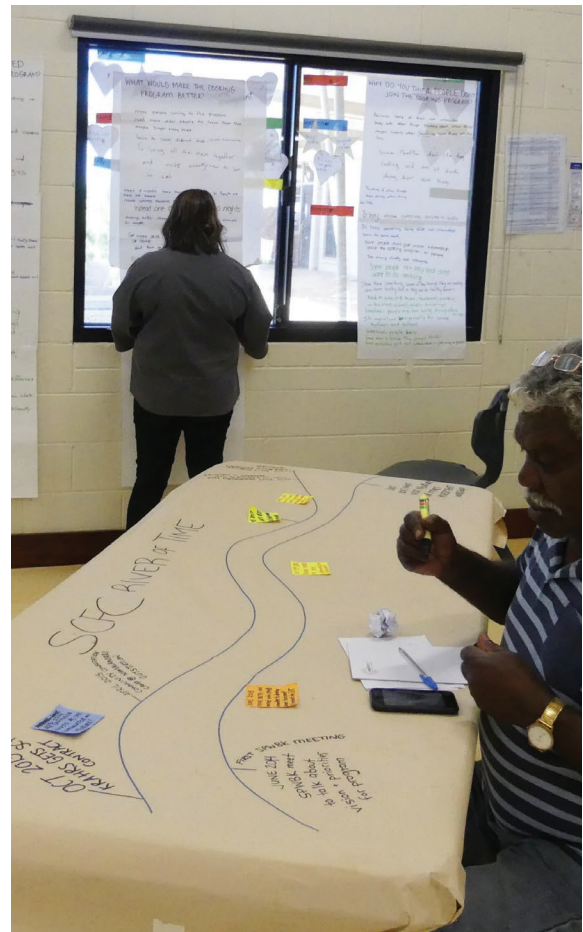
## 4.2 Taking an overview of the subject

Once the team is together, they need to think about the subject and get a feel for the information to be collected.

As a first step, we recommend everyone having a copy of the Framework for Measuring Local Change. The Facilitator will take them through it, describe how it works and answer any questions. It will be important that everyone understands how the framework links to the Local Community Plan. In other words, they will need to see how the priorities for SCfC in the community are connected to the framework and therefore to the information being collected.

A second step is for the subject to be discussed on which data is to be collected by the MLC Team. Let's assume the subject is parenting skills. The team will need to talk about that subject, especially in the context of what has happened relating to parenting in the community over its history. One approach to doing this that we find very useful is called the River of Time exercise. An example from Ngukurr is in the photo on the right

The River of Time is a group activity to prepare a historical timeline. The timeline is drawn as a river on a set of butcher's paper sheets taped together on a long table. Everyone present is given pens and asked to draw the key events using stick figures to represent the people involved, logos of organisations, names of individuals, programs, buildings and other places and the various changes that had happened over time. In remembering recent history, lots of discussion is needed to make sure the details and the sequence of events is accurate.



If a River of Time is drawn for the example of parenting skills, then it might include the opening of a childcare centre or kindergarten, people in the community who ran activities on this subject, the work that committees might have done to support parents, nurses and midwives, health checks, bush trips and really anything that people remember that relates to help parents to be good at looking after their children.

The Facilitator should help the team discuss the final drawing of the River of Time, talk about any areas that are uncertain and add or change details. The purpose is to share knowledge of the subject between everyone in the room, so they have a good historical knowledge before starting to collect information out in the community.

Finally, they should talk about this overview of the subject in the context of SCfC. The LCB has decided to invest in services or activities to improve the situation in an area like parenting skills. So it is important that the MLC Team understands both the history and how the LCB sees positive changes happening in the future, especially through SCfC.

### 4.3 Defining the questions

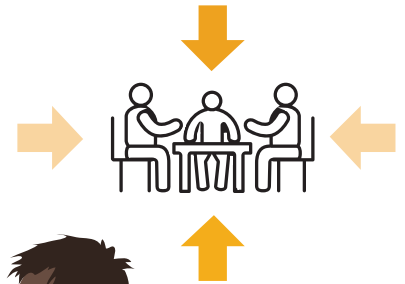
This is where we start to work on the methods themselves, which is the column on the right-hand side of the Framework for Measuring Local Change. Usually, methods for collecting information in the community include one or more of the following:

- 1 Surveys, using forms with between 5 and 10 standard questions

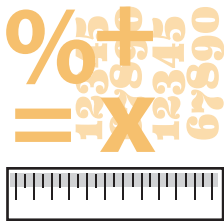


- 2 Interviews, using a small number of open questions to encourage a conversation with a person in the community. These interviews could be recorded using video or voice recorders, with the permission of the person being interviewed

- 3 Focus groups, which are like interviews with a group of people in which the interviewer encourages the group to discuss key topics with each other, to arrive at new insights



- 4 Third-party numerical information, which refers to information from organisations in the community. For example, trends in sales of fruit and vegetables from the store would tell us something about changes in healthy eating patterns.



The first three methods above require the MLC Team to use questions that they put to people. The responses are the information that we collect to help us measure change.



We have found that the best way to work out questions is to start with the Framework for Measuring Change. Below is an example based on SCfC activities designed to help children know the history and understand the culture of the place in which they live.

## OUTCOME

After the SCfC activities are completed, children are more knowledgeable and more connected to the history and culture of the community

|                                                                                                                          |                                                                                      |                                                                     |                                                                                          |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MEASURE</b><br>                      | 20% of children have a better connection to the history and culture of the community | 20% of children will know more about the country in which they live | 30% of parents will say that children have greater interest in local stories and places  | 30% of older people will say that they are talking more about culture with children and that children are interested | 20% of families will say they feel better connected to their community              |
| <b>GROUP TO BE SURVEYED</b><br>         | Children                                                                             | Children                                                            | Parents                                                                                  | Elders                                                                                                               | Families                                                                            |
| <b>SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b><br> | What have you learned about the community that you didn't know before?               | How do the bush activities help you?                                | What have you noticed about the children and their interest in local stories and places? | When did you last talk to kids about culture and what happened?                                                      | Tell us about your connection to the community and whether it has changed recently? |

The idea here is to discuss with the team each of the measures and to arrive at wording for suitable questions to ask. In this case, the questions are designed for interviews (and could be used for focus groups, too). They are open-ended and encourage conversation. For surveys, questions should be more closed so that the survey is shorter, has potentially more questions and the results can be compared more easily. A full description of the types of questions and the ways they are used is beyond the scope of this guide. Short videos explaining the methods are available for viewing on the Ninti One website.

An important consideration is ethical practice in conducting surveys, interviews, focus groups and other work to find out information about people's experiences with SCfC activities. Making sure that participants provide consent to be involved and that they fully understand the way the information is to be used is vital to good practice. We recommend that a consent form is prepared along with an information sheet for people who participate. Ninti One can provide advice on this subject.



## 4.4 Practising the methods

Before going out into the community to collect information, the MLC Team should practice asking the questions and getting feedback from each other and the Facilitator on how to improve.

Often, information will be collected through individual interviews. Conducting a face-to-face interview is the hardest part of collecting information for people new to the subject. We suggest semi-structured interviews based around topics are used. Question should be open-ended to encourage interviewees to talk about their experience of the SCfC activities. This takes practice. It is important for the survey team to spend time practicing asking questions and conducting surveys, especially:

- How to start the interview
- How to ask the questions in a conversational way
- The use of open-ended questions that encourage people to say what they think instead of providing only a yes or no response
- Ways to pursue a subject that the interviewee raises, in order to gain more information (example: 'Can you tell me more about that. Why did you think that way?')

Usually, we find that the work required for this part of the guide, which includes getting organised, taking an overview of the subject, defining the questions and practising the methods, can take the whole of the first day.





## 5 Collecting information in practice

Once the team is ready to start the actual work of collecting information, they need to take four steps:

- 1 Identify who to approach to be involved as an interviewee, survey respondent or participant in a focus group. For simplicity, we will use the word participants for all people involved
- 2 Approach and seek the person's consent to participate
- 3 Find suitable locations to do the work. A focus group will require a different space to a survey or an individual interview
- 4 Divide up the work between the MLC Team members so everyone has a clear set of tasks to do.

If possible, we have often found that asking one member of the team to do all the work for one set of questions or one measure is best. The reason is that it ensures a higher level of consistency in the way questions are asked compared to sharing the same work between the whole team. So, for example, one male team member might be the person who does all the interviews with elders on 3-4 measures while a female member talks to parents about the same or different measures.



### Example: Tackling the limitations of Measuring Local Change work

A central principle in the Measuring Local Change is that community people are trained in collecting data and also play an important part in advising on the wording of questions and the best way to engage people in the process.

A risk is that the people who come forward to be trained and involved in collecting data are also those who delivered the SCfC activities that are being measured. So when they interview or survey people in the community, there can be a bias introduced because it might be difficult for participants to give anything but positive feedback if they are speaking with someone who works on the SCfC program.

So, we keep this in mind in planning the work. It is important to try to involve people who are independent of the program as much as possible and reduce the presence of those people who work on SCfC when the data is being collected. So, for example, if a focus group is being conducted, it is best that local FP staff and LCB members are not present.

In remote communities, where families are big and everyone knows everyone, it is a challenge to reduce biases. The first step is to be aware of these limitations and try to overcome them through good planning and careful practice.



### Example: Meigim Kriol Strongbala in Ngukurr

The SCfC Program in Ngukurr has invested in strengthening the use of Kriol language in the local school. The program is called Meigim Kriol Strongbala (Making Kriol Strong). It has four objectives:

- 1 To increase Kriol skills and resources in the school
- 2 To increase engagement in education
- 3 To increase the use of Kriol as a tool in education
- 4 To increase connections between the school and the community

The design of the Measuring Local change process looked into changes due to the program across these four objectives. We aimed to do this through surveys and focus groups directed towards assistant teachers, teachers, students and families. We worked on survey forms and guides for the focus groups that would be consistent but also recognise that educators would have a different perspective to share than young people and families.

The result of the planning process for the different groups of people we wished to reach was that the Measuring Local Change process generated valuable information against each of the objectives above, but from different viewpoints.

This experience shows the importance of careful planning and engagement of people in the process. By making sure we could speak to a range of people, including busy staff at the school, we were able to gain many insights about the program.

For the information collected to be meaningful, a large-enough group of participants (sometimes called a sample) should be included. A guideline we recommend using is to start by aiming for a minimum of 10% of the total number of people affected by the project or activity to participate. However, if the total is ten people, 10% would be one person, so asking 50% or even all the people to participate in surveys or interviews would be feasible and generate more information.

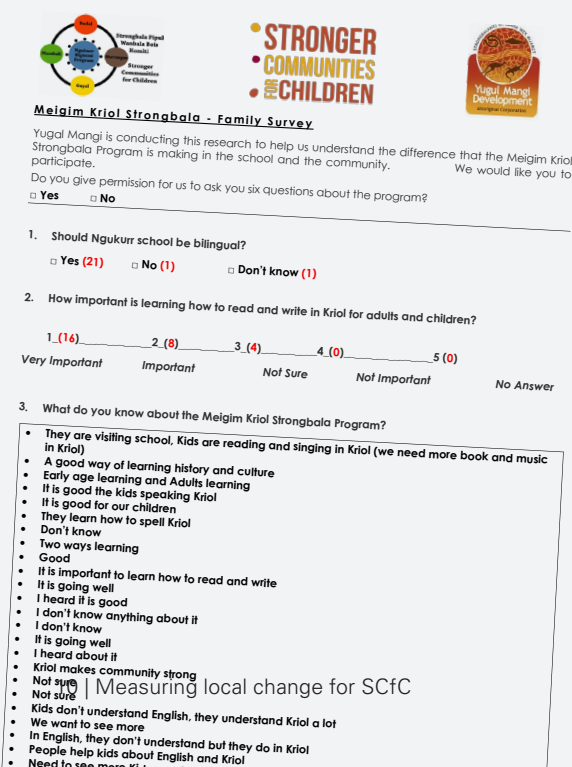
On the other hand, if the total number of people affected in some way by the project is 2,000, then 10% would be 200. Maybe this is too many people to manage with a small team and so it would make sense to reduce the number to 50 or 100. In this situation, the aim must be to involve as many as possible but making sure the work can be carried out in the time available.

Care should also be taken to ensure that the people interviewed or surveyed are a representative cross-section of the population affected by the project. It can be too easy to leave out people who are hard to reach. If we do miss them, then the information we collect could also be missing some important parts. The measurement needs to be as accurate and effective as possible.

The way the pattern of work usually goes on this day, which is probably the second day, is that members of the team go out to do interviews, conduct focus groups or do surveys. They return with results from their work every 1-2 hours, with all the materials they bring back kept on the table in the room the team is using, ready to be analysed later. It might be good for the team to have lunch or refreshments together, 2-3 times during the day, so they can talk about how the work is going.

Another good way to manage this part of the work is for the findings of the interviews, surveys or focus groups to be immediately written in summary form on butcher's paper on the wall of the room, as soon as they are completed. Collecting all the information on the wall (or on a table) is a good move because then everyone can see the content growing as more work is done.

The interviews might take 1-2 days to complete, depending on how many are planned. A typical target might be to complete 20-30 interviews or surveys each day, depending on the subject, the size of the team and how spread out the community is, meaning how much time is needed to move around.



**Meigim Kriol Strongbala - Family Survey**

Yugal Mangi is conducting this research to help us understand the difference that the Meigim Kriol Strongbala Program is making in the school and the community. We would like you to participate.

Do you give permission for us to ask you six questions about the program?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

1. Should Ngukurr school be bilingual?  
☐ Yes (21) ☐ No (1) ☐ Don't know (1)

2. How important is learning how to read and write in Kriol for adults and children?  
1 (16) 2 (8) 3 (4) 4 (0) 5 (0)  
Very Important Important Not Sure Not Important No Answer

3. What do you know about the Meigim Kriol Strongbala Program?

- They are visiting school. Kids are reading and singing in Kriol (we need more book and music in Kriol)
- A good way of learning history and culture
- Early age learning and Adults learning
- It is good the kids speaking Kriol
- It is good for our children
- They learn how to spell Kriol
- Don't know
- Two ways learning
- Good
- It is important to learn how to read and write
- It is going well
- I heard it is good
- I don't know anything about it
- I don't know
- It is going well
- I heard about it
- Kriol makes community strong
- Not sure
- Not sure
- Kids don't understand English, they understand Kriol a lot
- We want to see more
- In English, they don't understand but they do in Kriol
- People help kids about English and Kriol
- Need in...

Measuring local change for SCfC

## 6 Working out what the information is telling us

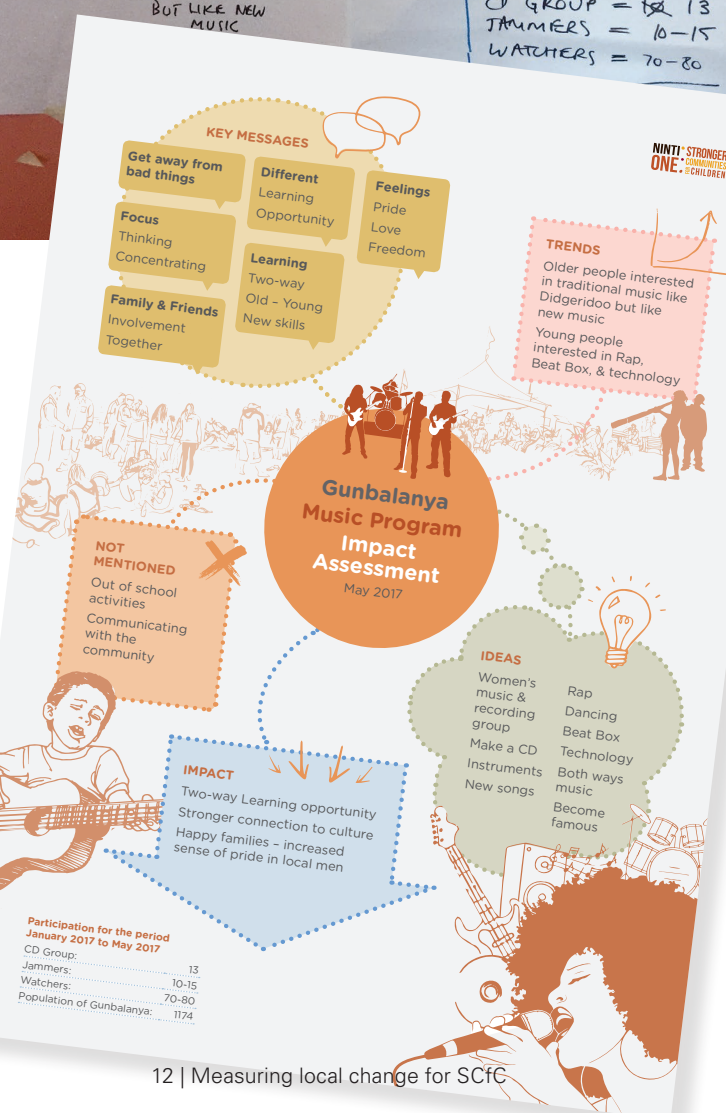
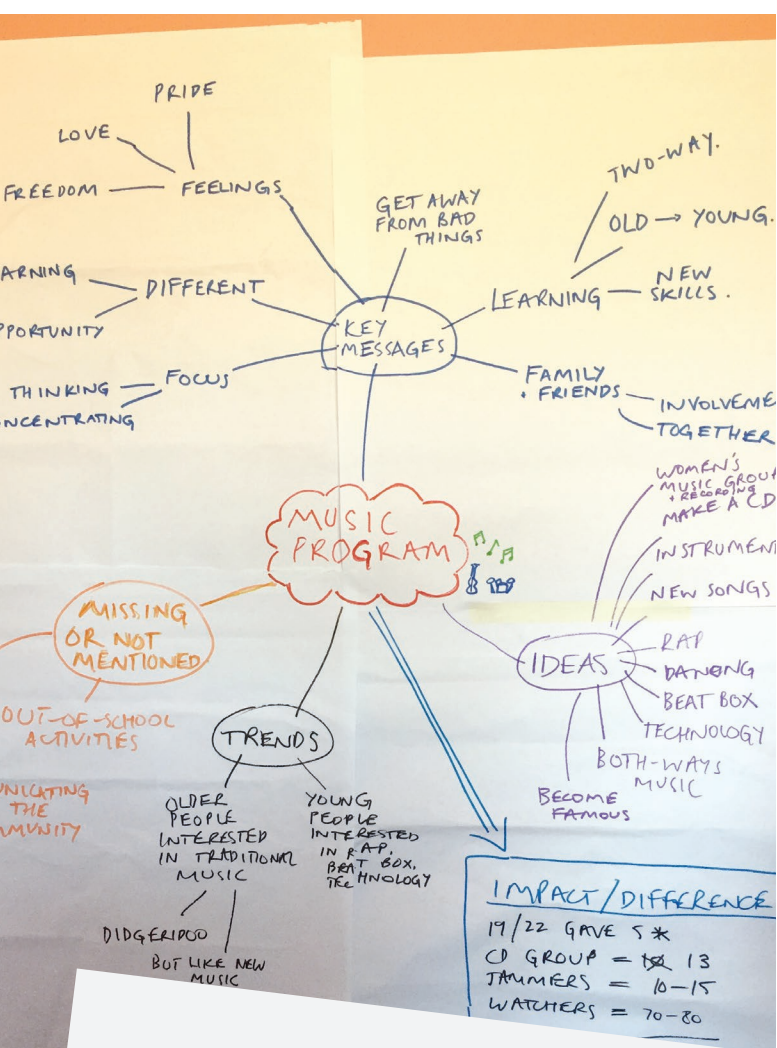
This stage of the process is where the analysis or interpretation of the information takes place. It is where we discuss what the information we have collected is telling us.

A good way to do this work is to use headings to organise the thoughts and insights the team gains from looking at the information written on the sheets. Useful headings to use are:

- Key messages – The main points that stand out
- Trends – Responses that appear from more several people (or 2-3 people if the total number of participants is small)
- Ideas – What people are saying that is new or different.
- Exceptions – What is missing or that people have not mentioned in their responses.







The team should write a page for each of the headings above, which represents their collective view for each category. Ideally, percentage or numerical measures should be included to show how strong the findings are. Examples might be:

- 8 out of 10 people said their parenting skills had improved and they could tell us how
- 90% of children said they learned something new about culture
- Half the participants wanted to practise cooking skills more in the future.

Going back to look at the measures in the Framework for Measuring Local Change is important because they usually include numerical measures. Those numbers are what we need to use to measure change.

Often, the key messages are the most difficult part because many comments are made in the interviews and it can be hard to make those into single statements.

It is also worth noting points that people interviewed do not make, especially if were expecting them to do so. For example, if one aspect of an SCfC program is really important, like a training course or an event, but nobody mentions it, then we learn something about the impact of that part of the program.

It is important to remember that the responses show what the community is valuing or noticing most and gives some guidance for how the activities could be designed and promoted in the future to maximise their positive impact in the community.



## 7 Arriving at an overall summary measure of change

The final stage of the process is to produce a report on the findings of the work we have done. We usually prefer a short engaging and visual report like those shown below. On one occasion we also produced a short video about the work we had done.

As not everyone wants to read a report, it can also be beneficial to prepare a single page summary in the form of a mind map, like those shown below. This is sometimes called a summary of the impact of the activity we have measured.

A colourful and community-friendly version is best. Visual representations of complex subjects are very important in communicating across a population with varied reading skills. But the challenge is to make the visual device, such as a mind map, include enough precise and accurate information. In other words, it needs to be both effective as a tool and simple without being simplistic or cutting corners in presenting the information.

Once this diagram is completed, the team should then discuss the main points that have arisen. These may be statements that reflect the view of the group on the change achieved through the SCfC activities so far. For example:

- The school holiday activities and the cooking program are making a difference
- Progress has been made towards all five aims of the activities in the framework
- It is clear what work needs to be done to improve some activities
- We need to get more people involved in the parenting program.

With this summary, we arrive at a set of measurements on the impact of a program or a project to date. These can be used by the LCB to work out what is being achieved, what works best and which choices to make with the next funding they have available.

