

# The challenge of Implementation: early lessons from Australia

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## Introduction

Since 2012, the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in Australia has undertaken a series of projects to identify and develop a set of high level indicators that can be used to monitor transformational change as a result of their interventions and activities. The program of work is strongly aligned with the OEH corporate goal of becoming an agile, effective, and innovative customer-focussed agency. The indicators were developed from a multiple impacts perspective and, more recently, in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where possible.

In parallel, the authors have been working with the Australia/Pacific Regional Network of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) on a national framework for implementing the SDGs in Australia. This project has marked similarities with the OEH Multiple Impacts Indicator Project. In particular: the need for a cohesive narrative; the establishment of common and shared indicators; and the need for a systems approach to 'join up' the current fragmentation across sectors.

Early attempts to operationalise OEH indicators within 'real world' settings provide an opportunity to inform wider national and international audiences about the barriers and enablers that were encountered. The key challenges included:

1. The work prompted a broader understanding of the system and context in which interventions and were taking place, engaging those involved in a wider story of social and economic development
2. The interdependent nature of program impacts make it difficult to measure any one impact without examining the whole suite of impacts, both positive and negative, and their inter-relationships
3. Implementation was challenging and required new leadership thinking and competencies
4. The operating context, both internal and external, was 'hard wired' to resist collaboration and encouraged working in silos.

Most significant in this enquiry is that the work required to overcome these challenges has radically influenced the way OEH approached implementation, evaluation and their relationships with stakeholders. Based on this experience we have developed a model that looks at four interrelated quadrants that require a high degree of capability in order to make progress:

1. **Leadership** skills in order to work effectively with entrenched social, economic and environmental challenges;
2. New ways of **engaging** with a broad range of stakeholders that enable those involved to work from a systems view (seeing the whole – rather than only their part);
3. A cohesive **narrative** creating an emotional connection and shared understanding of purpose; and

4. **Research and evaluation** to create an evidence base from which to adaptively manage challenges and demonstrate progress.

This paper sets out the key challenges that were encountered through the development and implementation of the OEH Multiple Impacts Framework (the Framework) and describes how capability in each of the quadrants can assist with these challenges. The following discussion has been built from a series of interviews with key individuals involved in the work.

## Background

The purpose of the OEH Multiple Impacts indicators is to:

- Enable **high level monitoring** of progress towards aggregate outcomes and broader goals across the programs, and link this to OEH and NSW Government priorities
- Recognise the **multiple impacts of energy efficiency** programs (e.g. social and health benefits) and track these over time
- Provide a **broader range of economic impact estimates** than are currently covered by traditional energy efficiency cost benefit analysis frameworks used in the energy sector.

The project initially involved defining relevant indicators through an international literature review and consultative processes. This resulted in the development of specific methods for measuring the identified indicators, documented in a report titled '*OEH Multiple Benefits Indicator Framework for Residential and Community Energy Efficiency Programs in NSW*'.<sup>1</sup>

Interest in the multiple impacts of energy efficiency has grown in recent years – in particular since the publication of the International Energy Agency's 2014 guide *Capturing the Multiple Benefits of Energy Efficiency*.<sup>2</sup> (There is some debate about terminology, with some proponents favouring the term impact over benefit, acknowledging that not every outcome will be a benefit).

OEH is the NSW Government department responsible for working with the community to care for and protect the environment. As part of its portfolio, the department establishes energy efficiency and renewable energy policies' and delivers programs to achieve outcomes in support of the goals set out by the NSW Government, including in the Energy Efficiency Action Plan (EEAP).<sup>3</sup>

The EEAP aims to reduce living costs and achieve greater energy efficiency in NSW. To meet these goals, OEH delivers energy efficiency programs to support consumers who have limited ability to change their consumption, including low-income households, small to medium-sized businesses and frontline government services. Key program elements include: energy efficiency advice for householders and businesses; grants for upgrading to lower energy-use appliances, machinery and lighting; retrofitting community housing to improve insulation; and engagement with rural communities to improve awareness of, and encourage action around, sustainability opportunities.

Examples of residential and community energy efficiency programs relevant to the Multiple Impacts Indicator Framework are:

- 1) The \$26.8 million **Home Energy Action Program** provides high-return energy efficiency improvements to low-income households, in partnership with social and environmental sector organisations. Vulnerable home owners and renters gain improved access to energy-saving appliances and home improvements.
- 2) The **Collaborative Sustainable Housing Initiative** works with housing industry representatives to facilitate the uptake of sustainable features in new and upgraded housing.

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1 *OEH Multiple Benefits Indicator Framework for Residential and Community Energy Efficiency Programs in NSW*

2 International Energy Agency (2011) [Capturing The Multiple Benefits of Energy Efficiency](#).

3 NSW OEH (2013) [NSW Energy Efficiency Action Plan](#).

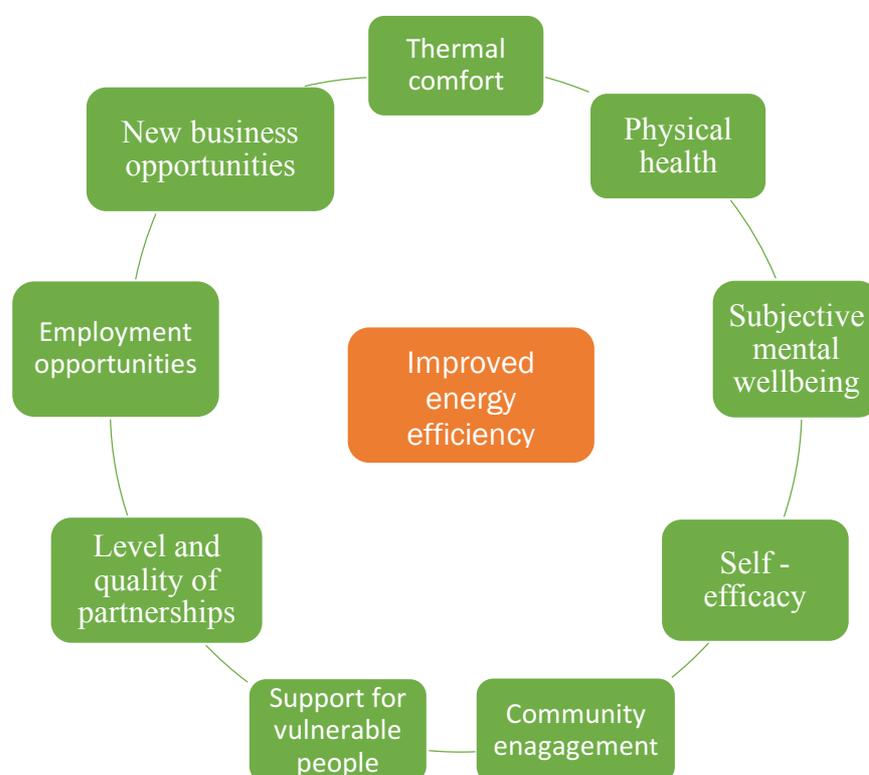
It is currently building a shared measurement framework with stakeholders across the four themes of awareness, capacity, adoption and systematisation.

- 3) A key sub-project, the **National Conversation**, seeks to shift the conversation around housing in Australia towards sustainable alternatives.
- 4) The **Our Place** program engages communities to undertake initiatives to improve the local environment and help people live more sustainably. The program aims to increase opportunities for people to look after their local environment and to be involved in their community.

To deliver their programs, OEH works in partnership with other government departments and stakeholders (e.g. NSW Family and Community Services, Community Housing Associations) to maximise positive outcomes relevant for both OEH and the partner organisations.

### Indicators to be measured

Nine key impact areas (Figure 1) were chosen from 35 potential impacts, based on OEH program and delivery partner priorities, review of national and international literature and in-depth testing with partners and experts.



**Figure 1:** Key impact areas to be measured

A key outcome of the project was operationalising the impact areas into a set of practical measures based on: a review of the available literature, available data sources and program evaluation priorities. The resulting methods and corresponding instruments (e.g. program monitoring data, participant surveys, in-depth interviews, observation) form a ‘tool box’ from which OEH program teams can draw for evaluation purposes<sup>4</sup>. OEH has an expectation that the use of consistent measures across programs will enhance monitoring of transformational change at the portfolio level.

<sup>4</sup> Refinement of this Framework is ongoing, as OEH program leaders and external partners ‘road test’ the measures for usefulness.

Data collected on the non-energy impacts are intended to augment data collected on traditional energy impacts (e.g. cost savings) in response to intervention programs.

The following table shows each indicator area, the methods and measures to be used and the potential alignment with the UN SDGs, where similar methods and measures may also be useful. For example, the literature indicates that potential health benefits arise following improved thermal efficiency of low-income housing, which aligns with Goal 3, Good Health and Well-being. Our focus on an indicators framework is shared by the UN on their SDG indicators website<sup>5</sup> which states:

*A robust follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require a solid framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure accountability of all stakeholders.*

**Table1. Multiple Impacts Indicator Framework: A ‘tool box’ of methods and measures for evaluating the non-energy benefits of OEH energy efficiency programs**

Indicator area	Specific Indicator	Method/ Measure	Alignment with UN SDGs
<b>Thermal comfort</b> of buildings/ homes	Internal temperature	Program monitoring data; Temperature measurement in homes (i.e. 18-22C)	No poverty; Good health & well-being; Affordable & clean energy; Reduced inequalities; Sustainable cities & communities; Responsible consumption & production; Climate action
	Perceived comfort	Self-report survey of participants <b>Key indicators:</b> % program participants reporting improved thermal comfort	
<b>Physical health</b> of program participants	Perceived general health; Reduced acute health issues, e.g. asthma; Reduced health care utilisation	Self-report survey of participants <b>Key indicators:</b> % program participants who report improved physical health. Local statistical data (if available)	Good health & well-being; Affordable & clean energy; Sustainable cities & communities;
<b>Mental wellbeing</b> of program participants	Perceived mental well-being; reduced symptoms of stress, anxiety & depression	Self-report survey of participants using validated instruments (e.g. GHQ12) <b>Key indicators:</b> % of participants who report improved welling	Good health & well-being; Affordable & clean energy;
<b>Self-efficacy</b> of program participants (and communities)	Belief in ability to control energy use in home; or that actions to limit energy use will be successful	Self-report survey of participants <b>Key indicators:</b> % participants who report increased capacity to: Control energy use and cost; Contribute to or take action in their community; Make decisions to improve their circumstances.	Good health & well-being; Affordable & clean energy; Sustainable cities & communities; Reduced inequalities; Climate action
	Improved attitudes to participation; to taking action; improved confidence	Self-report survey of or interviews with participants	
	Reduced	In-depth interviews with	

5 <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>

	barriers to personal and community efficacy	program partners	
<b>Community engagement and participation</b>	Improved social connections; community involvement; contribution to decision-making	Self-report survey of participants In-depth interviews with program partners & community organisations	Good health & well-being; Affordable & clean energy; Sustainable cities & communities; Climate action
	Observed community activation/ participation	Program records of participation, grants, groups formed; Survey and/or in-depth interviews with program partners and community organisations (e.g. housing providers)	
<b>Support for vulnerable people</b>	Improved social connections	Self-report survey of participants In-depth interviews with program partners & community organisations	No poverty; Good health & well-being; Affordable & clean energy; Reduced inequalities
	Increased provision of support options	Program records collected by staff <b>Key indicators:</b> Number of referrals; Referral type	
	Support options taken up	Interviews with and data collection from support providers	
	Satisfaction with support from the community; Reduced barriers to support	Self-report survey of participants; In-depth interviews with participants	
<b>Partnerships</b>	Number & type of partnerships	Interviews with program staff; Apply a useful typology of partnerships <b>Key indicator:</b> Type of partnership	Partnerships for the goals
	Increased effectiveness of partnerships; reduced barriers	In-depth interviews with program partners <b>Key indicator:</b> Level of effectiveness of each partnership using standard rubric	
<b>Employment opportunities</b>	Increased number of jobs created	Estimate of direct, indirect jobs using employment factor (0.16 jobs/GWh saved through programs)	No poverty; Affordable & clean energy; Decent work & economic growth; Reduced inequalities
	Barriers/enablers to job growth	Short interviews with local businesses	
<b>New business opportunities</b>	Expansion into new work areas	Short interviews with local businesses	Industry, innovation & infrastructure

Although the evaluation instruments are summarised broadly above, in reality survey and interview questions are carefully selected for suitability depending on the target group. Multiple instruments are needed within mixed-methods evaluation designs to cover the nine indicators areas. An example of the type of questions included in the self-report survey of participants used by community housing providers is shown in Box 1. The highlighted program involves retrofitting existing homes with insulation, low energy-use lighting and other energy efficient measures. Key evaluation considerations included:

- Housing providers are most interested in measures of thermal comfort, mental wellbeing and self-efficacy.
- Additional questions were included that establish context and that help to improve attribution of outcomes to the intervention.
- Two approaches are used to manage attribution, in order to strengthen arguments about the degree to which a program’s activities have led to the desired outcomes:
  - First, to rely on statistical analyses to determine the relative contribution of program and non-program factors
  - Second, adding questions to the post-program survey that investigate participant’s views regarding reasons for changes, starting with ‘unprompted’ or ‘free’ recall questions, followed by ‘prompted’ recall questions.
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### Box 1. Example of Household Participant Survey questions

#### *Introductory questions, e.g.*

- How would you rate the condition of your home, that is, its current state of repair?  
Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, Poor
- How often do you have difficulty paying your electricity and/or gas bills for your home?  
Never; Rarely, Sometimes; Often

#### *Thermal comfort questions*

- How comfortable have you felt in your home (in the past month)? Much too warm, Too warm; Comfortable but a bit on the warm side, Comfortable, Comfortable but a bit on the cool side; Too cool, Much too cool [a pictorial scale is also available]
- How would you rate the feeling of draughts in your home in comparison to last year at this time? Better, No change, Worse

#### *Self-efficacy questions*

- To what extent do you believe that you are able to limit fuel consumption in your household (i.e. electricity, gas, wood) to the absolute necessary? Responses on a 5-point scale from “not at all able to do it” to “able to do it to a high extent.”
- How much control do you feel that you personally have over how much fuel is consumed in your household (i.e. electricity, gas, wood)?” registered on a 5-point scale from “very little control” to “complete control”.

#### *Subjective mental wellbeing questions*

- Thinking about your own life and your personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole? Scale from 0-10, where 0 is completely dissatisfied and 10 is completely satisfied. (from the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index)<sup>6</sup>
- How often do you feel stressed about paying your electricity and/or gas bills for your home? Never; Rarely, Sometimes; Often

#### *Demographic questions*

- E.g. gender, age group, highest level of education, household income.

Although the nine key impacts were explored individually, there are clear links between them (see

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.australianunity.com.au/about-us/wellbeing/auwbi>

Figure 2). These need to be considered when individual indicators are examined and when conclusions are made regarding the overall impacts of a program. For example, educational programs that improve householders' knowledge about energy efficiency may empower them to take action (i.e. self-efficacy), which in turn improves the comfort of the home and potentially their physical health and mental wellbeing. Alternatively, a program that focuses on improving community engagement around renewable energy may have additional impacts regarding individual wellbeing, but also on jobs growth.

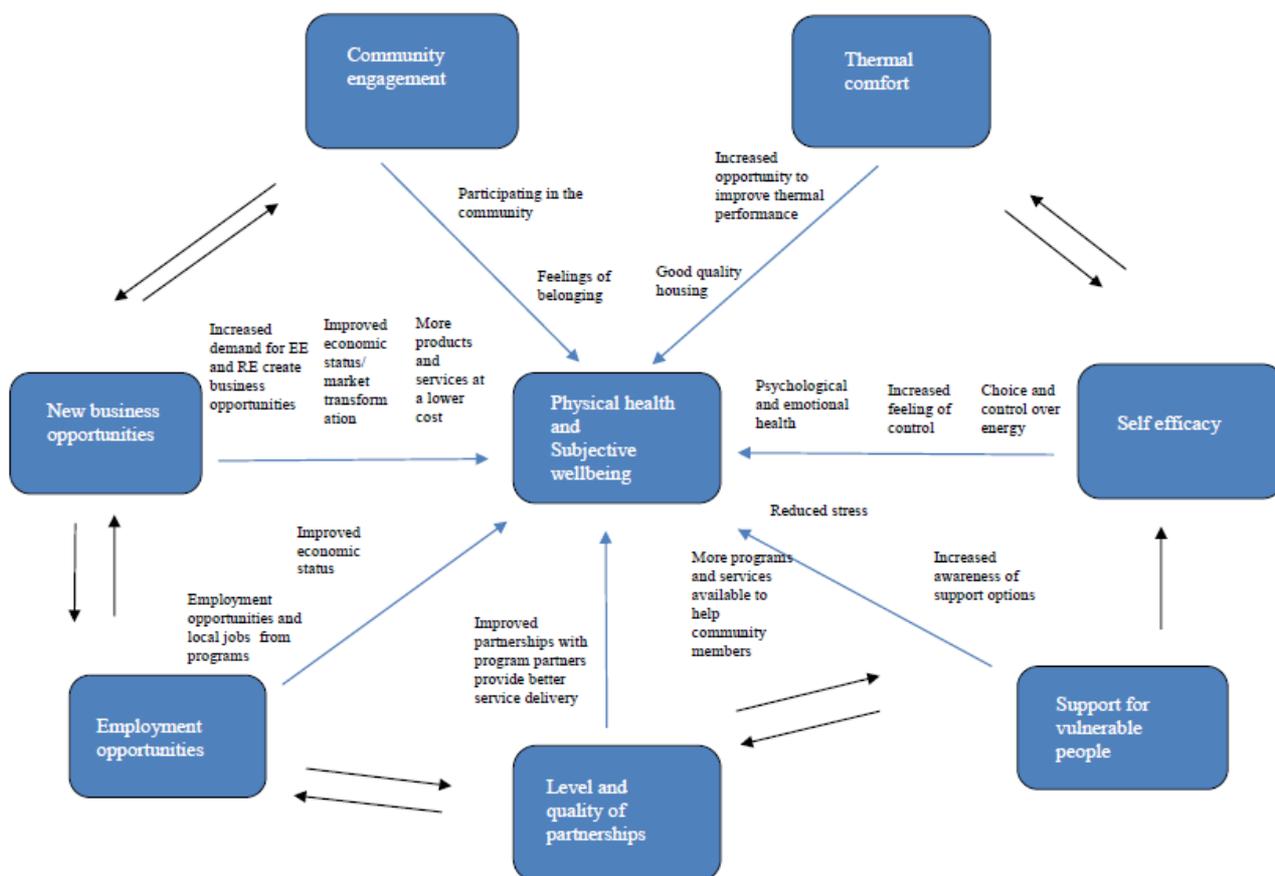


Figure 2: Links between indicators

In a recent article in *NATURE* Mans Nilsson, Dave Griggs and Martin Visbeck present a simple way of rating relationships between the targets to highlight priorities for integrated policy. The article acknowledges that if countries ignore the overlaps and approach the indicators in isolation from one another they “risk perverse outcomes.”<sup>7</sup>

“To make coherent policies and strategies, policymakers need a rubric for thinking systemically about the many interactions – beyond simply synergies and trade-offs – in order to quickly identify which groups could become their allies and which ones they will be negotiating with.”<sup>8</sup>

7 Nilsson, M., Griggs, D., Visbeck, M., *NATURE*. Vol 534, (2016): 320.

8 Nilsson, M., Griggs, D., Visbeck, M., *NATURE*. Vol 534, (2016): 321.

## Preliminary findings and lessons learned

Although OEH staff and stakeholders broadly agreed with the concept of a multiple impacts framework, it has been challenging to implement. Refining tools and metrics has assisted greatly, but engaging in a wider story of social, economic and environmental development took participants outside 'business as usual' practices. This moved the project from a purely technical focus, to working with the dynamics of change.

In many ways, this appears to mirror the challenges in implementing the SDGs. Dave Griggs, Professor of Sustainable Development at Monash Sustainability Institute and Secretariat for the SDSN in Australia/Pacific, has been involved in the implementation of the SDGs in the region.. Notably, the SDSN held a series of workshops on implementing the SDGs, and a National Summit in Sydney in September 2016 will bring together leaders and decision-makers from government, business, civil society and academia to identify how Australia can progress with implementing the SDGs. There are some great challenges for the Summit. In a recent article in the Guardian newspaper, titled *Australia can do much better than a rank of 20 on sustainable development goals*, Professor John Thwaites, chair of the Monash Sustainability Institute, argued:

“Australian businesses will need to place a higher priority on the environment and reducing inequality if Australia is to lift its ranking on global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Australia ranks 20th in the world, behind Canada and many European countries on a [new index](#) that compares different nations' performance on the SDGs.

The country got a bare pass in ... goals such as reducing inequality and responsible consumption and production. On the other hand, Australia rated well on health, water policy and sustainable cities.”<sup>9</sup>

Dave Griggs commented that the recent High level Country Forum urged governments to establish a formal mechanism for SDG implementation. Various approaches are grappling with the concept that SDG implementation cuts across all departments, requiring “joined-up” governance mechanisms. Whilst nations are starting to determine their approach, there are still questions regarding what success will look like.

“Ministers and ministries compete, they don't cooperate. The SDGs provide a mechanism for top down activity across silos. Some nations are exploring the idea of creating 'superstructures' that can sit over ministries and departments to coordinate SDG efforts.

Doing 'joined up government' has been tried before. It may not work, but there will be pockets where it does. These pockets can then provide case studies; individuals will get it.

Participants will need broad shoulders to push through in action and resistance - inertia is so strong... Those who implement change may be attacked/vilified/resented. Then when successful everyone else takes the credit.”

As such, capacity building will be key. Dave Griggs notes that the SDG Partnership Goal 17 has no implementation agency. The 'superstructures' mentioned above will hopefully assist but he questions whether they are going to be equipped for the role.

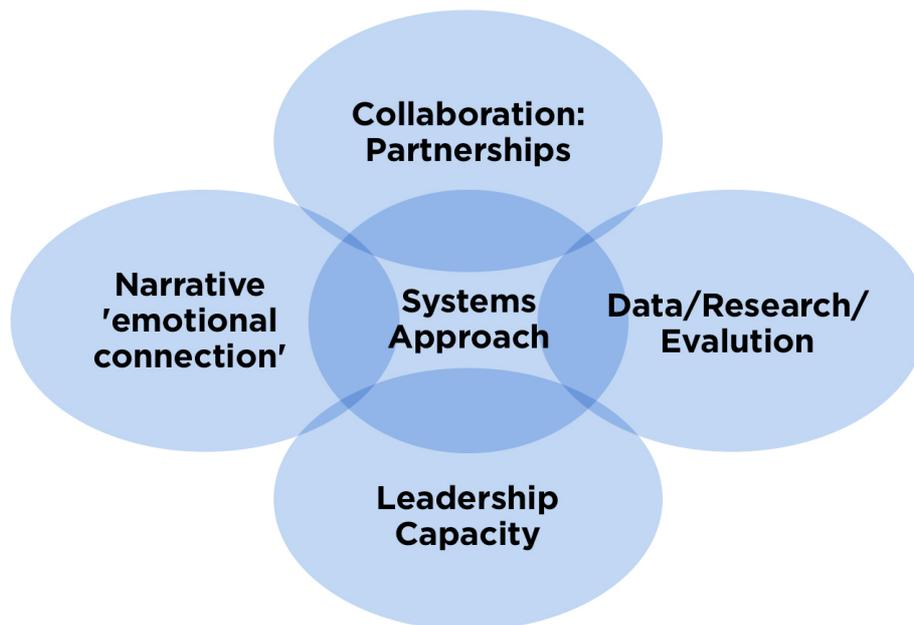
### A model for successful implementation and impact

Based on the experience of the OEH multiple-impacts work, a model of working has been developed linking four interrelated quadrants that require a high degree of capability in order to make progress:

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<sup>9</sup> Thwaites, John. “Australia can do much better than a rank of 20 on sustainable development goals” *The Guardian*, (2016): 28 July

1. **Leadership** skills in order to work effectively with entrenched social, economic and environmental challenges;
2. A cohesive **narrative** creating an emotional connection and shared understanding of purpose;
3. **Collaboration**: purposeful ways of engaging and working that enable those involved to hold and work from a systems view; combined with
4. **Data, research and evaluation** to create an evidence base from which to prototype, adaptively manage challenges and to demonstrate progress.



**Figure 3: The Four Quadrants**

## 1. Leadership: why is it so hard to join things up?

Terri Soller, Director of the Global Leadership Practice was involved in capacity building activities with a number of staff in senior roles at OEH. The Global Leadership Practice works to support leaders and leadership in Australia, and globally, who individually and collectively are invested in leveraging their roles to cultivate healthy organizations, thriving societies and the well-being of the planet. Reflecting on barriers and enabling forces, Terri suggests that:

“Systems are perfect and self-regulating. They are set up in this way to serve a purpose, even if this purpose at a fundamental level contradicts the desired outcomes of the participants of the system. These are usually hidden assumptions and beliefs that keep people stuck in defining the purpose to best serve an individual person; agency; government ... and, as such, are narrow and ill defined. The work of the system is to define its collective purpose”

“You can’t assume that by simply bringing diverse actors together you will solve a problem. If we imagine that people in a system have the skills and ability to work differently we will fail. There may be good intention however, the discipline of Working systemically requires a sophisticated and mature approach, and a continual focus on learning.”

A key question that has come out of this work is how to build the resilience of any system (and people) to stay there long enough to achieve the desired outcomes and transformation

“Nowhere in our education systems has there been a strong focus on working beyond our part.

The culture, values, and beliefs of organisations, in their own way, have to change. There is a capacity issue and a naivety in believing that we will achieve change without investing in that change.”

There is a need to shift people’s sense of the role of leadership. In practice, to:

- See the whole – work with the linkages and access the resources across the system
- Use the disruption as a source of continuous learning ;
- Build the resilience of the players and the system to sit with disruption long enough for new thinking
- Be present to what is happening now, to learn in the moment and enact mid-course corrections

“To make progress we can’t work from the past. Systems-thinking is working from the future. It is emergent; generative; future oriented.”

New ways of imagining this lead to a range of valuable tools, including adaptive management and prototyping and way of engaging, such as Collective Impact and the role of the Backbone Organisation.

### **The Home Power Savings Program: A Case Study in Adaptive Management**

The Home Power Savings Program (HPSP) was the largest low-income energy efficiency program ever rolled out in Australia. Energy experts visited participating households to provide energy saving items and advice on how to save energy through making simple, daily behaviour changes. The HPSP operated across NSW and helped more than 220,000 low income households save an estimated 120,000 megawatt hours of electricity and more than \$36 million on their energy bills each year. Participants also saw non-energy benefits in comfort, health, reduced stress, and improved capacity to manage finances. Through effective co-delivery with partners, adaptive management, and excellent evaluation practices, the HPSP achieved these results four months early and \$8 million under budget.

In an article on the program, BehaviourWorks Australia (a multi-disciplinary research partnership bringing together leading behaviour change academics with practitioners) put forward that:

Adaptive Management is a mind-set that embraces both uncertainty and learning by accepting that:

1. We are dealing with complexity and things don’t always work out as planned
2. Adjustments made along the way can improve a program’s performance.

BehaviourWorks identified four factors that were vital in the success of the Home Power Savings Program:

1. **The Right Stuff:** a confident organisation that is nimble (to change course), decisive (to do it early enough) and supportive of a ‘safe to fail’ culture
2. **All Aboard:** recruiting external help to fill in the gaps in the HPSP team’s expertise, and an internal champion to keep that team onside
3. **Early wins:** getting buy-in from the team by recognising their strengths and what’s worked so far
4. **Asking Not Ordering:** Recognising the skills of field staff, and not assuming they’ll automatically get on board with the changes.

The Home Power Savings Program was so successful it won the 2014 Premier’s Award for Excellence in the Public Sector in the Strengthening the Environment and Communities category.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Narrative: what is the story?

There is a pivotal role of a shared narrative to focus government, business and community on the transformative work envisaged by multiple impacts work. The Shannon Company specialises in behaviour change communication and has been involved in both the OEH projects and the SDSN. Bill Shannon, of The Shannon Company, argues “we tell ourselves stories in order to live. The story brings the strategy alive. They appeal to the imagination through emotional connection.”

Bill speaks of the notion of “consumerised” policy.

“Policy can pass like a ship in the night if people don’t relate to it. You need to tell the story in a way that appeals to people’s imaginations. To do that, change often requires ‘sensitising the community’ ...before change is introduced.

“[This puts] the issues on the agenda and give[s] the owner of the program – whether it be government, not-for-profit organisations, or industry – the social and moral license to act decisively on public policy, community and social issues, or market challenges. It encourages the community to be more accepting and receptive of interventions. And to do that you need an emotional connection. That can only come about by understanding the beliefs of the women and men who make up your audience and building empathy with them.”

To put it simply:

“If there’s no understanding of the beliefs, there can be no empathy.  
If there’s no empathy, there can be no emotional connection.  
If there’s no connection, there can be no action.  
And if there’s no action, there can be no behaviour change.”

By way of illustration, the following statement came out of the third National workshop on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Australia:

“Show me an educated person living in a healthy environment and a growing economy and I’ll show you someone who has a genuine chance of getting the most out of life – a healthy person, who is NOT living in poverty, is NOT oppressed and has HOPE for their children and their future”<sup>10</sup>

By creating an emotional connection the statement has provided a central narrative that all those involved in the SDG work could relate to, and use in their own story telling around the initiative. The story acts as a collective purpose, forming the boundary of the collaborative work required to make progress.

### Case Study

The wider story was extremely useful to OEH staff and stakeholders. For example, St George Community Housing (SGCH) was in a silo. Their interest was how best to provide housing to vulnerable people – how to satisfy the needs of individual tenants. SGCH was reactive – the objective was to build more housing quickly, get people in, and deal with housing issues such as comfort and energy affordability later.

A co-design process with OEH and Clean Energy Finance Corporation was key to helping them see how they could improve what they do, in the context of working with government agencies that have different objectives. However, this required telling the story *within* SGCH, to get everyone on the same page – to sell the benefits (of having better sustainable housing) – to see how a partnership can have mutual benefits that go well beyond what each organisation can do on its own. If OEH and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation only focused on energy benefits, SGCH may not have changed their thinking so quickly.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.monash.edu/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/294000/implementingsdgsaust\\_workshop-statement\\_final.pdf](http://www.monash.edu/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/294000/implementingsdgsaust_workshop-statement_final.pdf)

### 3. Engagement: what does this work look like?

The level of collaboration required to enable a multiple impact project should not be underestimated. An appreciation of the interdependence of all partners is required for success, with each partner clearly understanding their role.

However, the development of the capabilities required for effective engagement also appears to have unlocked the transformative potential of OEH and has led to considerable success. Acknowledging that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination, rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organisations, OEH developed a range of innovative and ambitious projects embracing agility, prototyping, adaptive management, experimentation and action learning. The Home Power Savings Program, Our Place and the subsequent Collaborative Sustainable Housing Initiative are key examples through which to explore these capabilities.

#### **Our Place: A Case Study in Prototyping**

The Our Place Program seeks to strengthen communities by working closely with local groups and providing support through grants, networking and capacity building events. Our Place encourages local groups (such as community organisations, councils, volunteer networks and schools) to engage their communities in environmental issues relevant in their local area.

Maria Rickert, head of the OEH Sustainable Communities team that delivers Our Place, notes that one of the key features of the work is the engagement of people who are not usually interested in the environment.

“We often preach to the converted and work with people who are already interested in what we are doing. To get outside of this, you have to meet people where they are. We start from the question – what is important to you? - rather than asking them to “use less energy”. This approach has been particularly successful in our work with remote communities. Through this approach we found that people connect with their local environment and then want to make a difference.”

A key element of Our Place is prototyping, whereby a basic version of a project is built, tested, and then reworked as necessary, until an acceptable model is achieved from which the complete system or project can be developed. Maria highlights that Our Place often engages with groups of people on the fringes of society - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, remote Aboriginal communities - who are less resourced. In its work with these groups, Our Place recognises their current capabilities, providing support to local partners to enable them to be effective in their role. This can include planning, project management, promotional activities and capacity building.

“Everyone is working in silos – this is then mirrored within the organisation, the government and out to the community. It ... limits the opportunities that can be realised. The opportunity is there; people are seeing more and more that new ways of working are possible and necessary.

People want to see value - .what is the return on the time and money that is put in? Often this comes from resource poor sectors. Powerful stakeholders have power; less powerful stakeholders have less - a competition where the toughest wins. This is outdated thinking, and it is not functional for the future. We need to get the sectors working together because there is so much at stake. The kind of prototyping that is coming out of Our Place can be really valuable to the broader community”, argues Maria.

This sentiment is reflected in the experience of Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC), a peak provider of services to communities in NSW, dedicated to assisting Indigenous Australians and delivery partner in the HPSP. Renee Wykes, Training Manager, commented that:

“We don't go out and dictate, but it's giving [clients] the knowledge and skills to make their own decisions as to what's best for themselves or their families. We know that it doesn't

happen in 1 or 2 visits, so the clients see us multiple times (initial, check-in, follow-up, fourth visit). Even now, people want advice on their whitegoods or purchasing other things like that. They ring up and ask how to reduce power bills. So even though the funding is gone, we keep up momentum and make sure that someone in the community has the skills to help with these things.”

Our Place partners with service providers, like MPREC, who are already embedded in their community, with deep connections and established trust. This is very important for sustainability in a context of intermittent government funding, as the role in the community remains constant when the funding is not. “People respond enthusiastically and with great joy” adds Maria.

“Your first interactions with the client may only be enough to get them to think about what we’re talking about. It’s what happens after that, over the next 10-12 months or 3 years. With the Our Place team, they do recognise that each community is different, and they are flexible in how we manage each project to meet the needs of communities. Things will change, and they’re quite receptive to that.”

### **Collaborative Sustainable Housing Initiative: A Case Study in Collective Impact**

The Collaborative Sustainable Housing Initiative was developed in parallel with Our Place to enable the housing industry to make systematic improvements to advance the economic, social and environmental viability of the sector through collective action. The program grew from the principle that in order to make a difference at a system level, the program must take a different approach. The Collaborative Sustainable Housing Initiative follows a Collective Impact framework. OEH’s role is to facilitate a network of industry representatives to co-define opportunities to progress common interests and support joint initiatives that will increase supply and demand of sustainable housing.

The initiative employs a Collective Impact framework. **Collective Impact** is “the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.”<sup>11</sup> There are no predetermined solutions; rather the work is emergent and adaptive.

“Collective impact is not merely a new process that supports the same social sector solutions but an entirely different model of social progress.”<sup>12</sup>

There are five conditions, which create a successful collective impact:

1. **Common Agenda:** There is a shared vision for change and a common understanding of the problem
2. **Continuous Communication:** To develop trust, a common vocabulary and understanding of the dilemma among non-profits, corporations and government agencies
3. **Shared Measurement Systems:** Consistency in data and measuring results across all participating organisations ensures all efforts are aligned and also demonstrates success
4. **Mutually reinforcing activities:** Success depends on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, although they do not all need to be focused on the same action. Each participant undertakes a specific set of activities (which they excel at) and are co-ordinated with the actions of others
5. **Backbone support organisations:** Collective impacts require a separate organisation with a specific set of skills to coordinate activity. This organisation will manage and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communication support, data collection and reporting and handling the logistical and administrative details.

Collabforge is a Melbourne-based firm that specialises in driving collaboration and innovation and has just started on its fourth collaboration project with OEH. These projects have proven to be an excellent case study on how to build collaboration capability within an organisation whilst helping them deliver on core organisational goals.

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<sup>11</sup> Kania J & Kramer M 2011, ‘Collective Impact’, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter,

<sup>12</sup> Kania & Kramer (2013).

“Working beyond a short-term ‘low hanging fruit’ type of approach, OEH took the time to build capability through deliberative practice,” comments Mark Elliott, Managing Director and Founder. “There was a values alignment, a principle about working in a values context supported with a regular routine of activity.”

“How you perceive the world around you is fundamentally affected by your values. If you don’t value ‘relational’ goods and only value ‘positional’ goods which are more around status and power – it will be hard to find common ground. You have to value relationship capital and build trust. There are two key dimensions of trust: trust in knowledge and expertise; but there is also trust that you are going to do the right thing and act in one another’s best interests. These can be built separately but one builds depth in the other.” continues Hailey Cooperrider, collaboration and strategy lead at Collabforge.

“There has to be a willingness to sit in the tension and discomfort in what is occurring. Build in time for capability building: ‘deep dives’ and ‘creative exploration’. There has to be a willingness to dream together beyond the traditional ‘transactional’ client-consultant relationship.”

“You have to just start – embrace agility and action learning – commit and put trust in the process. Choose projects and approaches that allow you to test and iterate, in order to learn from experience and respond with agility while building capability,” says Mark Elliott.

CSHI and the National Conversation are a great example of this. There was a full year with the group essentially holding “un-conference” meetings to build the ability to work together through which teams emerged, projects emerged and the National Conversation was able to prosper. The role of OEH as the backbone organisation was critical in providing support for the group to develop its capacity and learn together.

“There is value in routinised time to assist with learning. You can’t just have a one day workshop and expect that the learning is done. There needs to be a number of iterations for people to learn and develop. This way of working may be very new for people. Not all participants will have a learning mindset.”

“Collabforge always form a core team with the client so that the space is held together. This work is hard; it’s really hard. It can be slow going and you feel that you are repeating yourself. It is vital that you resist the urge to switch back to traditional modes of working when the collaboration becomes slow or hard work. This is a tension which is a natural part of collaboration.” Says Mark

## **4. Research, Data and Evaluation**

In the development of the OEH multiple impacts indicator project, the most effective recruitment and participation amongst stakeholders occurred where participants had previously considered, or been exposed to a multiple impacts framework, and could see the value of taking a more holistic approach. The challenge is not new. Charles Michaelis, who has over 20 years experience assisting governments and agencies evaluate, and was involved in the early conceptualisation of the OEH work, commented that people don’t necessarily understand the purpose of evaluation:

‘They see evaluation in an “Alice in Wonderland” way, a justification for cost effectiveness; an ex-ante modelling process; tracking of progress and activity. I see it as embedded in the policy making process as a way to make better policies for society as a whole. Therefore the Multiple Impacts are central to sound evaluative process as all societal impacts, positive and negative, are accounted for. The positive can then be accentuated and the negative eradicated.’

Charles noticed that some OEH participants asked, “How is this relevant to us? How is this practical? It doesn’t make my job easier – it makes it harder.” This kind of questioning doesn’t

consider whether an endeavour is going to have a positive effect on society. This has proven to be a challenge as there are no simple answers. There seems to be an issue around WHY research, evaluation and data collection is being undertaken.

Evaluation of multiple impacts inevitably results in multiple metrics (qualitative and quantitative) which creates a challenge to compare 'apples with oranges'. Economists and Government policy-makers can seek to 'solve' this challenge by distilling everything down to a monetised figure. However, under this paradigm if can't be monetised, it can't be counted.

This simply won't be sufficient for the SDGs.

This is a sentiment echoed in a current Low Carbon Living CRC Project, the *Carbon Reductions and Co-benefits: Report on Benefits of adopting a co-benefits framework in the Australian local government context*.<sup>13</sup>

"When targeting benefits from the mitigation measures councils' [local government] emphasis is overwhelmingly on 'financial benefits'. This is mainly due to the present character of local government policy discourse which stresses the need for quantification of results and readily definable outcomes. In such a context, policy measures are negotiated mainly within an economic frame of reference."

"... councils' over reliance on 'monetary considerations' and 'monetary quantification' in targeting benefits is excluding a wide range of environmental, social and health benefits' from incorporation in the policy process. These 'non-climatic and non-energy-related benefits' include the most important and significant category of health-related benefits (such as health benefits from better air quality, active transport, improved 'liveability' and creating local jobs) (IPCC 2014, Woodcock et al. 2009; and Hickman 2013). Exclusion of these benefits from incorporation in the policy process limits councils' potential to achieve maximum policy benefits from climate change-related policy measures."

There may be an irony in the pre-occupation with monetisation. When all impacts are accounted for, critical data emerges on how best to construct interventions for maximum benefit. To only count impacts that can be monetised conceals this adjacent potential. "Our business should be about enabling people to make good decisions," says Charles.

## Conclusion

In developing the recommended approach, OEH requested methods that will provide useful and reasonably robust data on which policy and program decisions can be made, and that are as cost effective to apply as possible. Whilst this sounds simple, implementing a multiple impacts approach is inherently uncomfortable. It forces a view of the whole and cuts across silos. This necessitates deep listening, willingness to let go of fixed ideas and openness to experimentation and failure. This is a challenging context where innovative ideas and a high degree of motivation are needed. As the multiple impact endeavours pushed beyond the intellectual exercise and were operationalised into practical tools for evaluating individual programs, it became clear that a model of working was going to be required that went beyond the technical application of a measurement framework. Implementation has prompted an exploration of the adaptive challenge and new ways of working.

From the choice of measures, to the engagement of stakeholders it has become evident that there is a critical role in creating an **emotional connection** with the work. This emotional connection, added to the creation of an evidence base through **research and evaluation**, can enable those involved to commit to taking a systems view, however challenging that may be, in order to work more effectively.

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13 Karim, S., Williams, P., Thompson, S. "RP – 2015 Carbon Reductions and Co-benefits: Report on Benefits of adopting a co-benefits framework in the Australian local government context." Paper prepared for the Low Carbon Living CRC, June 24, 2016.

It is extremely difficult for any one sector to make progress alone. From the perspective of the energy efficiency sector, if we are thinking about energy efficiency as a co-benefit to other activities, we might also seek to find ways to identify the energy savings arising in non-energy fields where multiple impacts are occurring. This logic, however, embodies a critical challenge for the energy efficiency sector, which is to consider: why energy efficiency is the point of reference? Would Health, Transport, the Community Sector or others not claim primacy? This prompts a conversation of where and how we will start to join up across other sectors to facilitate progress in achieving the SDGs. The primary consideration being that we need to ensure we have the capacity, courage and resilience required to work more effectively with entrenched social, economic and environmental challenges.

The **collaboration** required to enable a multiple impact project should not be underestimated. It is critical for success to enhance the potential and capacity of those involved to design, implement and measure policies and programs that capture the multiple impacts they seek. There is great intent, people work from a desire to make a difference and to contribute to the whole. However, systems tend to work with what is probable and we need to shift the work to what is possible. If we accept that systems are perfect and self-regulating, there is a key need for **leadership capability** to continually define the collective purpose.

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