

VicHealth Local Government Partnership:

Young people leading healthier communities



Foreword



Image courtesy of Daniel Soncin

VicHealth is working with Victorian councils to set our kids up for their best possible future - by creating communities where children and young people can grow up active, connected and healthy.

For many years, VicHealth has worked alongside local councils to support the health and wellbeing of Victorians. Our new and ambitious model will enable a more consistent and long-term approach to creating effective change.

Councils oversee a wide range of community services, facilities, strategic policy and planning that directly affect the daily lives, health and wellbeing opportunities for children and young people – which makes them ideal partners for VicHealth to work with.

As councils develop and implement their next Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans (2021–2025), they will receive enhanced support from VicHealth to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people (0–25) by ensuring their voices shape the planning.

Councils will have the opportunity to inspire, learn and collaborate with each other, as well as community experts and young people, to amplify the voices of children and young people in decisions that affect their daily lives.

In the early days, we listened and learned from Victorian communities through the Healthy Localities program. We analysed the barriers that prevented Victorians from being physically healthy and mentally well and we worked with councils to identify meaningful strategies that were jointly implemented.

Since then, our relationship with councils across Victoria have gone from strength to strength. We've worked closely on a host of programs and partnerships including This Girl Can – Victoria, the See Beyond Race campaign, Leading the Way: Councils creating healthier communities, and multiple projects to create healthier food environments.

Through these initiatives, we gained valuable insights on how to better support councils and Victorians. Councils asked us to work on a longer-term timescale across the full length of their planning processes, providing more certainty and an opportunity for greater strategic alignment.

Regional councils requested greater flexibility in our partnership approach, to better match varying resource levels, population sizes and community needs.

Councils shared a range of innovative strategies they've developed to address complex health issues within their communities, and the desire to more easily share these insights with other councils across Victoria.

We look forward to engaging with Victorian councils in a more systematic, consistent way and supporting them as they strengthen the essential and outstanding work they are already doing in their communities.

Dr Sandro Demaiò

VicHealth CEO

Content

| | |
|---|----|
| Young voices | 4 |
| Why is VicHealth partnering with local councils? | 5 |
| Program overview | 6 |
| Council voices | 7 |
| Fast-track councils | 8 |
| What does success look like? | 10 |
| Council voices | 12 |
| Funding and capacity building to strengthen the local workforce | 13 |
| Evidence-based health promotion modules | 14 |
| Collaborating with expert partners | 17 |
| Fostering peer learning through communities of practice | 18 |

Young voices

Letisha's story



Letisha (18) from Hume is in her first year of university studying biomedical science. Her interests include dancing (hip hop), music, jogging and walking, as well as volunteering in her local council's Youth Summit Working Group.

"My role is to support and help plan the youth summit. The topic this year is on mental health, which I have learnt a lot about through this group. We have been brainstorming ideas on how to spread the awareness of mental health to other young people in Hume. We have also been informing them about the services that are available."

"Mental illness is a big issue especially among young people, so I wanted to join the group (Youth Summit Working Group). I felt like I can improve, innovate, use my voice, and create ideas to help spread the message to my community."

Imarsha's story

Imarsha (17) from Melton, is in her final year of high school. Imarsha has a strong passion for health and science, hoping to one day become a doctor. And when she's not hanging out with her 2 sisters watching movies, Imarsha dedicates her time to being a part of YAC – Melton.



"My school really encouraged me to get involved, especially as the council had presented us with a lot of opportunity's directly through school. By working with the local council outside of school, there were a lot more opportunities to get involved with the community."

"(My local council) are especially good at programs that engage primary school kids and creating good habits. There are also a lot of programs that get whole families involved."

Shannon's story



Shannon (18) from Shepparton, is in his final year of high school. Shannon has a keen interest in football, tennis, mountain biking and basketball, as well as a general love for being outdoors in his community and staying active.

"I used to be a participant in these types of programs, which really benefited me so I thought volunteering/ applying for a job would be a great way to better help others (in the community)."

Why is VicHealth partnering with local councils?



Councils are at the heart of community health and wellbeing, and well-placed to understand local priorities that can make the difference for effective health promotion. Their role in decision making and delivery of strategic policy and planning, community services and facilities at the local level is fundamental to creating places where children and young people can thrive.

VicHealth has established this Local Government Partnership with 16 fast-track councils to address local factors that directly affect the daily lives of children and young people and their opportunities for health and wellbeing. Through the course of the partnership, VicHealth will seek opportunities to expand the program into new communities.





The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted that children and young people aged 0–25 are more vulnerable to inadequacies in the food system, have inadequate access to suitable physical activity opportunities, and have inadequate exposure to suitable social and physical environments that enable social connection.

All Victorian councils develop 4-year Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans. They are a key lever in enabling councils to provide children and young people with opportunities that give them the best start in life.

As part of the partnership, councils will receive enhanced support to develop and deliver action on children's and young people's health and wellbeing through their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans for 2021–2025.

All 79 Victorian councils will have access to a range of evidence-based health promotion modules, providing them with the building blocks for effective change in their communities.

This local government partnership model is informed and shaped by the discussions and collaboration with councils across Victoria. The partnership model will take a holistic approach, focusing on and providing support in four key areas, which councils identified were key in achieving sustained change and in improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people in their communities:

-  funding and capacity building to strengthen local workforce
-  best-practice health promotion modules to inform local government action
-  collaboration with expert partners via a coordinated and localised approach
-  data and monitoring support and assistance to capture data for evaluation of their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans

This support is being directed toward communities who need it most. We have prioritised those who already face greater barriers to reaching their full health potential because of circumstances such as income, cultural background, gender, age or location. We will work closely with our fast-track councils to embed health promotion policy and practices with a focus on stable, long-term goals and support to effect local change and better health and wellbeing.

Program overview

VicHealth’s Local Government Partnership model has a strong emphasis on building capacity within councils to authentically engage with children and young people and use systems thinking approaches to guide the development, prioritisation and implementation of actions.

Councils will receive long-term support throughout the full cycle of their plans, including assistance with planning, implementation and evaluation.



What the VLGP provides:

- funding and capacity building to strengthen local workforce
- evidence-based health promotion modules



How we’ll monitor and measure:

- development of an outcomes evaluation framework capturing local stories, impact indicators and big picture outcomes

Our approach:

- collaborate with expert partners
- use systems thinking and community co-design
- foster peer learning through communities of practice

Council voices: Southern Grampians Shire Council



“I am really excited about the future direction that partnership will facilitate in our Shire.”

Michael Tudball

CEO Southern Grampians Shire Council

“We’re excited to be working with VicHealth through the Partnership project to create opportunities for youth to contribute to conversations around matters that shape and inform our community.”

Southern Grampians Shire is looking forward to partnering with our Youth to provide ideas, thoughts and solutions contributing to how our community and the Council can best support our younger citizens to live, grow, learn, develop, participate and remain within the region.”

“The newly-elected Council has identified youth as a focus priority. The project will provide the opportunity for Council, stakeholders and community to develop skills and learnings that will enable genuine consultation, engagement and delivery of services that meet our local youth needs.”

Council voices: City of Greater Bendigo



“Although we already listen to the voice of young people in our community with the Integrated Strategic Planning approach as outlined in the Local Government Act we will capture their voice in every aspect of the planning process through a variety of community engagement approaches including deliberative engagement forums with adults and youth.”

Kristy Bennett

City of Greater Bendigo
– Community Wellbeing Officer – Early Years

“I’m excited for the opportunity for children’s voices to be embedded and heard through the development of our community vision, council plan, and health and wellbeing plan. I think this partnership will support and validate the importance of Greater Bendigo’s children to be more clearly heard in decisions that affect them and their future.”

“It will provide opportunities for us to network with other local government areas and share ideas methods and collateral of capturing the views and experiences of children authentically. It’s something I have been passionate about for many years, and.

This project, which targets the 0–12 year old age cohort will provide vital information to inform long-term deliverables for the plan. I’m confident that children will identify valuable key priorities and objectives for the future Health and Wellbeing Plan through various methods of engagement. Emphasis will be placed on capturing the voices of children from a broad demographic, ensuring it reflects Greater Bendigo’s diversity. ”

Fast-track councils

VicHealth is working closely with a number of councils who are dedicated to making healthy changes with and for children and young people in their communities. These councils represent a range of rural, regional and outer-metropolitan localities.

Mildura Rural City – Vibrant Futures Through Healthy Bodies and Minds

Young people in Mildura want to see more opportunities to participate in physical activity and other pursuits.

Mildura has established a community partnership approach to realising the vision of being ‘a connected community, where families matter and children thrive’ by having the community take ownership in building local projects. ‘Vibrant Futures’ will contribute to the established partnership and enhance the focus on community connection through physical and other health activities specifically for young people aged 10 to 18.

Northern Grampians Shire – Ready For Life: Early Years in the Northern Grampians Shire

Northern Grampians will focus their work in the partnership on children aged 0 to 8, knowing health and wellbeing through this stage directly impacts life course, particularly in mental wellbeing. As a small rural council, the Northern Grampians community can face limited resources to drive the changes they need and will emphasise local relationships with children’s health and education services to release their goals for this project and give their kids the best possible future.

Southern Grampians Shire - CONNECT YOUTH

Southern Grampians envisions that the voice of young people should inform council decisions at all levels and that engagement is authentic allowing a diverse range of voices to be heard. Through this partnership they will engage youth effectively in their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan development, action development, and importantly implementation of actions for better outcomes through a systems approach. The importance of working with and for youth will drive Southern Grampians approach.

Glenelg Shire – Integrate Glenelg

Glenelg will achieve a whole-of-shire integrated approach, improving the health and wellbeing of our children and young people. Building on a strong community-led model in Portland and Casterton, this partnership allows expansion into Heywood. Glenelg’s approach will be driven by systems thinking, reflecting the underlying influences on complex issues and ensuring greater impact.

City of Ballarat - Creating environments and opportunities for healthy tweens in Ballarat

Ballarat’s vision is for a community where all children are healthy and engaged with opportunity to thrive. Through this partnership, Ballarat will have a special focus on the 8-13 years cohort, aiming to increase opportunities, services and linkages with existing efforts in the early years and older teen years, to support them right through their early life course.

Colac Otway Shire - Vocal, Young & Local!

Colac Otway are dedicated to provide meaningful chances for children and young people to shape their opportunities for health and wellbeing, and to be treated as the experts of their own lives.

Using a partnership approach to integrate services across health promotion, community, and youth engagement, Colac Otway will challenge the far-reaching inequities that stem from having some of the highest rates of disadvantage in the state and increase their capacity for prevention and health promotion.

Buloke Shire - Strong Young People, Strong Communities

The Strong Young People, Strong Communities project will use a collective impact model, aligning core partners in the region to focus on young people who face additional barriers in this geographic location. Buloke embed an approach of listening and responding to concerns expressed by communities across Buloke, and address the gaps reflected in the disadvantage they see through their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-23.

Central Goldfields Shire - Children and Young People First

This partnership will drive the ambition to make Central Goldfields Shire the best place in Australia for kids to grow up. This project is founded in a recognition that we can only shift the dial by working together, thinking strategically, sharing power between government and community, and playing the long game. This project will embody Central Goldfield’s ambition and contribution to the transformational change our community deserves.

City of Greater Bendigo - Imagine Greater Bendigo: A child-friendly vision for our future

Greater Bendigo’s vision is to ensure children’s voices are heard in development and implementation of their community vision, council plan and health and wellbeing plans. With enduring inequities, we need a refresh to centre children’s voices, align our efforts and reflect contemporary prevention and health promotion practice.

Greater Bendigo will achieve their vision by applying and equity lens and driving for meaningful participation through respecting and responding to children’s priorities.

Greater Shepparton City Council - VicHealth Local Government Partnership

Greater Shepparton’s strategic plans for their community speak to developing resilient, inclusive healthy communities that makes Greater Shepparton a safe and harmonious place to live, work, learn and play.

Greater Shepparton will work alongside children, young people and their families to co-design local solutions to address three main priorities; healthy eating, physical activity and mental wellbeing. Youth led engagement is critical to Greater Shepparton’s vision for young people to become the advocates of the work, co-design the actions associated with it, and have ownership of the programs and activities. This provides an avenue for young people to develop a passion and lifelong commitment to community engagement and volunteering.

Hume City Council - Hume City Council Children and Young People Partnership

Hume recognises children and young people as valuable contributors to the community, and are committed to empower and support them to thrive and to attain the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes for now and later in life. Hume’s vision is founded in the knowledge that the best outcomes for children and young people are achieved within communities and families which have strong economic, natural, built and social environments.

This project provides Hume an opportunity to further invest in localised place-based initiatives led by children and young people which can provide healthy environments and better outcomes at a community level.

East Gippsland Shire - Hearing our Voice

East Gippsland will focus on a coordinated and collaborative approach dedicated to children young people’s health and wellbeing. Communities in East Gippsland have faced traumatic drought and bushfire and are working to reconnect with those who have been hit hardest. East Gippsland will use a site-based approach to build on the strengths and networks present in local communities.

Wellington Shire - Wellington Ways to Wellness

Wellington’s children and young people, when authentically engaged, are loud and proud advocates of the message held within the projects they are included in. Wellington will apply the Five Ways to Wellbeing approach. Under the partnership, projects designed and led by children and young people which will call for cultural change in the Wellington community – shifting their common understanding and focus on mental illness to one of mental wellbeing with an understanding of protective factors available to us all.

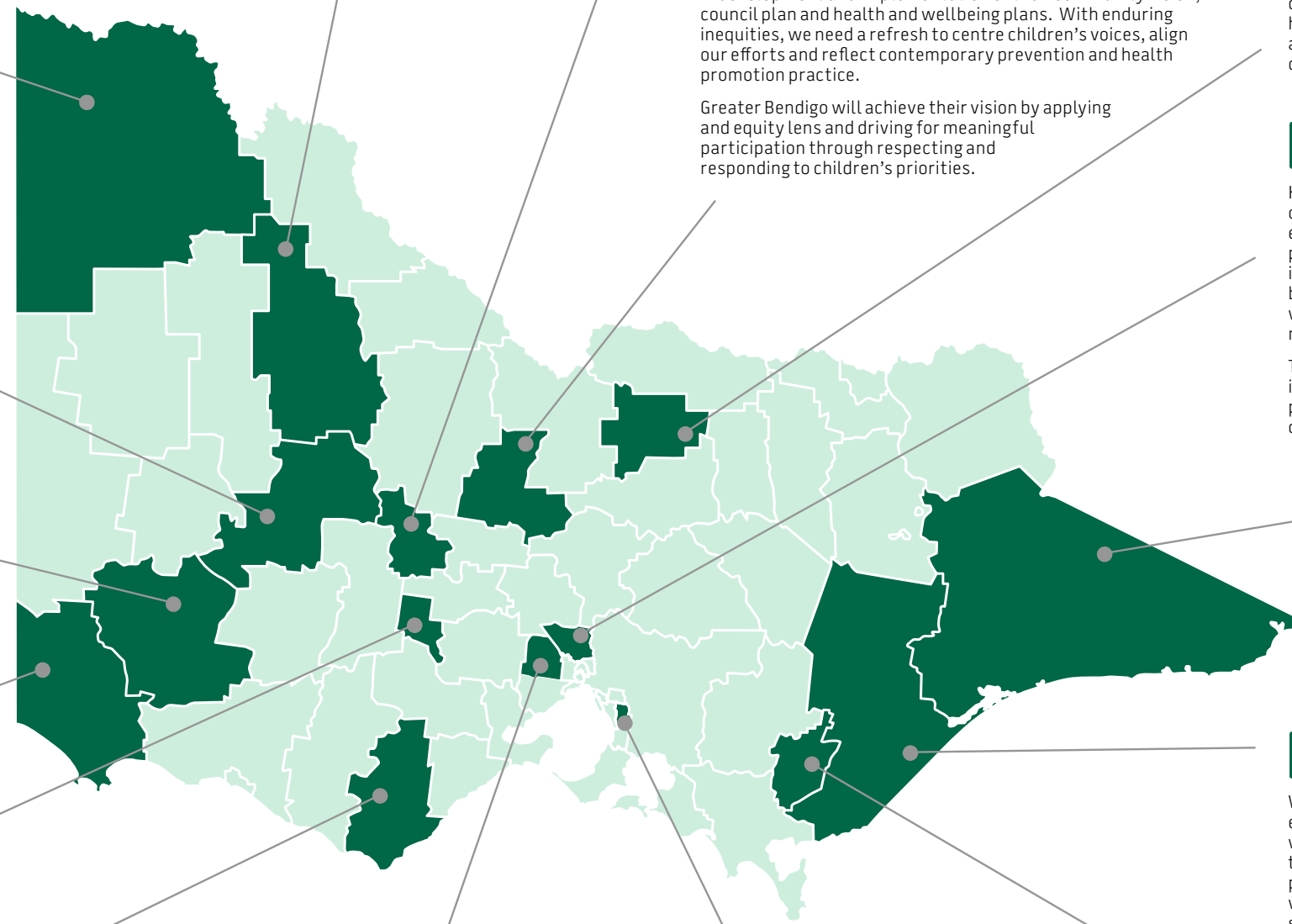
City of Greater Dandenong – Healthy Children and Young People Greater Dandenong

Through this partnership, Greater Dandenong seeks to engage and strengthen community partnerships using a systems-approach to implement the children and youth actions of the municipal health and wellbeing plan.

Children and young people will have a voice in the planning and delivery of the Greater Dandenong Council Plan 2021-25 with the aim of creating a safe and vibrant city of opportunity for all –to visit, work, live and play.

Latrobe City Council - Children and Young People Living Well in Latrobe

Latrobe recognises that the first years of life are formative and adolescence is a significant period for growth and change. That’s why it’s critical to capture the voices of children and young people and empower them to be involved in their health and improving the future. Through this partnership, Latrobe will build relationships with children and young people, utilise existing local partnerships with schools, children and youth organisations, explore underutilised engagement opportunities and undertake creative approaches to engagement to suit different ages and settings.



Melton City Council – Children & Young People in the City of Melton

Melton is committed to prioritising the children and young people of our community by asking them how their council can improve their health and wellbeing, listening and ensuring their voices are included in the planning and delivery of the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25. Melton is a young, fast growing municipality a higher proportion of children than Greater Melbourne.

Melton will apply a cross organisational approach that will see the strategic alignment of each department’s focus on children and young people and to build the health promotion capacity of staff.

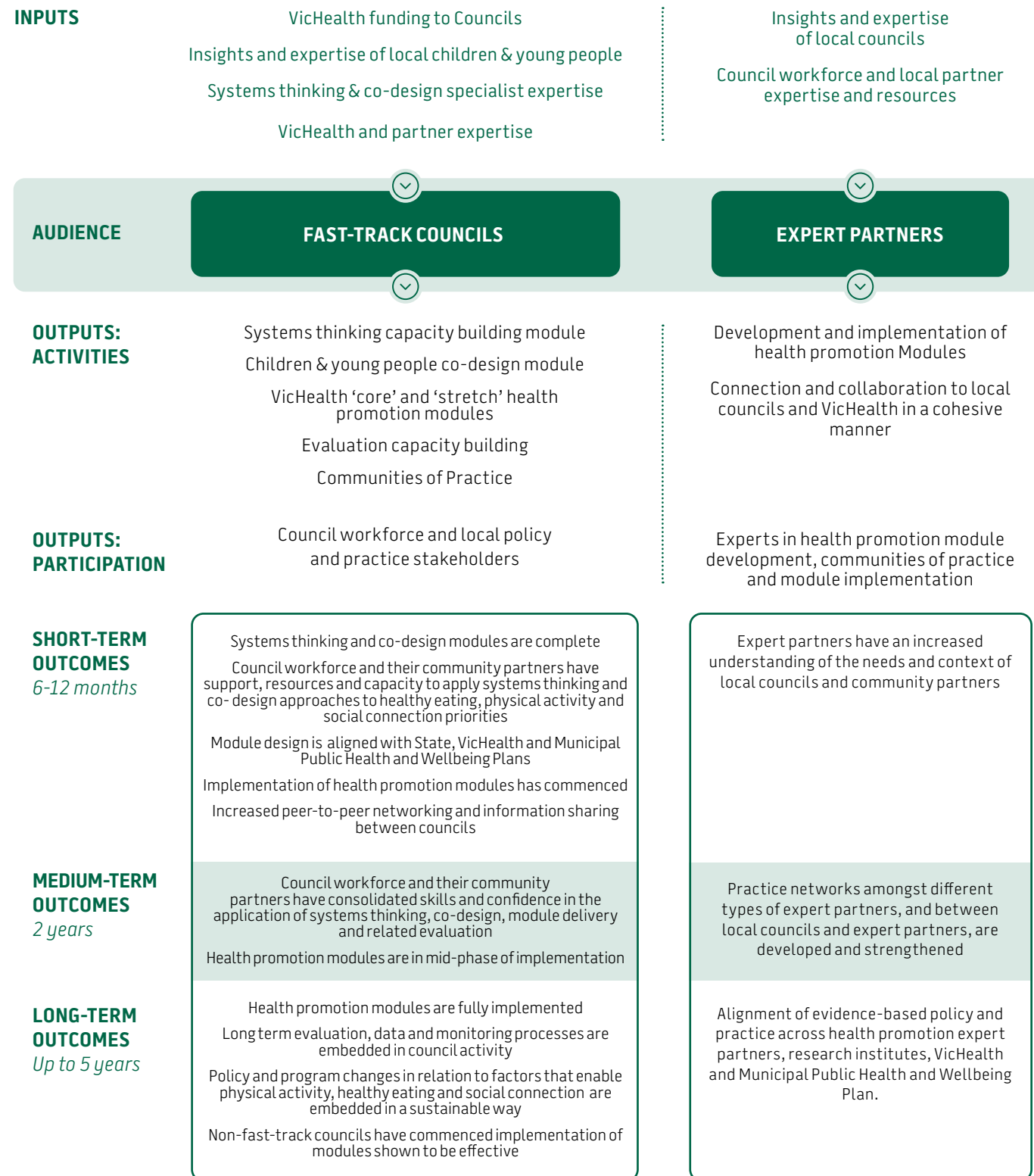
What does success look like?

VicHealth's Local Government Partnership will work toward short, medium and long-term outcomes to make real change with and for children and young people in their communities.

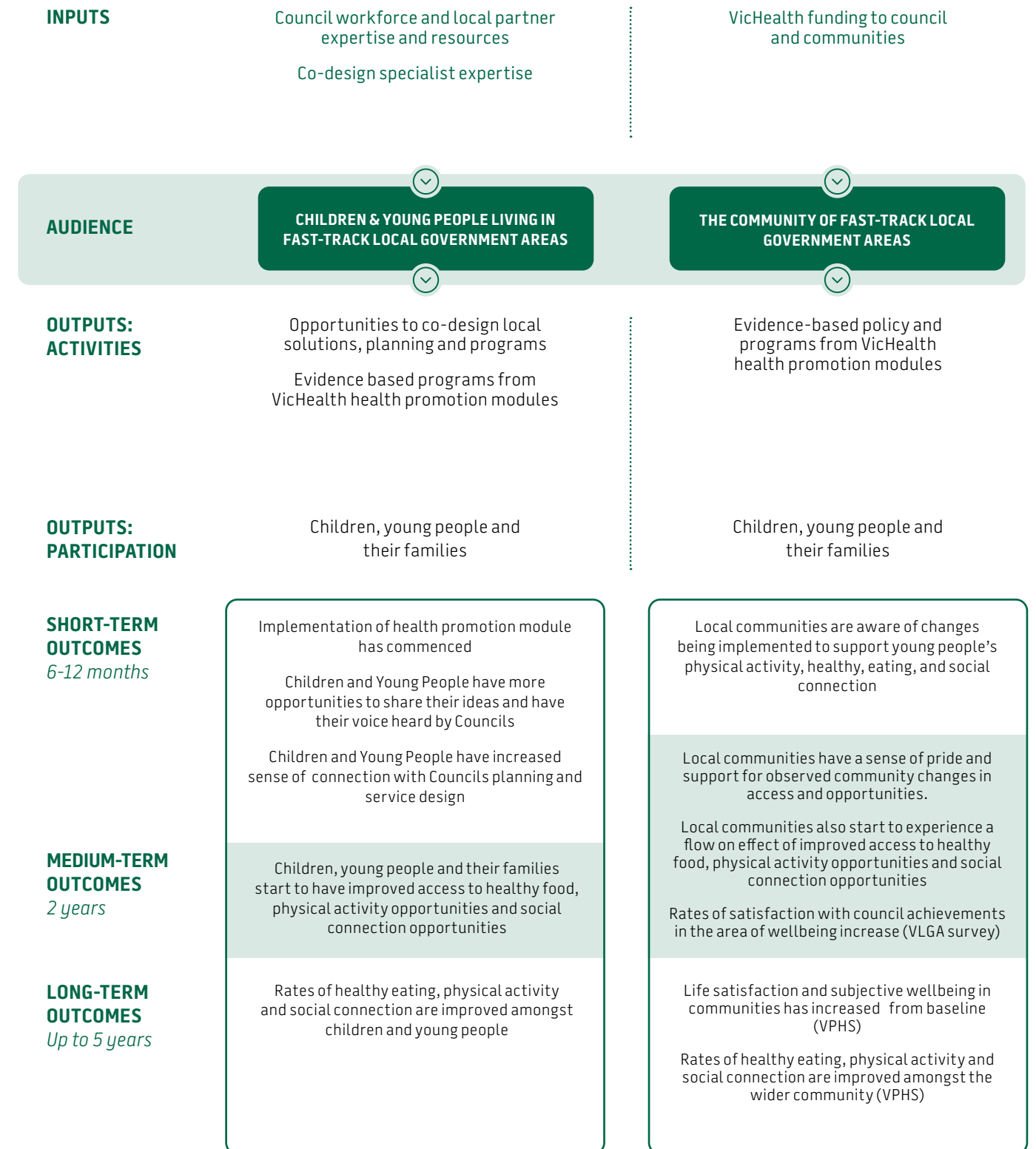
A linked evaluation process is being delivered alongside this partnership, which will measure key outcomes.

TABLE 1: What does success look like?

Improvement in the rates of healthy eating, physical activity and social connection amongst young people aged 0-25 by 2026



Problem statement: Children and Young people aged 0-25 are more vulnerable to inadequacies in the food system, have inadequate access to suitable physical activity opportunities, and have inadequate exposure to suitable social and physical environments that enable social connection



Council voices: Latrobe City Council



“The partnership will assist us in giving children and young people a voice in creating the Latrobe City they grown up in.”

Liam Bantock

Coordinator Active & Liveable Communities
Latrobe City Council

“I am excited by the opportunity the partnership presents for us to engage with best practice in health and wellbeing planning. The sharing of knowledge, innovative ideas and resources will support us to deliver great outcomes for our community.”

“Our key objective at Latrobe City Council is to embed health and wellbeing planning in the centre of all that we do. Engaging children and young people in the design and delivery of the plan will ensure that their voices are prioritised. They aren’t the leaders of tomorrow – they are leaders today!”

“Latrobe City is in the midst of an economic transition. The community has been very clear that health and wellbeing has to be at the centre of any transition planning and advocacy.”

Council voices: Central Goldfields Shire Council



I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting Central Goldfields Shire Council, children, young people, key partners, and the broader community through the provision of this funding.

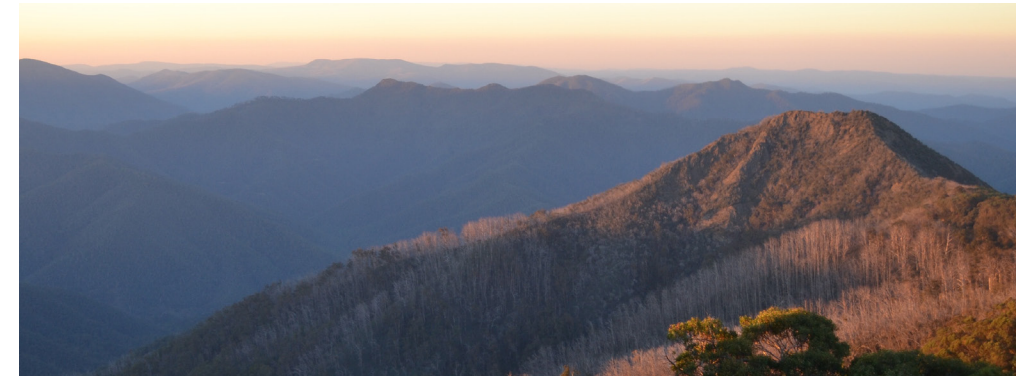
LUCY ROFFEY

CEO Central Goldfields Shire Council

“As CEO, I would like to express Central Goldfields Shire Council’s commitment to this important initiative and partnership with VicHealth. We will work to focus on the needs of children and young people in Central Goldfields and the key domains required for them to live safe, healthy, and confident lives.”

“I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes of this initiative and the inclusion of actions in our Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25. I am excited about working with our partners to shift the dial on health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in Central Goldfields.”

Funding and capacity building to strengthen local workforce



Councils oversee a wide range of policies, programs, services and facilities that are essential to people’s daily lives. Health promoting decisions and actions applied at a local government level have the potential to result in significant health and wellbeing improvements by ensuring people’s surroundings offer options for healthy, connected and active living.

Across Victoria, the availability of dedicated staff or resources to capitalise on this potential varies widely. Often, communities already facing an uphill battle have limited resources to dedicate toward investments that would improve health. These challenges are further compounded by few opportunities for peer-to-peer learning to develop and retain skilled health promotion workers.

VicHealth will direct funding and capacity building resources to councils to increase the size and skills of local health promotion workforces.

The Partnership model is designed to embed project staff within supportive teams, and ensure that council leaders, partners and officers are part of the workforce development journey. We will provide networking and peer-to-peer learning opportunities between our council partners across rural, regional and outer metropolitan localities.

Our investment includes direct funding for partner councils to invest in their local workforce, with ongoing opportunities to access programmatic funding aligned to local priorities.

Evidence-based health promotion modules

The health promotion modules are toolkits that consolidate best-practice methodology, evidence and case studies to inform the planning and implementation of enhanced, equitable health policy, and practice changes tailored to councils.

Together with councils and expert partners, VicHealth’s Local Government Partnership will bring together research and experience to inform impact streams and key actions. These will provide specific policy and practice changes for councils to embed to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Victoria. The modules provide theoretical and practical guidance on the implementation of key actions.

Each module has a number of impact streams with key policy and program asks. There are three types of modules:



Foundation modules provide the basic building blocks to develop staff capabilities and skills in systems-based thinking and in children and young people-led engagement and planning. Foundation modules are focused on supporting effective engagement of children and young people’s voices in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans 2021–2025 and setting up mechanisms that enable their continued involvement in the implementation of their plans.



Core modules provide the best practice policy and implementation guidance for councils in 3 priority areas to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people:

- Building active communities
- Creating connected and supportive communities
- Building better food systems for healthier communities



Stretch modules are an additional (optional) component of the partnership. Stretch modules can also be completed in isolation. Stretch modules focus on:

- Strengthening tobacco control at a local level
- Increasing alcohol harm prevention at a local level
- Promoting everyday creativity at a local level

The modules will be made available to all 79 councils; however, the impact streams within the Foundation and Core modules must be delivered by the fast-track councils to meet the requirements of the partnership.

Evidence-based health promotion modules



TABLE A: Foundation modules

| Module: Leading the way – engaging young voices for change | | Module: Connecting the dots – creating solutions for lasting change | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Impact stream | Implementation actions | Impact stream | Implementation actions |
| Better solutions shaped by children and young people | Including children and young people in policy creation | Big picture thinking for better solutions | Understanding systems thinking approaches |
| | Including children and young people in planning | | Actioning new systems thinking approaches |



TABLE B: Core modules

| Module: Building active communities | | Module: Building better food systems for healthier communities | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Impact stream | Implementation actions | Impact stream | Implementation actions |
| Increasing opportunities for walking and bike riding | Increasing active opportunities to and from school | Creating better food systems through council policy | Promoting healthy food policy in council practice. |
| | Including walking and bike riding in council policy | | Embedding healthy food options in policy and council owned and operated places |
| Increasing inclusive sport and active recreation | Creating opportunities for all Victorians to be active | Protecting community from harmful food and drink industries | Using Healthy Rewards and Sponsorships in Community Activities |
| | Including gender equity in council sport and recreation policy | | Enabling Healthy Partnerships |
| | Empowering and enabling women to get active through local promotion of This Girl Can - Victoria | | |
| Module: Creating connected and supportive communities | | | |
| Impact stream | Implementation actions | | |
| Improving young people’s resilience and connection | Young people co-design for better community wellbeing | | |
| Building a proud and inclusive community | Building proud and inclusive community practices | | |
| Embedding primary prevention for mentally healthy communities | Addressing social determinants of mental wellbeing | | |

Evidence-based health promotion modules



TABLE C: Stretch modules

Module: Strengthening tobacco control at a local level

| Impact stream | Implementation actions |
|---|---|
| Enabling Smoke Free Communities Program | Ensuring council owned and operated places are smoke free |

Module: Increasing alcohol harm prevention at a local level

| Impact stream | Implementation actions |
|--|---|
| Preventing Alcohol Harm at the Local Level | Adopting alcohol harm prevention actions to protect children and young people |

Module: Promoting everyday creativity at a local level

| Impact stream | Implementation actions |
|---|---|
| Improving everyday creativity opportunities for more Victorians | Embedding diversity and inclusion through council-led creative strategies Increasing opportunities to participate in creative and inclusive programs |

Collaborating with expert partners

VicHealth’s Local Government Partnership will bring together the expertise of Victorian universities, peak bodies and health promoting organisations to build the knowledge and practice of the fast-track councils in health promotion processes and priorities.

These expert partners will variously contribute knowledge of best-practice interventions, support the delivery of capacity building and communities of practice, and provide advice and support.

Deakin University’s Institute for Health Transformation is a key partner and will support systems thinking capacity building and practices in 13 of the identified partner councils.

Other expert partners include:



VicHealth would also like to acknowledge that the Bicycle Network, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Multicultural Arts Victoria, Play Australia and Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities are partners in the development of the health promotion modules.

Fostering peer learning through communities of practice

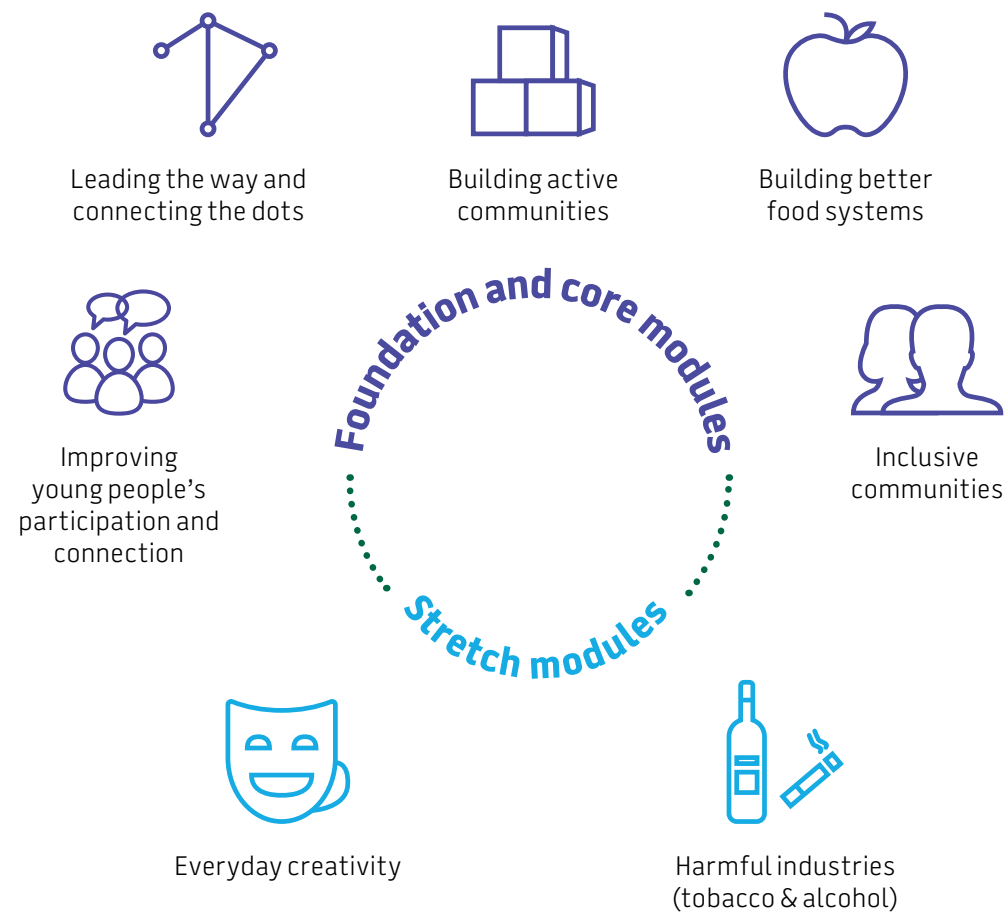
Communities of practice are a notable feature of VicHealth’s Local Government Partnership. They are critical in providing fast-track councils with both peer-to-peer and expert partner support during the implementation of the health promotion modules.

Communities of practice will be facilitated by expert partners, including leading Victorian universities, the Municipal Association of Victoria, and key agencies and peak bodies with specialist industry knowledge.

As well as offering practical and strategic guidance to the councils, they will foster collaboration and the sharing of case studies, ideas, knowledge and learnings.

The fast-track councils represent a wide geographical spread across Victoria. They differ in workforce capability and capacity, population and diversity. Our partnership model is designed to cater to this – the implementation of the actions from the health promotion modules will be unique to each council.

VicHealth’s Local Government Partnership will offer the following communities of practice for fast-track councils:



Further Information

Stay up to date with the VicHealth Local Government Partnership.

Visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/local-government-partnership

For further information or enquiries, contact our Local Government team at lgp@vichealth.vic.gov.au or phone on 03 9667 1333.



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VicHealth is committed to health equity, which means levelling the playing field between people who can easily access good health and people who face barriers, to achieve the highest level of health for *everyone*.



VicHealth acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

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VicHealth acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land. We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and future.