

Collaborating for Impact C4I

COUNCIL NAME

Waverley Council

WEB ADDRESS

waverley.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

9 square kilometres

POPULATION

74,114

Overview

Waverley Council's Collaborating for Impact (C4I) program has increased the collective capacity of 10 environmental groups to mobilise community action around litter prevention and waste avoidance. A 'Collective Impact' framework was used to collaboratively design, implement and evaluate environment groups' waste education activities to strengthen their capabilities and develop their skills to engage the community.

Background

Replicability/Leadership

Waverley's Community Strategic Plan and Environmental Action Plan outline strategies to progress to a zero-waste community. The council recognised that environmental education activities could not be designed and delivered with low levels of community engagement as this led to duplication of efforts, misunderstandings, high levels of investment with little return, competition and sometimes conflict for resources and support from Council. This was identified through monitoring and evaluation of council's Eco-wise workshops program and feedback from staff and environmental groups. The council recognised the need to work better with the community to unleash innovative thinking to overcome challenges and mobilise resources.

Objectives

C4I aims to engage with and walk alongside environmental community groups operating locally. C4I aims to support the development of collective capacity of the groups (Partners) to form working relationships with other organisations to achieve better environmental objectives and increase active community engagement around environmental sustainability. The program aims to provide opportunities for collaboration between the Partners, including Council as the backbone organisation, to gain, strengthen and maintain capabilities and processes to deliver environmental objectives.

Implementation

C4I was implemented through a partnership approach to waste education with 10 community organisations: Responsible Runners, Happy Fish, Plastic Free Bronte, Plastic Free Bondi, Seaside Scavenge, Protect Our One, Transition Bondi, Wilderness Society Eastern Suburbs branch, Waverley Council and Boomerang Bags Eastern Suburbs. Council is a partner and backbone organisation.

C4I was identified through research to be the most appropriate framework to target environmental community groups and Waverley residents. Key stakeholders were identified via a stakeholder analysis, focused on revisiting the history of working together, clarifying misconceptions, mapping networks and resources and identifying strengths and constraints. This provided a 'fresh start' based on a better understanding of how partners operate and their capacities. A common vision was then developed for the program and the skills and knowledge needs of partners were assessed. Education activities targeting single-use plastics, litter and waste avoidance were collaboratively designed, implemented and evaluated. Council helped coordinate resources and facilitated capacity building and training opportunities including grant writing, strategic planning and project management.

An independent evaluation was undertaken that showed C4I was a success and can be duplicated in other key areas where there is a groundswell of community interest such as climate change. Council is currently scaling up the approach across the Eastern Suburbs, linking groups operating in Randwick and Woollahra Councils through a series of capacity building gatherings.

With an investment of just over \$15,000 a year, C4I has leveraged volunteer value in-kind of over \$25,000 for waste education activities (a five-fold increase in this value is estimated if considering time spent beyond planning meetings). Funding is secured until June 2021 with hopes to leverage and extend funding in future for a broader range of activities.

Outcomes

C4I is evaluated yearly with each activity evaluated against SMART objectives and indicators. An independent evaluation of the program completed late 2019 confirmed C4I increased the groups and the community's capacity to be active participants in achieving sustainability outcomes and directly supported the delivery of Council's Community Strategic Plan and Environmental Action Plan's waste objectives. Outcomes included:

- Capacity of partners to work collaboratively and strategically towards common objectives was built. 96% of partners reported an increased capacity to network and work together, 91% developed additional skills to engage with the community, and over 85% reported increased ability to achieve their organisation's objectives.
- Capacity of the community to live sustainably was built with 9 environmental education activities collaboratively designed and implemented in 2019-2020 bringing total activities since inception in 2018 to 20 and number of residents engaged to over 3,500.
- Increased community engagement by 343%, for example. from 159 to 716 attendees at Plastic Free July from 2019 to 2020 and 200 to 800 attendees at Summerama from 2019 to 2020.
- Volunteer value in-kind of over \$25,000 for educational activities was leveraged, based on the hours dedicated to planning meetings only. A five-fold increase is estimated if considering hours partners contributed to all C4I activities.

The council is now exploring the C4I model with neighbouring councils.

Key Learnings

Using a robust and structured framework for engagement helped bridge the gap between the fluid nature of community groups and the bureaucratic nature of local government. Dedicating time to revisit the history of working together, having 'hard conversations' around capabilities, limitations and aspirations created trust, accountability and commitment to the program. Being flexible and committing to a common agenda created a shared sense of responsibility towards solving environmental problems beyond the traditional approach where Council funds or implements isolated solutions. However, being unable to direct the program was challenging for Council and required new levels of flexibility and faith in the community. Balancing the level of support provided to community groups with their ability to deliver was key.

With strong levels of trust and robust functioning networks C4I has adapted to changing circumstances. Covid-19 hasn't stopped C4I members from collaboratively developing 10 innovative activities for this year's Plastic Free July, albeit online. C4I is a widely scalable and transferable program with potential to grow by involving more partners and exploring other complex environmental issues, such as climate change and resilience.

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**This project was the 2020 winner of the Behaviour Change in Waste Award
at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards**