

# BANKWEST FOUNDATION

## Social Impact Series

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

---

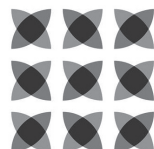
Issue #3  
October 2015

### **Measuring the difference we make:**

The state-of-play of outcomes measurement in  
the community sector in Western Australia

Sarah Adams, Paul Flatau,  
Kaylene Zaretzky, Dianne McWilliam  
and Jessica Smith

The University of Western Australia  
Centre for Social Impact



**CENTRE**  
*for* **SOCIAL**  
**IMPACT**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WESTERN**  
**AUSTRALIA**

The Bankwest Foundation has partnered with the University of Western Australia Centre for Social Impact (UWA CSI) to undertake a research program **Supporting Development and Growth in the Community Sector in Western Australia**. The aim of the research program is to increase our understanding of the difference community programs make to the lives of Western Australians and what factors enhance the resilience and long-term financial viability of Western Australia's emerging social enterprise sector. Improving the evidence base on the measurement of the outcomes of community programs and of the financial sustainability of Western Australia's social enterprises will support growth and innovation in the community sector and build community resilience. Outcomes of the research program are delivered through the Bankwest Foundation **Social Impact Series** and through community workshops and forums. This paper is the third paper in the **Social Impact Series**, and focuses on the **experiences of community organisations and their funders with outcomes measurement in Western Australia**.

**Citation:** Adams, S., Flatau, P., Zaretsky K., McWilliam, D. & Smith, J. (2015) Measuring the difference we make: The state-of-play of outcomes measurement in the community sector in Western Australia, Bankwest Foundation Social Impact Series, No. 3, Bankwest Foundation, Western Australia.

Sarah Adams is a senior researcher with the UWA CSI and PhD Candidate at The University of New South Wales. Paul Flatau is Director of the UWA CSI and leads the Supporting Development and Growth in the Community Sector in Western Australia research program with the Bankwest Foundation. Kaylene Zaretsky is a senior researcher at the UWA CSI. Jessica Smith and Dianne McWilliam are research assistants at the UWA CSI.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors thank the participants of stakeholder discussions for sharing their insight and experiences of outcomes measurement in Western Australia. We also thank the UWA CSI team for their logistical and administrative support.





# INTRODUCTION

This is the third publication from the Bankwest Foundation **Social Impact Series**, and the second report in the research stream of **Measuring Outcomes for Impact in the Western Australia Community Sector**. The previous report (Issue 1) of this research stream explored the international experience with outcomes measurement, and the context for outcomes measurement in the community sector in Western Australia. The Western Australia community sector covers areas as diverse as housing, community mental health, disability support services, drug and alcohol services, homelessness, and child protection services. In other words, the community sector covers all areas of individual, family and human social need across a broad range of human service domains.

The term ‘outcomes measurement’ refers to the measurement of the difference that an initiative, program or organisation makes to the lives of people they engage with. Outcomes measurement provides evidence on whether initiatives, programs and organisations are making a difference to the lives of people they serve. It is an important basis of learning within organisations of what works and what doesn’t work. Outcomes measurement also provides the foundation stone for evaluation, strategic planning and good governance, and is critical to good decision-making in respect of the appropriate allocation of resources by funders.

This report extends our previous Bankwest Foundation research and investigates the experiences of on-the-ground community organisations, government and philanthropic funders of community service organisations, and community sector peak bodies with outcomes measurement in Western Australia. This is particularly important in Western Australia as recent regulatory reform has placed outcomes measurement firmly on the agenda for all Western Australia departments, agencies and the organisations they work with.

**This study finds outcomes measurement at a tipping point in Western Australia.** Our mapping of outcomes measurement in Western Australia and consultations with community sector stakeholders in Western Australia suggest not simply a growing interest in outcomes measurement and a broad appetite for progress and change, but that community sector organisations, big and small, as well as funders, are implementing or seeking to implement a systematic, well-grounded outcomes measurement framework in their organisations and through their funding programs. Community organisations and the funders of programs are also moving towards more strategic use of the outputs of outcomes measurement and connecting measurement with strategy and performance improvement.

But our consultations also point to the fact that community sector organisations and funders are struggling with outcomes measurement, and facing critical barriers at the organisational and systems levels that are impeding progress. The key themes that arose from our mapping of outcomes measurement in the community sector and stakeholder discussions with community sector organisations are represented in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Key struggles and barriers of outcomes measurement**

Struggles

- Articulating outcomes
- Integration with strategy
- Being systematic across diverse programs
- Using existing data
- Meaningful participation
- Estimating cost/benefit

Barriers

**Organisation Level**

- Internal capacity
- Funding
- Engagement of staff
- Client and service diversity

**System Level**

- Expectations of quality
- Fragmented funding
- Data access
- Timing of outcomes
- Exclusivity
- Inconsistent language



The report concludes by putting forward a series of ideas to start an on-going conversation of the future direction of outcomes measurement policy and practice in Western Australia. We also look forward to the first major Australian survey on outcomes measurement in the community sector, which will be conducted as part of the present research program and are seeking the participation of Western Australian community sector organisations and funders in the survey.

This report is based on the mapping of outcomes measurement in the community sector in Western Australia and a series of discussion groups conducted with community sector stakeholders in Perth in August 2015. A total of 27 community sector leaders participated in the discussion groups. Participants ranged from managers and CEOs of community sector not-for-profit organisations (both large and small) to peak bodies representing different parts of the community sector to state government departments and agencies, and philanthropic funders of community services. The discussions with stakeholders were semi-structured and based around six key topic areas:

- Outcomes, outcome measures and experiences.
- Outcomes measurement practices and methodologies.
- Strategic uses, integration and benefits of outcomes measurement.
- Barriers, challenges, and funding of outcomes measurement.
- Practical context and policy environment in Western Australia.
- Opportunities for change and support mechanisms.

Research was conducted in compliance with UWA Human Ethics protocol RA/4/1/7233. Our analysis approach draws from applied thematic analysis as outlined in Guest, Macqueen, & Namey (2012), and was performed using NVivo.

## SECTION ONE:

### THE OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT CONTEXT

#### What does outcomes measurement mean in the Western Australia context?

The term 'outcomes measurement' is commonly used but what exactly does it mean? And what does it mean in the Western Australia community sector context? Of all the issues we pose in this paper, this is the perhaps the easiest to address and on which we found clear consensus. Broadly speaking, outcomes measurement is the measurement of the difference that an initiative, program or organisation makes to the lives of people they engage with. Participants in the stakeholder consultations provided a consistent understanding of what outcomes measurement meant to them, which was consistent with this simple, but fundamental definition. The following two quotes show how participants see outcomes measurement:

*"Seeing if some program, or system is achieving what it sets out to achieve"*

**[Representative from a state government department]**

*"What we're doing and whether we're making a difference"*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**



In defining outcomes measurement, community sector leaders and funders were clear to connect these statements on what outcomes measurement is with the context in which outcomes measurement takes place and its role in the community sector. As one participant in our stakeholder engagement sessions said: “measuring outcomes is easy to say – but there needs to be more around it” [Representative from a peak body].

Our mapping of outcomes measurement in the Western Australian community sector in our stakeholder discussions point to two processes critical to effective outcomes measurement. First, that outcomes measurement is part of a broader practice of outcomes activity, which includes evaluation and strategic planning, and second, outcomes measurement takes place at different levels including the service, program, system and population level.

### 1. Outcomes measurement is part of a broader practice

First, outcomes measurement must be understood as part of a broader process of both strategy and learning within an organisation. This means ensuring that outcomes measurement is connected with the purpose or intent of the organisation, and connected with its strategies, targets and other performance measurement. This is important to ensuring that outcomes measurement is meaningful to an organisation (Liket & Maas 2014). Are outcomes targets front and centre in strategic plans? Do board meetings of community sector organisations focus on reviewing consumer and client outcome reports or do they get bogged down in process questions and day-to-day management issues? We have yet to gain a full understanding of where we sit with respect to these questions at the present time but they will figure in our large scale survey of community sector organisations in Western Australia.

One of the points made in stakeholder discussions was that there is a need to link and embed outcomes measurement within a broader organisational context:

*“In terms of all this outcomes stuff, I think there’s been a piece missing... We need to stand back from it a bit, because I often see that organisations haven’t even mapped their processes. We want them to [measure] outcomes, and choose an instrument, but they don’t know how to [begin]. Unless you’ve done that process mapping around what you are doing, you [can’t measure]!”*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

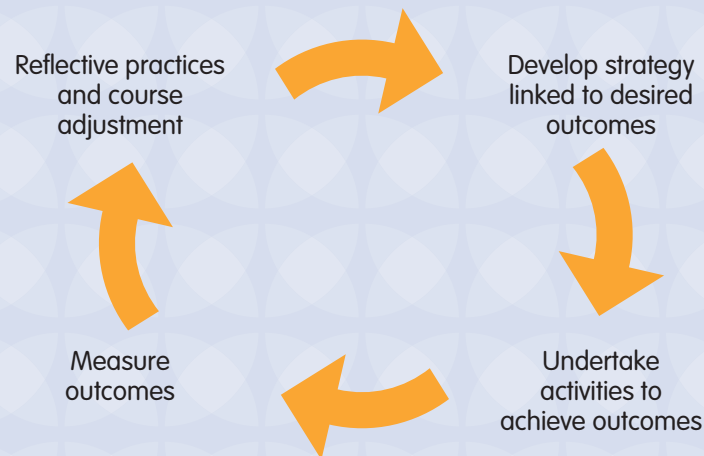
Outcomes measurement also needs to be connected with service provision, allowing organisations to respond and adjust to emerging evidence about the outcomes being achieved by their clients and consumers.

*“When you think outcomes measurement, you think of the end of the process, saying is this a good program, did it do what we wanted it to do? That’s the most important thing. But I think it can be part of the whole process, so if you have an outcomes framework as you are going through, you’ve got measurement that allows you to say - should we make changes now? Rather than getting to the end and seeing if that was successful or not”*

**[Representative from a non-government funder]**

The views of community sector leaders and funders resonate with emerging guidance on best practice, including that reflected in the Impact Practice proposed in the UK based around the ideas of ‘Plan-Do-Reflect-Improve’ (National Council of Volunteer Organisations, 2013). We referred to this practice in our first Social Impact Series paper (Flatau et al. 2015), but it bears repeating again here as shown in Figure 2, (next page):

Figure 2: Outcomes Practice



Understanding outcomes measurement in this way helps to ensure that outcomes measurement is not a stand-alone or ‘snapshot’ process, but rather part of a system aimed at articulating and achieving improved outcomes requiring strategic focus at the board, funder and broader organisational level.

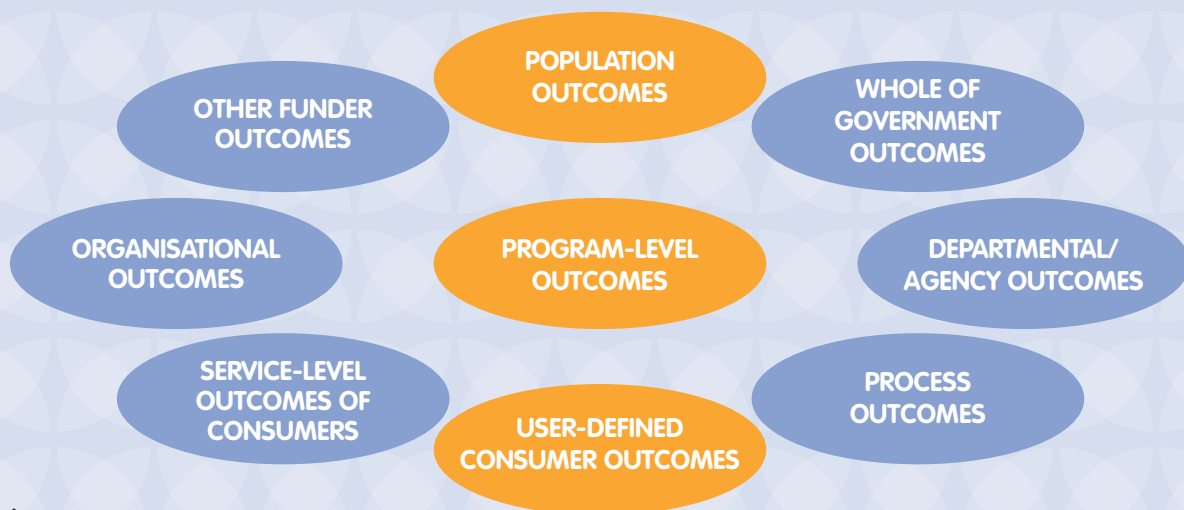
## 2. Clarity on the level at which outcomes are measured

Second, the consultations with community stakeholders highlighted the need for clarity around the level at which outcomes should be measured. Figure 3 below suggests a possible hierarchy of outcomes measurement:

- Outcomes determined and reported by the individual consumer themselves (what does success look like for them);
- Outcomes achieved by clients at an individual service level (which should include, but be not limited to reported improvements in consumer-defined and measured change);
- Program level outcomes (client outcomes aggregated across different services in different organisations);
- Organisational outcomes (client outcomes aggregated across different services within an organisation);
- Outcomes achieved by government departments and other funders which may be extended to all-of-government outcomes achieved across funding departments;
- Population outcomes (outcomes of the entire population and not simply those in social programs or initiatives).

Figure 3: Hierarchy of outcomes measurement

Society Level  
↑  
↓  
Individual Level





In theory, and other than at the final level of the hierarchy (i.e., population outcomes), outcomes can be specified and measured at different levels and be able to be aggregated so that higher level outcomes can be understood as the product of lower level outcomes measurement. While this represents an ideal, in reality the practice of defining, setting and measuring outcomes can be less structured leading to broken links between lower-level and higher-order outcomes and what that means for systems-wide impact (Reed et al. 2014; Willems et al. 2014). One of the participants pointed to the challenges they have faced in the public sector working with higher-order outcomes:

*"In government it becomes very complex and unwieldy very quickly because you have about eight layers from high level outcomes down to program outcomes that all nest and relate to one another. It becomes so unwieldy that everyone just gives up... I think program level information is way more useful than trying to do it on an aggregate level. We struggled for many years trying to do it at an aggregate level. It becomes so generic, or so complicated that it just becomes too difficult."*

**[Representative from a state government department]**

To ensure that outcomes measurement properly links between different levels of the hierarchy (to build the Western Australia outcomes measurement architecture) requires coordinated design action on the part of the many stakeholders engaged in that work. As one stakeholder observed at our stakeholder engagement sessions:

*"I think it is important to keep an eye not only on if things are changing over time, but also between components of a system... Is an individual program translating to the systemic change you want? More often or not, isolated pockets of activity create outcomes on an individual level but on a systemic level it's not adding up to any progress."*

**[Representative from a state government department]**

One of the key issues in relation to the level at which outcomes are measured is that of service-level and program-level impact on the one hand and population impact on the other. Population-based measures reflect a broad variety of influences and not just the impact of community sector programs (Willems et al. 2014). And while a focus on broader level population measures are important, assessment of the impact of community sector organisations should be first and foremost (but not only) on the outcomes that individual organisations or programs can reasonably be expected to change (those for individuals in their services and programs).

Discussions with stakeholders also pointed to the 'disconnect' between summative outcome measures which involve an aggregation across consumers in services and programs using indicators applied to all consumers in the service and program and the role of person-centric approaches and individualised funding in the community sector. Under a person-centric approach, it is the consumer that determines, in large part, what success looks like for them (the first rung in our outcomes hierarchy). Aggregating across individuals in this circumstance is a tricky business but not impossible.

The trend towards person-centred approaches to outcomes measurement and individualised funding is particularly significant for many health and social services in Western Australia, and increasingly at the national level. Box 1 (next page) provides more information on the growth of individualised funding and person-centred outcomes measurement in Western Australia.

Developing a system that balances the duality of aggregated outcomes measures with person-centric approaches represent a key challenge for the outcomes measurement system in Western Australia (and more broadly across Australia).

*"There's a duality between the consumer/client outcome and the funder/ fundee outcome. When departments set the outcomes that they are procuring for, how are they factoring in what the client sees as an effective outcome for their life?"*

**[Representative from a peak body]**



### Box 1: Outcomes for whom? Individualised funding in Western Australia

Individualised funding is a client centred approach where a package of funding is allocated specifically to a person in response to his or her needs. It encourages service providers to focus on achieving outcomes desired by the consumer and places the consumer at the centre of market exchange, albeit typically regulated, market exchange. This creates a further dimension to outcomes measurement and reporting, where the desired outcomes are individually determined, not system based, and raises the question of the types of system based outcomes that can or should be specified and the level at which outcomes reporting should occur.

Western Australia first introduced direct funding in the disability sector over 20 years ago. A 2010 study (Fisher et al. 2010) found positive outcomes for people who had individual funding which was attributed to a greater ability for the client to make choices and the whole-of-life approach compared with clients who had other arrangements.

Significant changes to the system will occur with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Western Australia is currently undertaking a trial of two models, the Western Australia NDIS My Way model and the Commonwealth Government NDIS model. There is some concern in the sector about the level of outcome reporting that will be required, and that funding will not provide capacity for measurement required. Data linkage between organisations is also required to create a picture of outcomes achieved across the range of services accessed by the individual.

### 3. A need for shared understanding

Alongside these challenges, stakeholders pointed to the need for the community sector and funders to build consensus, and co-design (with consumers) the future outcomes measurement framework and architecture for Western Australia.

This includes a clear articulation and understanding of questions such as the following:

- What are the key community sector targets we want to see for Western Australia?
- What outcomes can feasibly be measured for consumers by organisations and what is the appropriate method of measuring them?
- What is the appropriate outcomes data collection system and architecture?
- What is the benefit to the community sector and its clients of outcomes measurement? What are the limits to outcomes measurement?
- Is it possible to create a shared common outcomes language?

*"We need a shared community understanding about what outcomes we want for our state. Once we have a shared understanding, then we can prescribe how to do it, and then we can look at a measurement framework"*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

*"I worry sometimes that we're all measuring for measurement's sake. The amount of capacity and resources that we have on the ground is getting less and less, and the administrative burden of doing this is getting higher and higher, all in a marketplace where the sector money is reducing... What is the right level of measurement? And what is the point where it stops being a value add?"*

**[Representative from a peak body]**



## SECTION TWO: THE PRACTICE OF OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT

Our mapping of the Western Australian community sector, together with responses from stakeholders, suggests a wide variety of experiences in outcomes measurement and reflections on current practice in the sector. This section reviews the evidence available and provided about current practice.

### What is driving practice?

International evidence suggests that outcomes measurement behaviour is often driven by the direct demands of funding organisations (Barman & Macindoe, 2012; Benjamin, 2012a; Benjamin, 2012b; Botcheva et al. 2002; Breckell et al., 2010; Eckerd et al. 2011; Flatau et al. 2015; Thomson, 2010). Participants in our consultations suggested that this was often the case, but a more important driver was the broader social and economic climate of ‘value for money’.

The key driver of improved outcomes measurement from a government funding perspective was interest in channelling government resources towards evidence-based programs, aimed at improving effectiveness and efficiency in the context of increasing fiscal restraint:

*“I think it is a really good discussion to have about where government invests and making sure we have...the data that allows us to evaluate what has been achieved with that investment.”*

**[Representative from a state government department]**

In this climate, community organisations are responding strategically by seeking to demonstrate that their programs are a valuable investment. This is not only to manage existing funding relationships, but also to justify expansion and growth at the organisational level.

At the same time, stakeholders refer to a wide variety of intrinsic drivers of outcomes measurement. Fundamentally, this relates to the desire, on the part of community sector organisations, to achieve positive social change for their clients. Beyond this basic intrinsic motivation, are drivers such as using outcomes measurement for strategy and planning, internal resource allocation, performance improvements and, of course, adjustments to service design to better meet the needs of consumers. A commonly identified benefit of improved outcomes measurement was the use of an outcomes focus on informing and motivating staff:

*“Workers on the ground are putting their blood, sweat and tears into this service, but for what end? Is it because they want to tick a box at the end of the reporting period? Or is it because they’ve made a difference? They will all say ‘we are doing it because we want to make a difference?’ And I say to them - how do you know you are making a difference? And what information are you collecting that tells you that at the end of the day? It’s like a lightbulb! The motivation is that it will go to change and improve what we do.”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Ultimately, the real benefit for outcomes measurement done properly is that it represents a win-win-win: It contributes to informing government and funders, the service provider and clients as well as the broader community about the impact of community sector programs.

Box 2 provides an example of one approach to outcomes measurement now utilised across a number of organisations in Western Australia – the Outcomes Star. The Outcomes Star, was developed in the homelessness sector in the UK in 2003 (by St Mungos) and was introduced into Western Australia at St Bartholomew’s House a few years later, and is now adopted by a number of community sector organisations in Western Australia. The Outcomes Star began as a client-oriented approach to success and as a means of effective case management, but has developed into an overarching tool for outcomes measurement (Anicha Consulting 2014).



### Box 2: Outcomes Star<sup>1</sup>

Outcomes Star is a bottom-up tool used to manage the process of change across a number of aspects of a client's life. The Star is focused on client outcomes and standardised across a sector. Outcomes can be aggregated at program and organisation levels to provide input into the strategic planning process and into outcomes recording and reporting frameworks such as Results Based Accountability. As Outcome Star data is available nationally and internationally, results can be compared with other organisations in the same sector (Anicha Consulting 2014).

In total, there are 28 versions of the Star, each tailored to a particular sector. The Star is now widely used in Western Australia, with approximately 20 organisations currently using Outcomes Star across a range of sectors, including the mental health, youth, family services, domestic violence, drug and alcohol, disability services and homelessness sectors. This includes UnitingCare West – who currently use 10 versions across 20 programs and is in the process of further implementation. Richmond Wellbeing implements the Recovery Star in both accommodation and outreach services in the mental health sector, St Bartholomew's House uses the Homelessness Outcomes Star, and Albany Youth Support association uses the Star in its accommodation and outreach services. Finally, the Red Cross has implemented the Star across a number of program types.

An informal support group of organisations, which use the Star, allows for sharing of expertise and learnings. Organisations are using it in conjunction with other tools to capture quantitative and qualitative data. Client engagement is seen as a major advantage of the Star, compared with other outcome assessment tools. This engagement relates to its holistic, strength-based and reflective approach. Some organisations find it to be most useful for more complex clients, but others find it sufficiently adaptable to use in less formal client contacts.

Staff training is identified as essential to successfully engaging the client in an appropriate manner, for the Star to be used in a consistent manner across the organisation so that meaningful measures are produced for input into strategic planning (Anicha Consulting 2014).

<sup>1</sup> Information on the Outcomes Star was also provided by UnitingCare West, Richmond Wellbeing and Albany Youth Support.

## What is happening?

Our review of outcomes measurement in the community sector suggests widespread interest and curiosity about outcomes measurement from across a wide variety of community organisations, and growing interest from their boards. Evidence from funders and government agencies also point to growing interest across service areas. Respondents suggest that many organisations are making attempts to measure their outcomes, within the constraints of their own organisational resources.

The discussions also highlighted the diversity of approaches taken by organisations, which also reflects international experience with outcomes measurement (Eckerd & Moulton 2011; Flatau et al. 2015; Grieko et al. 2014). A number of methodologies were identified as currently in use by Western Australia community organisations, including those listed in Box 3 below:

### Box 3: Outcomes measurement methodologies

There is evidence of a wide variety of approaches and methodologies being used by community organisations to embark on outcomes measurement, including:

- Outcomes Stars
- Results Based Accountability
- Social Return on Investment (SROI)
- Quality of Life Indicators
- Social Exclusion (Brotherhood of St Laurence and Melbourne Institute Monitor)
- Outcomes integrated into existing case management software platforms
- Outcomes adapted from existing quality standards, such as ISO standards
- Customised surveys, questionnaires or feedback instruments.

Despite widespread interest in outcomes measurement in the community sector, stakeholders suggest that practice is still emerging in pockets rather than systematically across the board:

*"In terms of measuring what they're doing, there are some pockets doing really well, but from what I've seen they're struggling to even just get their heads around it. Some of that is about they don't have the internal infrastructure, internal systems; they are capturing data but they don't know what they should be doing with it or how they should analyse it and what it is even saying to them."*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

There remains work to be done on connecting the outcomes measurement of community organisations with the requirements of funding bodies and government agencies:

*"The shift [towards outcomes measurement in government] is really just beginning. There's been a lot of work done on trying to get there, but it hasn't been hugely successful in terms of what not-for-profits are providing agencies. There has been a lot of information flow but a lot of it hasn't been useful."*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

### 1. A methodology reality-check

A key learning from our stakeholder engagement is a call for moderated expectations about the ability of single tools and methodologies to address the challenges that organisations face with outcomes measurement, particularly for large and complex organisations.

Best-practice outcomes measurement is often characterised as systematic and holistic (Bagnoli & Megal 2011; Ógáin et al. 2012). However, best practice examples arising from the consultation suggest that the introduction of effective approaches is often a gradual, iterative process. Evidence was presented in stakeholder discussions that organisations begin by scanning across different methodologies and frameworks. Organisations then introduce a particular tool, but find that one tool or framework is rarely the complete answer. Instead, organisations find the best approach is achieved by pilots or trials of a simple yet suitable approach in a defined area or service, and gradually expanding its use across services and integrating it with other organisational practices and tools. Throughout, consideration is given to the limitations of the chosen approach(es) and complementary tools adapted as needed.

This adaptive and responsive approach is shown in the case of Anglicare WA and their employment of the Results Based Accountability model (in Box 4 below).

#### **Box 4: Transformation and learning in outcomes measurement: The case of Anglicare WA and Results Based Accountability (RBA)**

RBA is a strategic framework that utilises indicators to plan, monitor and assess ongoing achievement of outcomes defined by the organisation. RBA progresses from asking 'How much did we do?' to asking 'How well did we do it, and is anyone better off?' (Friedman 2001)

Western Australia organisations to implement RBA include Anglicare WA, Linkwest, St Bartholomew's House, Ngala, Holyoake and Connect Groups. Anglicare WA has implemented RBA in over 60 services and assisted over 20 organisations with RBA. Linkwest, was funded by the Department of Local Government and Communities to trial RBA with nine community organisations (Davies 2014).

RBA is currently used for internal strategic planning purposes; addressing needs from the consumer view, rather than government. The approach is linked to a range of positive impacts, including:

- More targeted service delivery
- Increased opportunity for positive consumer outcomes
- Improved data collection practices with increased focus on outcomes,



- Increased staff expertise in data analysis and their ability to apply this knowledge to inform service improvement.

Organisations require support to implement RBA, for ongoing staff training and resources. Grants such as the ground-breaking WA Social Innovation Fund grant provided to Anglicare WA as well as that to Linkwest have been essential to establish RBA as a viable framework, but lack of funding and staff with the appropriate expertise remain major barriers to expanded use (Davies 2014).

## Where are we struggling?

Our review of outcomes measurement in the community sector in Western Australia suggest a number of areas that are proving most challenging for community organisations and funders in Western Australia.

### 1. Articulating outcomes

Defining and articulating outcomes, and operationalising those outcomes in the form of indicators, remain key challenges for many organisations. This is a critical first step on the road to outcomes measurement, but can be a difficult process. It involves specifying the program logic for an organisation or service, setting outcomes and the transmission mechanism between services delivered and outcomes and the operationalisation of outcomes in indicators and their related targets. In relation to indicators, organisations frequently speak of a difficulty in knowing what represents the appropriate indicator to use and the best measure of that indicator (see Flatau et al. 2015). For example, if a desired outcome is improved quality of life, what is the indicator by which quality of life is to be measured? Moreover, what is an appropriate target improvement in quality of life outcomes that we wish to achieve for our clients?

Beyond the question of specifying outcomes, indicators and targets there is the broader issue of cultural change (focusing attention on outcomes measurement) and learning (capacity development) required to implement an effective outcomes framework:

*"In terms of measurement, particularly service delivery staff, we are better at collecting info on people who used the service rather than whether it actually made a difference, whether people thought it was good, had a good experience, and liked it, which is still different to outcomes. We still haven't got past [the fact that] people might not be happy, but they may have had an outcome"*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Funders and government also often face this challenge when attempting to measure outcomes. This can be due to the often opaque and complex mission statements and agency objectives that can be difficult to translate into desired outcomes.

One of the challenges identified by the discussions is reconciling outcomes measurement as an approach with the often slow and non-linear experience of social change for individuals.

*"I struggle a little bit as it refers to a measurement in time: a snapshot. That worries me a little bit because I think change is a better word, change is a dynamic thing that ebbs and flows. [Measurement] is opposed to either a pathway or a journey."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

## 2. Being strategic with outcomes measurement

For many organisations, a key challenge is ensuring that outcomes measurement remains closely knitted with their organisational purpose, particularly when dealing with fragmented reporting and measurement needs from different funders. The consultations suggest the link between outcomes measurement and practice is particularly challenging:

*“There’s a lot of people struggling with that whole concept. In our organisation, we’re still in the process of refining and making sure the service model, plan has the same way of describing the outcomes we are trying to achieve. Then working out what the measurement is.”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

## 3. Being systematic across diversity

Another challenge for many organisations is developing outcomes measurement that is systematic and cuts across multiple activities. This includes adopting a systematic approach suited to the organisation, as well as streamlining and rationalising existing systems and data.

*“The question is do you systematically have a system in place to measure outcomes? Most agencies would say no. Do you know what your outcomes are? Intuitively they might say ‘yes, we have some idea’. It is that question about are you systematically doing something to measure, take account and influence the way you are improving your services. A lot struggle in that space. I don’t know how many organisations are saying we need a system in place and yet we don’t. And yet we do lots of data collection, lots of this, and lots of that.”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

The diversity of organisational types and services places extra pressure on this challenge. While smaller, single-purpose organisations may find a systematic approach easier to adopt (but are limited in terms of resources), diverse and complex organisations, or those with system-wide impacts such as advocacy or collaboration groups find this harder.

Managing this in terms of funding relationships is a significant issue in the sector, with governments and funders also grappling with how to develop systems that are holistic and linked to their strategy, but flexible enough to capture the diversity of grantees and their capabilities as organisations.

*“Across government we’ve struggled with measuring and putting in place a system that suits all agencies and produces useful information. We’re really trying to define what we’re trying to achieve and whether you’ve achieved it or not. We struggle to do that.”*

**[Representative from a state government department]**

A priority going forward is for organisations to develop an organisational outcomes architecture that is capable of both producing outcomes data that meets organisational purpose and mission as well as meeting the reporting needs of funders.

## 4. Estimating the cost benefit of measurement

A key challenge for many organisations is building from and making sense of existing data and analysing it effectively. Many organisations already have established systematic data collection processes, but struggle to make the most of their analysis and integrate this data into their outcomes measurement.

*“We use outcomes in our strategic plan regularly. It’s getting all the data we have aggregating them into measures, that is the most difficult thing we have to do.”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**





*"The future of outcomes measurement is using the data we have; it doesn't have to be a difficult exercise."*

**[Representative from state government]**

This can include systematic and meaningful ways to approach qualitative data within an outcomes framework. Many organisations already collect qualitative data but do not make the most of it in a systematic way.

*"I'm not sure that impact can be measured purely quantitatively. A lot of my data is qualitative, so how do I make that demonstrate meaningful impact?"*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

The challenge of effectively using existing data is also present at a systems level. Western Australia has some very rich linked administrative data available. The core of this linked data is health data collections, but data at the unit record level is also held by Western Australia departments and agencies such as in Housing and Child Protection. Linkages between these data sets - such as using core health data sets to evaluate the effectiveness of community sector programs in discrete areas - remains in its infancy.

## 5. Meaningful participation and context

A number of participants in the consultations expressed concern over how to balance outcomes measurement processes with meaningful participation by clients and other stakeholders (including staff). This can include systems that are sensitive and responsive to different constructs of performance and achievement across different communities.

*"People are not even part of the conversation, if they could be part of the design or service what would that look like? What would be useful, what outcomes are they looking for in their lives, and what do we need to deliver to achieve that? That is the other end of the conversation."*

**[Representative from a state government department]**

## 6. Estimating the cost- benefit of measurement

A final challenge faced by organisations is balancing the costs and benefits of measurement, and seeking the 'right level' of outcomes measurement within operational constraints. Failure to strike this balance correctly can either compromise further funding, or reduce the effectiveness of an organisation:

*"In [one project], they measured everything, taking a lot of time collecting data and filling out reports, but not a lot of time actually achieving outcomes. By measuring too much they were diluting their impact... The organisation ended up being an information capturing model rather than an impactful approach."*

**[Representative from non-government funder]**

## Procurement policy and outcomes in Western Australia

The Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy (DCSPP), introduced by the Western Australia Government in 2011, aimed to establish a primary role for outcomes in the relationship between government agencies and community organisations who are funded or whose services are purchased. Since the introduction of this policy, a number of Western Australia government departments and agencies have introduced a greater focus on outcomes measurement in their funding arrangements with community organisations.

Effectiveness measures used by government departments for their own reporting still, however, rely on a mix of output-related, process-related and outcomes measures rather than focus on the aggregation of client and population outcomes measures. This is evident in Box 5 below





which provides an abridged set of effectiveness measures from different government departments and agencies in Western Australia.

All information in the table below comes from the relevant government departments' 2013-14 Annual Reports. For a full list and description of outcomes and effectiveness indicators used, please see the Annual Reports. Also note that all departments and agencies use common efficiency indicators, which are average cost per service provided, cost per client or operating costs.

**Box 5: Western Australian Government: Selected outcomes and effectiveness measures, departments and agencies, Annual Reports 2013-2014**

Department	Selected Outcomes	Selected Effectiveness Indicators
<b>Aboriginal Affairs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage</li> <li>Land management</li> <li>Accountable government</li> <li>Community development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of direct stakeholders satisfied with services</li> </ul>
<b>Child Protection and Family Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of children with comprehensive care planning undertaken within set time frames</li> <li>Average number of placements per child</li> <li>Proportion of Aboriginal children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families/individuals overcome their risks/crises and keep themselves and family members safe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of customers who report: a) that they were supported to provide care b) confidence to manage well in the future, and c) that their needs were met</li> </ul>
<b>Disability Services Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People with disability access appropriate services and supports that promote their wellbeing and choice and control over their lives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of serious incidents</li> <li>Service users' satisfaction with services</li> <li>Take-up rates for services</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The West Australian community is inclusive of people with disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service users' satisfaction</li> <li>Percentage of: a) agencies who have lodged DAIP with the Commission and b) public authorities that reported DAIP<sup>2</sup> enhanced inclusion for people with disability</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced health of Western Australians through health promotion, illness/injury prevention and continuing care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate per 1,000 HACC<sup>3</sup> target population who receive HACC services</li> <li>Specific HACC contract provider client satisfaction survey</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing eligible Western Australians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which the housing authority is responsive to the housing needs of eligible Western Australians</li> <li>Waiting times for accommodation</li> <li>Applicants housed</li> </ul>
<b>Local Government and Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities are strengthened so that individuals and families are able to better meet their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which: a) customers report their needs are met, and b) stakeholders report that policies/projects have an impact on strengthening the community</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Western Australia public sector which practices the principles of multiculturalism and the empowerment of CALD<sup>4</sup> communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of public sector agencies that accept and practice the principles of multiculturalism: perception of a) public sector agencies and b) CALD<sup>4</sup> community groups</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build the capability of the local government sector to deliver economic and social services to communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement in local government's capability to enable the fulfilment of their responsibility to communities</li> <li>Stakeholder satisfaction rating</li> </ul>
<b>Mental Health Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible and high quality mental health services and supports that are recovery focused and promote mental health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After discharge: a) readmission to hospital, and b) contacts with community based public mental health services</li> <li>Proportion of: a) service funding directed to publicly funded community mental health services and b) funding directed to community organisations (NGOs)</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup>DAIP: Disability Access and Inclusion Plans <sup>3</sup>HACC: Home and Community Care <sup>4</sup>CALD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse



David Gilchrist's (2012, 2013) review of the progress of the DCSP indicated that over 70 per cent of respondent organisations believed their organisation was in a stronger position to meet their mission compared to the year before (Gilchrist 2012, p. 12; Gilchrist 2013, p. 27). However, both reports on the DCSP also describe continuing frustrations about the administrative requirements of the policy and difficulties of specifying and measuring outcomes (Gilchrist 2012, pp. 14, 17, 24; Gilchrist 2013, pp. 42, 54).

Our consultations extend these findings and suggest a mixed view about the impact of the DCSP policy on creating a stronger and more effective environment for outcomes measurement in Western Australia. There was, however, consensus on the fact that the DCSP had moved the focus of discussions from activities and outputs to outcomes in the community sector.

*"It's started the conversation, and that's good and I think it's really useful. It's really difficult, and I'm not sure there was a recognition as to how difficult and complicated it can be to do this stuff. Although, in some areas it doesn't have to be as difficult as it's made out to be... But at least we are starting to have conversations about it."*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

Box 6 below highlights the process of review and change in one Community sub-sector, the Alcohol and Drugs sector:

### **Box 6: The Western Australian drug and alcohol sector**

In accordance with the DCSP Policy of 2011, a significant attempt to incorporate and emphasise outcomes measurement was evident in reforms to the procurement process of the Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO) of Western Australia. The DAO's 2014 Request for Community Alcohol and Drug Services – South Metropolitan Region (The Request) is one clear example of a policy effort to focus attention on measuring and achieving outcomes in the drug and alcohol sector. In developing their procurement process, the DAO abides by a key government policy objective, seeking 'value for money', that is, the best outcomes for its spend (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 6).

As an element of the service agreement, service providers are required to provide a bi-annual (unless otherwise agreed) 'Outcome Summary Report', which includes an analysis of data relating to their achievement of outcomes (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 12). Outcomes also feature significantly within the DAO's service requirements section of its procurement process. The DAO collaborated with a variety of stakeholders and existing service providers to draft a list of the outcomes required by service providers (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 5).

An overarching outcome established at the community level was that 'the adverse impacts of alcohol and other drug use in the Western Australian community are prevented and reduced' (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 18). Furthermore, the The Request also specifies five distinct service specific outcomes to be met. One of these outcomes is that 'the services have an impact on the individual, their family...and community through improvement in wellbeing, including physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing' (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 18).

The DAO performance reporting framework aims to allow service providers to answer: 'are people better off?' and 'did we make a difference?' (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 25). Each of the five service outcomes are matched with key performance indicators as well as annual targets set by the service provider (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 25). Data collection is conducted via a unit record database system established by the DAO, with the exception of qualitative reporting allowed in a few circumstances (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 25). The DAO draws a clear distinction between service outcomes and service outputs and processes (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, pp 25, 27, 28).

In its criteria for awarding contracts, the DAO places a substantial weighting on those service providers which provide a detailed description of their plans to achieve the outcomes (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority 2014, p. 30). This focuses attention on the theory of change which underpins the service delivery model. The Western Australian Network of Alcohol & other Drug Agencies (WANADA) has provided ongoing support to the service providers funded by the DAO, to help them adjust to the implementation of the DCSP and these new procurement processes (WANADA, 2015).

Stakeholders suggest that there remains a lot of work to do on the ground to move the Western Australian government procurement model to a fully articulated outcomes-based model. In practice, stakeholders suggest there are still many instances of funding and reporting remaining on a largely outputs model (sometimes simply rebranded as outcomes).

*“The Government is saying here is outcomes based procurement [but] a lot of the processes haven’t occurred... In terms of the community organisations that I’m working with, we are struggling to understand some of our business processes because Government is saying ‘this is the service delivery model we want, this is what you will deliver, we want inputs, we want outputs and that’s what you need to report on.’”*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

Some stakeholders attributed a lack of progress to patchy implementation. This included a lack of a clear articulation of how the new policy would change the mechanics and technical detail of existing and new funding contracts. There was also a concern expressed about trying to move too quickly, particularly to economic evaluation approaches such as Social Return on Investment, prior to first developing the outcomes measurement infrastructure and without clear articulation of where outcomes measurement should go in Western Australian agencies:

*“We confused ... people, to be honest, about outcomes measurement when we put it in DCSP. The first 3 years, everyone panicked. A lot of organisations massively over-complicated it, made it about somehow moving towards performance-based contracts and really sophisticated measures. [One agency] had a two year process of a really complicated process that they ditched and are going through a second wave that is much more simple. Everybody got a bit frozen, lots of people came in and gave everyone lots of advice, and everyone got confused, and everyone thought we had to use SROI. There were 3 years of wasted effort because everyone just froze. Now we are seeing a second wave of going back to basics - both government and NFP...Now beginning to see arrangements emerge, but we wasted an awful lot of time and effort.”*

**[Representative from state government]**

Others questioned the effectiveness of the policy with respect to outcomes measurement given the absence of a major funding boost to outcomes measurement capacity development and infrastructure at the community organisational level in Western Australia.

*‘How can we even have discussion around outcomes - the delivery of outcomes let alone their measurement - in an environment of the DCSP when there’s not full service funding? The whole discussion is quite Quixotic.’*

**[Representative from non-government funder]**

Nonetheless, our consultations unearthed a general and genuine support for a focus on outcomes measurement in the community sector and the overall objective of the DCSP policy. Efforts are clearly continuing to extend an outcomes focus across the Western Australia community sector as evident in Box 7 below with respect to Aboriginal youth programs.



### Box 7: Aboriginal youth policies

The Aboriginal Youth Expenditure Review 2013 established that less than 15% of programs that received part of \$115 million in annual investment could actually prove their effectiveness (Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2013, p. 2). It was found that 'poor articulation and measurement of outcomes' and 'limited program evaluation' were two areas that contributed to this insufficient demonstration of effectiveness (ibid, p. 2). Furthermore, programs suffered from a lack of accountability and strategic, long-term planning ability, due to funding arrangements that were often too short in nature (Department of Aboriginal Affairs 2015).

The findings from the Aboriginal Youth Expenditure Review 2013 highlighted the need for key reforms, including the need for built-in performance measurement based on outcomes (Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2013, p. 13). A major policy reform will be introduced over two years, beginning in July 2015, to 'ensure effective and sustainable programs are funded' (Minister's Office 2015). The Aboriginal Youth Investment Reforms published in May 2015, identifies measurement as one of six key principles that should be demonstrated by Aboriginal youth programs (Government of Western Australia 2015, p. 2). Programs should have 'built-in performance management' that defines outcomes clearly and regularly reports on progress towards outcomes (Government of Western Australia 2015, p. 2). In implementing these reforms, it is recommended that government agencies both apply the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy and consider levels of resources for evaluation and measurement (Government of Western Australia 2015, p. 3).

## SECTION THREE:

### KEY PRACTICAL BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Our review of outcomes measurement in Western Australia has raised a number of practical barriers and challenges to the further development and extension of outcomes measurement across Western Australia. These include barriers at the organisational level, and system-wide challenges and stoppages.

#### Barriers at the organisational level

##### 1. Internal capacity

The absence of internal capacity to undertake outcomes measurement was identified as a critical barrier for many organisations. Only some, often larger, organisations are able to employ specialised staff in this area, and for many other organisations outcomes measurement becomes part of broader responsibilities of general staff with no specific expertise in the area.

*"There aren't many community organisations that have serious research and evaluation... Some people say - "I think that's on my job description" - but it might be point seven on the one job description. There aren't serious research and evaluation teams here. That is a huge issue in its own right."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

If staff do not have the underlying background in statistical analysis and measurement techniques and methodologies or specific training to undertake outcomes data collection and measurement in the community sector, then this will have an impact not only on the capacity of the organisation to regularly collect, analyse and report outcomes data effectively, but it will also have a profound impact on the staff themselves coming to grips with an unknown terrain.



## 2. Funding

Funding outcomes measurement was consistently cited as the biggest barrier for organisations exploring and implementing an outcomes measurement framework.

*“They’re asking us to produce more information, but they’re not giving us more funding.. We haven’t had one extra dollar to cover the increase in effort and human resources required. The government needs to consider that if you want [us] to collect the information you want, [then maybe] it is an opportunity to give the organisation the resources they need. ”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Participants in the consultation stated that outcomes measurement is still rarely funded as a separate line item, and little funding is available for measurement alone. This is problematic in an environment of competitive tendering, where the lack of separate funding for outcomes measurement can result in either poorer measurement practices, or is taken from the budget for service provision.

*“We [included a line item for outcomes measurement] once and lost the tender on price. And we went back into the process and saw that we’d put in good professional supervision, research and evaluation, and we’ve priced it at this and you’ve told us that we’ve lost out. We actually think it is a good robust system. Others have gone in to it with [very few] staff and have got it, but are they collecting any data? Nope. Have they thought about it? Probably not.”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

## 3. Enrolment and enlistment of staff

A barrier to outcomes measurement in some community organisations is the enrolment and enlistment of front line and delivery staff to outcomes data collection and reporting. With delivery staff often key to collecting the data necessary for measurement to happen and to an understanding of the results from data collection, a culture change and training is needed to convince staff of the value of measurement:

*“There remains an internal battle at times between research and evaluation team and frontline service delivery that are going ‘I’m not getting clients to do all that, I’m struggling to get them to do their work, why am I filling all of this out?’ You say ‘This is actually about defensible outcomes’, they say ‘But I’m busy, and I have to do all the work.’”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Participants noted this is a challenge for funders too:

*“Some systems are still stuck in their ways – you’ve got the Director General furiously nodding, and the Executive Director sort of nodding and then by the time you get to contract managers they’re going ‘pigs might fly, you won’t get that’.”*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**



### 4. Client, service and funder diversity

Many community organisations operate at the nexus of complex, diverse client needs, across different service setting and mixed funding sources. Developing an approach to outcomes measurement that adapts to this diversity is a big challenge for many front-line service organisations.

*"It is mixed funding models - with different funders demanding different things and you're trying to measure for all of them. Five years ago we had a small percentage of complex clients, now we have all complex clients. We are probably giving them services from two or three different funding models or funders, and they are measuring different outcomes on this one poor person, or one poor family. We are trying to impose these measurements on them because that is what the funder wants to measure. So I think there is a lot of tension between what everyone is trying to."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

## Barriers at the systems level

### 1. Balancing expectations on quality

A number of participants identified a lack of consensus between organisations, funders, and other government bodies about expectations over what defines 'quality' and what 'reliability' means in outcomes measurement. Unreasonable expectations over quality can represent a barrier to organisations continuing the outcomes measurement journey.

*"People say you need a validated instrument, but sometimes it's just about getting feedback from the people you work with. Maybe let's park the validated instrument as a long term plan in terms of getting research done, but instead let's get a feedback survey done that has appropriate questions for this group."*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

This also includes further discussions and clarity around the role of qualitative data in an outcomes measurement system, and standards of evidence thereof. Striking the balance between quantitative measurement and qualitative stories can be challenging, and is far from resolved.

### 2. Fragmented funding

A key systems-level barrier to outcomes measurement is the fragmentation of funding, accountability and outcomes in the community sector. Meeting different outcomes measurement requirements from different funders can be unreasonably onerous on community organisations, and can impact upon their ability to deliver services.

At a more systematic level, however, participants identified a number of disconnects between outcomes measurement and funding and accountability, particularly when working across the different administrative boundaries of government departments.

*"We talk about social issues with co- and multiple- morbidity, like drugs, alcohol and child protection. All these are entrenched and are connected, but they are not connected in terms of accountability, outcomes and funding from the government."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**



### 3. Data access

A lack of access to relevant data is a key concern among community organisations. The Western Australian Whole of Government Open Data Policy launched by Premier and Science Minister Colin Barnett, Finance Minister Bill Marmion and Lands Minister Terry Redman, at GovHack on 2 July 2015 provides a commitment to greater release of government data to the public and this will go a long way to meeting the needs of various stakeholders in the community sector.

*"Because community issues are so complex and there are so many different agencies and groups working within it, data really needs to be held in one place and accessible by all, so that if you are working in the same area as someone else, then that information is shared"*

**[Representative from a non-government funder]**

*"I still get frustrated, with the amount of data that's sitting in federal and state government agencies that has never seen the light of day. I think of a very large program we've done - the amount of stuff we push in as part of our obligations under that funding - has it come out yet? No. And we've been going for a decade or so. Where is it?"*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Ideally, increased data access should lead to more informed decision-making with respect to service delivery design and outcomes measurement together with greater transparency and accountability.

### 4. The timing issue

The long-term nature of many social outcomes can be difficult to capture within the constraints of shorter-term funding mechanisms and measurement cycles (Willems et al. 2014).

*"The system doesn't cope with stuff from medium to long term change. It's like zero to three years is treated as long term. Yet you look at some of the stuff in child protection, with the work being done looking at up to 10 years in terms of outcomes. Treasury is not going to say, 'Oh yes we'll wait another 10 years'. It is a huge issue."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Longitudinal data can be challenging and expensive to collect and monitor on a bespoke basis, but it remains vital to an understanding of the difference organisations are making to the lives of people. One area of urgent concern is understanding the pathways followed by consumers or clients following exit from programs. The Western Australia linked administrative data can provide a valuable resource in this area.



## 5. Exclusivity

At a system-level, there are barriers to full participation and inclusion of smaller organisations into the conversation around outcomes measurement.

*"There is still the perception that the conversation around outcomes is exclusive. It's the informed and the cool kids that are having these discussions. And for smaller organisations trying to find their way into those conversations in a way that they are welcomed at the table is a challenge."*

**[Representative from a non-government funder]**

The lack of simple decision-making tools and methodologies are also considered barriers to participation by smaller organisations.

*"People forget in small agencies, the director might sit on the reception desk at lunchtime. That doesn't mean they don't have impact. But [outcomes measurement] is just not their reality as this is big and complex work."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

## 6. Inconsistent language

*"We're not using the same language and that's the first obstacle we have"*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

Finally, another key barrier to improvement is the lack of consensus on key language and terminology. A number of participants still struggle with determining the exact use of some terms and how they are operationalised.

*"We're trying to address it, and measure it, but people don't understand it... When I arrived I had to get my head around what are they even talking about? What do these terms actually mean? As you engage with different funders, you get really lost in translation."*

**[Representative from a peak body]**

*"There really isn't a definition even from the funding bodies about what they mean, they're just using that terminology without really understanding what it means. Then its imposed on us, as small non-profits, to just sit and think what it means and how to do it... That's the whole confusion that surrounds it."*

**[Representative from a community organisation]**

## SECTION FOUR:

### WHICH WAY FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA?

The previous sections have explored some of the challenges and complexities of outcomes measurement in the context of the community sector in Western Australia. We now turn to some practical ideas around the enhancement of outcomes measurement in Western Australia, and how the issues identified in outcomes measurement may be remedied or addressed. These ideas are put forward to start a conversation about the future direction of outcomes measurement in Western Australia.

1. Standardisation of language and key concepts of outcomes measurement, in collaboration with both funders and community organisations.
2. Guidance on outcomes measurement frameworks, processes, tools and best-practice measures of outcomes particularly tailored for the community sector and recognising the needs of small organisations.
3. Communities of practice to promote best practice in outcomes measurement, and inform organisations about different approaches.
4. Explore opportunities for collaborative outcomes-based initiatives with shared measurement (as evident in Collective Impact frameworks).
5. Full, separate funding for outcomes measurement included in contracts.
6. Professional development and capacity building within community organisations (particularly smaller organisations).
7. A shared human services unit record data collection infrastructure for the Western Australian community sector with a core set of common outcomes items.
8. Development of capability to use the WA linked administrative data to assess the effectiveness of community sector programs.
9. Greater movement towards meaningful outcomes set in government tenders, pressing ahead with the promise of procurement reform.
10. Further action to transparency and open data from all levels of government.
11. Government department effectiveness measures to be fully consistent with outcome goals for consumers of programs and population level desired outcomes.
12. Knowledge sharing about rich, detailed and useful existing data sets.
13. Eliminating differences between government outcomes reporting requirements across different government departments and between Commonwealth and State levels where possible.

## SECTION FIVE:

### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The findings in this report represent the findings from a mapping of outcomes measurement in Western Australia and consultation with a mix of community organisations, funders, peak bodies and government. These discussions have been used to propose a series of steps that can be taken to move outcomes measurement in Western Australia forward. The next step is to allow all community organisations in Western Australia to have a say on their experiences with outcomes measurement in Western Australia, and what they think needs to change for the state to move towards a greater outcomes focus.

This is important as we know very little about outcomes measurement practices across Western Australia community organisations and their funders.

#### 1. What data do we have on outcomes measurement?

Data from the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission provides some information on reporting in community organisations in Western Australia (ACNC 2014). Figure 4 below shows that while there are 4412 active charities and NFP organisations in Western Australia, over half of these organisations are classified as small (with revenue under \$250,000).

Figure 4: Community Organisations in Western Australia

There are 4412 active charities and Not For Profit organisation operating in Western Australia\*

27% are large  
(with revenue over  
\$1mil)

17% are medium  
(revenue of  
\$250,000 - \$1 mil)

55% are small  
(revenue under  
\$250,000)

\* Excluding inactive charities and basic religious charities

Of these organisations:

- 26% have obligations to report to Western Australia State Departments or Agencies
- 21% have obligations to report to the Commonwealth Government
- 8% have obligations to report to other regulators (ACNC 2014).

Together, these organisations claim a total 342, 295 hours in 2013 was spent on reporting (ACNC 2014). That is an average of over 77 hours spent on reporting each year per organisation. We don't know how much of this effort is spent on outcomes measurement.

Other evidence also suggests that there is considerable progress to be made in moving outcomes measurement forward. A survey of Not For Profit CEOs in 2014 found that only a minority (28%) believe there are clearly defined outcomes in the social system in Australia, and even fewer (15%) believe that there are effective measures of these outcomes (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014).

#### 2. The survey

The next step of our research is to investigate the prevalence of these trends in outcomes measurement with a broader sample of Western Australia community organisations. We will investigate how organisations are measuring outcomes, the challenges and obstacles they face, and also what they think we need for things to change.

If you are a funder or a community organisation in Western Australia, please help us find out more about outcomes measurement in your organisation by completing the survey at the following link:

<http://www.csi.edu.au/outcomessurvey/>

The results of the first wave of the survey will be released publicly in 2016, and will be used to shape the future agenda of this research project.



## REFERENCES

- Anicha Consulting (2014). Star Versions and their Outcome Areas. Available from: <http://www.anichaconsulting.com.au/pdf/Star-versions-and-their-outcomes-areas.pdf>
- ACNC (Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission) (2014). Charity Register. Available from: <http://data.gov.au/dataset/acnc-register>
- Barman, E., & Macindoe, H. (2012). Institutional Pressures and Organizational Capacity: The Case of Outcome Measurement. *Sociological Forum*, 27(1), 70–93. doi:10.1111/j.1573-7861.2011.01302.x
- Benjamin, L. M. (2012a). Nonprofit Organizations and Outcome Measurement: From Tracking Program Activities to Focusing on Frontline Work. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 33(3), 431–447. doi:10.1177/1098214012440496.
- Benjamin, L. M. (2012b). The Potential of Outcome Measurement for Strengthening Nonprofits' Accountability to Beneficiaries. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. doi:10.1177/0899764012454684.
- Botcheva, L., White, C. R., & Huffman, L. C. (2002). Learning culture and outcomes measurement practices in community agencies. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(2), 1–30. doi:10.1016/S1098-2140(02)00229-1
- Breckell, P., Harrison, K., & Robert, N. (2010). *Impact Reporting in the UK Charity Sector*. London: CDFG/ CASS Business School.
- Buteau, E. & Buchanan, P. (2011). *The State of Foundation Performance Assessment: A Survey of Foundation CEOs*. Cambridge: The Center for Effective Philanthropy, Inc.
- Davies, R. (2014). 'Planting the Seeds of Change', Social Impact Measurement Network of Australia Website. Available from: <http://simna.com.au/planting-the-seeds-of-change-rebecca-davies-centre-development-manager-linkwest/>
- Department for Child Protection and Family Support (2014). Department for Child Protection and Family Support Annual Report 2013-14. Government of Western Australia pp. 5, 8. Available from: <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Resources/Documents/Annual%20reports/Annual%20Report%202014.pdf>.
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs (2014). Department of Aboriginal Affairs Annual Report 2013-14, Government of Western Australia, pp. 10-11. Available from: [http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/globalassets/pdf-files/daa-2014-ar\\_interactive.pdf](http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/globalassets/pdf-files/daa-2014-ar_interactive.pdf)
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs (n.d.). Youth Expenditure Review – Fact Sheet. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/globalassets/pdf-files/remote-comms-reform/youth-expenditure-factsheet.pdf> [12/08/15].
- Department of Health (2014). Department of Health Annual Report 2013-14. Government of Western Australia, pp. 10-11. Available from: [http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~/\\_media/Files/Corporate/Reports%20and%20publications/Annual%20reports/doh\\_annual\\_report\\_2014\\_update.ashx](http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~/_media/Files/Corporate/Reports%20and%20publications/Annual%20reports/doh_annual_report_2014_update.ashx) .
- Department of Local Government and Communities (2014). Department of Local Government and Communities Annual Report 2013-14. Government of Western Australia. pp. 14-15. Available from: <http://dlg.wa.gov.au/Content/Publications/AnnualReports.aspx>
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet (n.d.). Aboriginal Youth Expenditure Review 2013. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/Aboriginal%20Youth%20Expenditure%20Review.pdf> [12/08/15].
- Disability Services Commission (2014). Disability Services Commission Annual Report 2013-2014. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/Global/Publications/About%20us/corporate%20publications/Annual%20reports/Disability-Services-Commission-2013-2014-Annual-Report-full.pdf>
- Eckerd, A., & Moulton, S. (2011). Heterogeneous Roles and Heterogeneous Practices: Understanding the Adoption and Uses of Nonprofit Performance Evaluations. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 32(1) 98-117. doi:10.1177/1098214010381780.
- Fisher, K. R., Gleeson, R., Edwards, R., Purcal, C., Sitek, T., Dinning, B., Laragy, C., D'Aegher, L., and Thompson, D. (2010). Effectiveness of individual funding approaches for disability support (Occasional Paper No. 29). Canberra: Australian Government: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
- Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Adams, S., Horton, A., & Smith, J. (2015). *Measuring Outcomes for Impact in the Community Sector in Western Australia*, Bankwest Foundation Social Impact Series No. 1, Bankwest Foundation, Western Australia.



- Friedman, M. (2001). *The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide: Questions and Answers about How to Do the Work*. Available from: <http://raguide.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/RapaComplete.pdf>
- Gilchrist, D. (2012). *Sustainable Funding and Contracting with the Not for Profit Sector Initiative and Associated Procurement Reforms 2012 Evaluation*. Available from: <https://partnershipforum.dpc.wa.gov.au/EventsAndNews/Documents/D1300117%20-%20Attach%20A%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>
- Gilchrist, D. (2013). *Sustainable Funding and Contracting with the Not for Profit Sector Initiative and Associated Procurement Reforms 2013 Evaluation*. Available from: <https://partnershipforum.dpc.wa.gov.au/CurrentProjects/Documents/2013%20Curtin%20Evaluation.pdf>
- Government of Western Australia (2015). *Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reform*. May 2015. Available from: <https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/Aboriginal%20Youth%20Services%20Investment%20Reforms.pdf> [12/08/2015]
- Guest, G., Macqueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. London: Thousand Oaks.
- Housing Authority (2014). *Housing Authority Annual Report 2013-14*. Government of Western Australia, p. 21. Available from: [http://www.housing.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/housing\\_authority\\_annual\\_report-2013-14\\_interactive.pdf](http://www.housing.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/housing_authority_annual_report-2013-14_interactive.pdf)
- LeRoux, K., & Wright, N. S. (2010). Does Performance Measurement Improve Strategic Decision Making? Findings from a National Survey of Nonprofit Social Service Agencies. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, doi:10.1177/0899764009359942.
- Liket, K. C., Rey-Garcia, M., & Maas, K. E. H. (2014). Why Aren't Evaluations Working and What to Do About It: A Framework for Negotiating Meaningful Evaluation in Nonprofits. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 35(2), 171–188. doi:10.1177/1098214013517736.
- Mental Health Commission (2014). *Annual Report 2013/14*. Government of Western Australia. Available from: [http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/Libraries/pdf\\_docs/Annual\\_Report\\_2013-14\\_FINAL2.sflb.ashx](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/Libraries/pdf_docs/Annual_Report_2013-14_FINAL2.sflb.ashx)
- Minister's Office. *Media Statement: Long-term investment for Aboriginal Youth*. 04/05/15. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/Barnett/2015/05/Long-term-investment-for-Aboriginal-youth.aspx> [12/08/15]
- National Council of Volunteer Organisations. (2013). *The Code of Good Impact Practice*. London: Inspiring Impact.
- Ógáin, E. N., Lumley, T., & Pritchard, D. (2012). *Impact measurement among charities and social enterprises*. London: New Philanthropy Capital.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2014). *PwC-CSI Community Index 2014*. Sydney.
- Thomson, D. E. (2010). Exploring the Role of Funders' Performance Reporting Mandates in Nonprofit Performance Measurement. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39(4), 611–629. doi:10.1177/0899764009360575.
- Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority (2014). *Request for Community Alcohol and Drug Services – South Metropolitan Region*. 2014. Government of Western Australia.
- WANADA – Western Australian Network of Alcohol & other Drug Agencies (n.d.). *Procurement Reform Support*. Available from: <http://www.wanada.org.au/Procurement-Reform-Support/procurement-reform-support.html> [14/08/15].
- Willems, J., Boenigk, S., & Jegers, M. (2014). Seven Trade-offs in Measuring Nonprofit Performance and Effectiveness. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 25, 1648–1670. doi:10.1007/s11266-014-9446-1.



# BANKWEST FOUNDATION

## Social Impact Series

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

#### #1 - March 2015

---

Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Adams, S., Horton, A., & Smith, J. (2015). Measuring Outcomes for Impact in the Community Sector in Western Australia, Bankwest Foundation Social Impact Series No. 1, Bankwest Foundation, Western Australia.

#### #2 - August 2015

---

Barraket, J., Barth, S., & Mason, C. (2015). Resourcing Social Enterprises: Approaches and Challenges, Bankwest Foundation Social Impact Series No. 2, Bankwest Foundation, Western Australia.

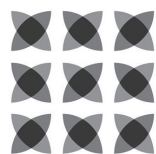
#### #3 - October 2015

---

Adams, S., Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., McWilliam, D. & Smith, J. (2015). Measuring the Difference we Make: The State of Outcomes Measurement in the Community Sector in Western Australia, Bankwest Foundation Social Impact Series No. 3, Bankwest Foundation, Western Australia,



# BANKWEST FOUNDATION



**CENTRE**  
*for* **SOCIAL**  
**IMPACT**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WESTERN**  
**AUSTRALIA**