



Using the guide

Monitoring outcomes: achieving goals offers an approach to selecting and using indicators to monitor the strategic directions defined for a local government area or region. It is designed to provide material for local government managers responsible for policy development and strategic planning.

The guide is not prescriptive and offers flexibility in addressing local needs and circumstances. It has been prepared in three parts.

Part One introduces the concept of strategic indicators and provides background information about the use of indicators.

Part Two outlines key elements of the process for identifying and selecting strategic indicators.

Part Three offers a core set of indicators from which councils can select, add to, or refine to suit local circumstances and needs.

Some ground rules

Like any planning or management guide, there is usually some word of caution offered about how the tools should be used. There are five principles to observe when using this guide, principles which are drawn from the experiences of community-based indicator projects undertaken in Australia and overseas.

1. There is no universal set of indicators

The vision and strategic directions for each community will vary, reflecting different economic, social and environmental priorities. The indicator suite is drawn from common strategic direction themes and is offered as a starting point. Part Two of the guide offers a process for evaluating indicators for monitoring those strategic directions that are unique to a community.

2. Each council needs to determine its own process for selecting indicators

The selection of indicators and the timetable and resources for this process will be a decision for each council. Part Two presents information on elements of the process for identifying and selecting indicators.

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Indicators are designed to reveal and draw attention to changes so that councils can take appropriate action.

3. Not all indicators are perfect

Indicators will not address every criterion that makes up the ideal 'strategic indicator'. Where flaws do exist, care must be taken in the interpretation of the data to avoid misguided use. Over time, as data sources improve, there will be scope to refine the indicator suite.

4. Indicators inform and guide action

Indicators are designed to reveal trends and draw attention to changes so that appropriate action can be taken. They are not about embellishing an annual report or producing a scorecard, that is, reporting on indicators for their own sake.

5. Indicators are signposts

Indicators are designed to simplify information about key trends or changes that are relevant to goals and policies. While indicators can trigger deeper analysis, they do not provide the whole picture. They are designed to be signposts.