Building the Adaptive Capacity of Communities
Focus Area 1: Create a disequilibrium state

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
1. 1 Highlight the need to organise communities differently	Does the initiative highlight that the problem it is addressing is a complex social policy (wicked) problem and needs to be addressed differently? Does the initiative highlight the need to take a solution ecosystem and systemic innovation approach to address the problem?	Wicked problems have many interconnected and multi-causal factors. This means they can't be addressed by individual projects and programs. To address wicked problems communities need to take a coherent approach - by bringing all the initiatives together (a solution ecosystem) and creating an interconnected set of initiatives to address the problem (systemic innovation approach).	An example might be a Newsletter for a community visioning project that discussed the need for the community to work differently.
1.2 Cultivate a passion for action	Does your initiative create a passion for the community to take action around "the problem"?	Community passion is important to inspire people to take action on the problem. It also encourages people to work together with a shared focus and take collective action to address the wicked problem.	An example could be creating a shared vision for a community playground, which encourages people to come together to take action.
1.3 Manage initial starting conditions	Does your initiative clearly articulate the starting conditions? Starting conditions can include: who is involved, the type of leadership approach (collaborative, facilitative), diversity of who is involved, the willingness of community and government to work together as equals and transparency of information?	Initial conditions can have great subsequent effect when taking an adaptive community approach - so it's important to get off to a good start. In wicked problems it is important to manage initiative starting conditions, because predetermined results can not be achieved. By setting the starting conditions (through policy, community visioning project) an environment for positive outcomes to emerge is created.	For example, a management committee of an initiative is diverse and works collaboratively with other stakeholders
1.4 Specify goals in advance	Does the initiative specify goals in advance? For example, does it have broad goals or is it part of an umbrella strategy?	Broad goals need to be set in advance so that people and other resources are aligned to the general direction without dictating "how" these goals will be achieved. The goals need to be broad as predetermined results should not be dictated when addressing wicked problems.	For example a strategic plan having a goal such as food secure, prosperous economy, sustainable environment or thriving families.

1.5 Establish appropriate boundaries	Does your initiative operate within appropriate boundaries?	Boundaries are important as they help focus efforts, and ensures the collective energy of initiatives and stakeholders are channeled to the wicked problem. These boundaries could be geographical such as a neighbourhood, local government area or electorate. Or they could be problem focused: focusing on part of the wicked problem.	For example an initiative that addresses part of the problem of food security such as food waste, food availability or access to food.
1.6 Embrace uncertainty	Does your initiative embrace uncertainty? Does the initiative highlight that there is no predetermined plan or outcome that it is trying to achieve?	Embracing uncertainty fosters creativity, innovation and promotes learning. It can help communities shift current perceptions and beliefs. It can circumvent people wanting to create predetermined outcomes.	For example an initiative that supports people to come together and collaboratively co-create future action.
1.7 Surface conflict	Does your initiative surface conflict? Does your initiative highlight that there are informational differences in the community? Or that there are a range of perspectives in the community about how to address the problem?	Surfacing conflict is important as it assists existing community systems to be disrupted. By surfacing conflict, communities can put spotlights on the informational differences, the diversity of perspectives within the community, and or showcase other ways to address the wicked problem.	For example a discussion paper that highlights different ways of thinking about an issue and different approaches to tackling the issue.
1.8 Create controversy	Does your initiative create controversy? Does your initiative make people feel uncomfortable about the current status quo of the problem?	Creating controversy helps to disrupt systems. Controversy creates discomfort which challenges the current way of working and highlights the need to take action on the problem.	For example an initiative that visually shows the amount of waste generated by disposable coffee cups in one day to highlight the need to use reusable cups.

Focus Area 2: Amplify action

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
2.1 Enable safe fail experimentation	Does your initiative allow for 'safe to fail' experimentation?	Safe to fail experiments are typically small and approach a problem in a new or innovative way. Experiments which produce favorable outcomes are reproduced, whilst experiments with unfavorable outcomes are allowed to fail and not be reproduced.	For example a library that experiments with converting a meeting room into a coworking space for small businesses can easily revert back to a meeting room if the opportunity is not taken up by small businesses.
2.2 Enable rich interactions in relational spaces	Does your initiative enable rich interactions in relational spaces? Does your initiative enable interested community stakeholders to come together, open up discussion, encourage dissent and diversity, and encourage new ideas to emerge?	Relational spaces are safe spaces created to enable rich interactions where diverse people come together to unpack, explore and discuss issues.	Examples of initiatives that enable rich interactions in relational spaces are well facilitated focus groups, large group consultations and world cafes.
2.3 Support collective action	Does your initiative support collective action? Is your initiative part of a collective effort to address a problem?	Collaborative leadership supports collective action. This approach inspires commitment and actions by other stakeholders, builds broad based involvement of the initiatives and organisations in the solution ecosystem and encourages participation by the diverse stakeholders.	Collective impact approaches are an example of an intervention that supports collective actions. The defining features of the collective impact approach are: long term commitments by a group of key actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, ongoing communication, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization
2.4 Partition the system	Does your initiative partition the system by breaking your work up into different focus areas that address different parts of the problem?	Partitioning the system involves breaking the activities of your initiative into several different work areas. This enables work undertaken in the separate areas to remain focused. It also enables experimentation and innovation within these work areas to occur without negative consequences to the whole initiative if something goes wrong in one of the separate work areas.	An example of an initiative that has partitioned the system would be an employment service that splits its activities into skills development, employment placement and post-placement support.

2.5 Establish network linkages	Does your initiative establish network linkages?	Establishing network linkages is where you create connections with other initiatives, organisations or individuals that are working on the same issue within the solution ecosystem. The aim is to create linkages with others that have expertise, contacts, and /or resources that enable your initiative to expand its activities.	Examples of initiatives that establish network linkages are ecosystem maps, networking events and project registries of initiatives.
2.6 Frame issues to match diverse perspectives	Does your initiative frame the issue in a way that matches diverse perspectives?	Framing issues to match diverse perspectives is where your initiative is described in a way that encompasses different points of view on the issue. This encourages individuals, groups and organisations that think differently about the issue to work together.	An example of an initiative that frames issues to match diverse perspectives is a discussion guide that provides information from diverse perspectives that is used as a briefing paper for a forum that aims to take action on an issue.

Focus Area 3: Encourage self-organisation

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
3.1 Create correlation through language and symbols	Does your initiative use language and symbols that enables stakeholders with diverse perspectives to have a shared understanding and direction?	Initiatives which create correlation through language and symbols encourage the sense making and sense giving required to assist the organisations and initiatives in the solution ecosystem to recombine in new ways that increase the functioning of the solution ecosystem. These initiatives encourage a shared understanding of the solution ecosystem.	An example might be an initiative that uses a hashtag to connect and identify people who have different experience of a problem - for example the hashtag #me-too that was used by people who identified as being part of the 'me too' movement.
3.2 Encourage individuals to accept positions as role models for the change effort	Does your initiative encourage individuals to accept positions as role models for the change effort?	Individuals that accept positions as role models for the change effort are relatable, provide meaning and create understanding for other stakeholders in the solution ecosystem this enables the organisations and initiatives to more easily recombine.	For example, an initiative that aims for community ownership having community members involved in its governance.
3.3 Enable periodic information exchanges between partitioned subsystems	Does your initiative enable the subsystems identified in question 2.4 to come together for periodic information exchanges?	Providing an opportunity for subsystems to come together and share information (through a structure, process or event) enables the separate subsystems to have an awareness of what is occurring across the whole solution ecosystem.	An example of an initiative that enables periodic information exchanges between partitioned subsystems would be a strategy that is spilt into working groups that have the opportunity to periodically come together to exchange information.
3.4 Enable resources and capabilities to recombine	Does your initiative enable resources and capabilities from stakeholders to come together?	Creating a structure, process or event that enables resources and capabilities from across the solution ecosystem to combine in new ways and supports the shift to a new way of working that is coherent.	An example of an initiative that has enabled resources and capabilities to come together would be an aged care centre that uses a schools computer training facility to offer training to seniors in the community.

Focus Area 4: Stabilise feedback

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
4. 1 Integrate local constraints	Does your initiative work within local constraints? Has the initiative been adapted to meet the local needs or context?	Initiatives that adapt to any local restrictions, limits or constraints will more likely gain legitimacy and therefore are better able stablise in the solution ecosystem.	For example, an initiative that was an outside bar that was too noisy for residents is moved inside a vacant building – it is adapted to meet local needs.
4.2 Provide a multiple perspective context and system structure	Does your initiative provide a structure for diverse stakeholders to continue their work together by supporting ongoing collaboration?	By providing a multiple perspective structure an initiative enables problems to be analyzed from multiple perspectives, to identify and conceive problems in new ways, and to avoid the inherent risks of working in insular environments.	For example an initiative such as a backbone organisation for a collective impact project or a membership organisation for diverse members of a network.
4.3 Enable problem representations to anchor in the community	Does the initiative provide a variety of materials and promotional activities to increase awareness and understanding of what it does to the broader community?	Initiatives that have artifacts that inform the solution ecosystem and broader community of their purpose and activities are more likely to become embedded within the solution ecosystem.	For example an initiative with a website, flyer, bumper stickers, key rings and other marketing materials that represents the problem and the initiative to the community.
4.4 Enable emergent outcomes to be monitored	Are unforeseen outputs and outcomes being monitored?	Through monitoring you can be aware of when the activities of an initiative produce desirable observable outcomes. Then they can be adopted and amplified. Likewise, through monitoring you can be aware when they do not produce desired outcomes and they can be allowed to fail in a contained and acceptable way.	For example an initiative such as a performance management system that enables non-predetermined outcomes to be recognised as they occur.

Focus Area 5: Enable information flows

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
5.1 Assist system members to keep informed and knowledgeable of forces influencing their community system	Does the initiative assist stakeholders to keep informed about forces influencing the problem you're addressing? Such as political, economic, social, technological, national and international forces	Initiatives that assist the solution ecosystem to stay informed of the political, economic, social, technological, national and international environmental forces that are influencing the problem to enable the initiative within the solution ecosystem to adapt.	For example an initiative that produces a newsletter that includes an article about how the development of a local industry will influence the problem or an information session about how a new government policy will influence the problem being addressed.
5.2 Assist in the connection, dissemination and processing of information	Does your initiative use technology or social media to process information and/or inform and present information about what you do?	Initiatives that use technology to process or disseminate information speed up the flow and connection of information around the solution ecosystem which assist the system to transition faster.	For example an initiative that uses social media such as Facebook to disseminate information or processing technologies such as Wicked Lab's Tool for Systemic Change to present information about its activities.
5.3 Enable connectivity between people who have different perspectives on community issues	Does your initiative enable stakeholders to connect who have different perspectives on community issues?	Initiatives that enable or increase connectivity between stakeholders that have a different perspective increases the coherence and inclusiveness of the solution ecosystem.	For example a forum that provides the opportunity for people with different perspectives to present their different approaches to the issue to a broader network.
5.4 Retain and reuse knowledge and ideas generated through interactions	Has your initiative been documented in a way so that its insights are accessible to the community currently and in the future?	Initiatives that create an accessible record of previous interactions, results and activities enable the solution ecosystem to learn and build on previous experience.	For example an initiative is recorded in a project register for a Local Government.

Unplanned Exploration of Solutions with Communities
Focus Area 6: Public administration – adaptive community interface

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
6.1 Assist public administrators to frame policies in a manner which enables community adaptation of policies	Does your initiative assist public administrators to frame policies in a manner that enables community adaptation of policies?	Adaptation of policies is important so community can implement government policies in a manner that fits the context of the community	Having a participatory budgeting challenge for food insecurity which enables the community to implement a food insecurity policy in a way that takes advantage of their resources, capabilities and context. Similarly, the initiative that won the challenge would also include this characteristic.
6.2 Remove information differences to enable the ideas and views of citizens to align to the challenges being addressed by governments	Does your initiative remove information differences to enable the ideas and views of citizens to align to the challenges being addressed by governments?	If citizens have access to relevant information that governments hold, they can make more informed decisions when developing and implementing initiatives.	An example would be a government department making their strategic plan or organisational chart easily accessible online. Similarly, if an initiative used the available government information it would also have that characteristic.
6.3 Encourage and assist street level workers to take into account the ideas and views of citizens	Does your initiative encourage and assist street level workers (public sector and non-profit workers who interact directly with citizens) to take into account the ideas and views of citizens?	The ideas of citizen are important to contextualise and provide new and innovative insights and information for a given place. Taking into account the ideas of citizens also encourages community ownership and strengthens democracy.	For example governments collaborating and/ or empowering citizens through a community engagement process. Similarly, an initiative where the citizens have been empowered by street level workers through a community engagement process would also contain this characteristic.

Unplanned Exploration of Solutions with Communities
Focus Area 7: Elected government – adaptive community interface

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
7.1 Assist elected members to frame policies in a manner which enables community adaptation of policies	Does the initiative assist elected members to frame policies in a manner which enables community adaptation of policies?	Adaptation of policies is important so community can implement government policies in a manner that fits the context of the community	For example, when elected officials provide a narrative that incorporates the values and the mindset implicit in the policy which attracts communities to develop initiatives that implement that policy. Similarly if an initiative was inspired by the policy narrative, the initiative would also have this characteristics.
7.2 Assist elected members to take into account the ideas and views of citizens	Does your initiative assist elected members to take into account the ideas and views of citizens?	It is important for elected members to take into account the ideas of citizen, as they provide knowledge and innovative ideas about the elected members electorate and /or portfolio responsibilities.	For example, having an elected member on an initiative's management committee. Similarly the initiative itself would have this characteristic.

Planned Exploitation of Community Knowledge, Ideas and Innovations
Focus Area 8: Community innovation – public administration interface

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
8.1 Encourage and assist street level workers to exploit the knowledge, ideas and innovations of citizens	Does your initiative encourage and assist street level workers (public sector and non-profit workers who interact directly with citizens) to exploit the knowledge, ideas and innovations of citizens?	By encouraging and assisting street level workers to take the knowledge and innovation back into the bureaucracy the insights can be used in other contexts in the future.	For example, job descriptions and performance criteria that recognise the need for street level workers to gather and record community insights. Templates that assist with the gathering and recording of this information are also examples of this characteristic. Similary, an initiative that the worker with such a job description was working on, or initiatives that are included in such a template would also contain this characteristic.
8.2 Bridge community-led activities and projects to the strategic plans of governments	Does your initiative bridge community-led activities and projects to the strategic plans of governments?	As these initiatives align to government policies and directions, their implementation contributes to the achievement of the government directions. This can be recognised and measured.	For example, protocols that bridge community initiatives to government plans and formal alliance/partnership programs that encourage community initiatives to align to the strategic plans of government. Similarly, the community-led activities that are bridged would contain this characteristic.
8.3 Gather, retain and reuse community knowledge and ideas in other contexts	Does your initiative gather, retain and reuse community knowledge and ideas in other contexts?	Systems must be in place that enables the storing and accessing of community information so that it can be used in other contexts in the future.	For example, a project register that records initiative information so that information and insights can be used in other contexts in the future. Similarly, if an initiative was included in a project register it would also include this characteristic.

Planned Exploitation of Community Knowledge, Ideas and Innovations
Focus Area 9: Community innovation – elected government interface

Initiative Characteristics	Question	Why is it important	Example
9.1 Encourage and assist elected members to exploit the knowledge, ideas and innovations of citizens	Does your initiative encourage and assist elected members to exploit the knowledge, ideas and innovations of citizens?	By encouraging and assisting elected members to use the knowledge and innovation they will make more informed policy decisions for their electorate or area of portfolio responsibility.	For example, briefing papers and or templates that include insights from community initiatives in their electorate or portfolio of responsibility. Similarly, the initiative(s) that were included in the briefing papers and / or templates would also contain this characteristic.
9.2 Collect, analyse, synthesise, reconfigure, manage and represent community information that is relevant to the electorate or area of portfolio responsibility of elected members	Does your initiative collect, analyse, synthesise, reconfigure, manage and represent community information that is relevant to the electorate or area of portfolio responsibility of elected members?	Systems must be in place that enable the storing and access to community information so that it can be used in other policy contexts in the future.	For example a project register that aligns the insights from initiatives to electorate and portfolio information. Similarly, an initiative included in the project register would also contain this characteristic.