



HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Local opportunities

for healthy planning: the IP&R Framework

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Healthy planning principles and objectives are important and local government needs to find ways to put these principles into practice to enhance community wellbeing in real places where people live, work and play. The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework provides a great opportunity to do just this. Here we explain how the framework can be used to set long term visions, delivery plans and monitoring regimes to create local environments that support health.

Local government amalgamations provide challenges and opportunities for enhancing healthy planning. Forthcoming local council elections and the ensuing need to update Community Strategic Plans (CSPs) as part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) process, will afford one such opportunity. CSPs are comprehensive, long terms plans, developed in close consultation with the community, that span the full spectrum of local council roles and responsibilities. These plans establish a council's vision and goals, as well as priorities and allocation of resources, which are subsequently developed through a Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The suite of plans is subject to formal, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that the vision is translated into reality. Review of the CSPs coincides with the council four year election cycle and other monitoring requirements (such as those mandated for local land-use plans). The Office of Local Government has both information and resources to assist local councils to prepare and monitor their plans.¹

Healthy planning and the IP&R Framework

The IP&R Framework is the principal planning and reporting tool for local councils. Healthy planning can be addressed at all levels of the framework, from raising issues during community/stakeholder engagement, through setting goals, objectives and strategies in the CSPs, to determining specific actions in the four year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan. The NSW Premier's Council for Active Living (PCAL) has developed a comprehensive web based resource to assist communities, planners and other local council officers to incorporate healthy planning within each stage of the IP&R process.² The resource focuses on elements of strategic design that promote active travel, recreation and open spaces, incorporate healthy eating strategies and actions, and provide a wealth of information on every phase of the IP&R process.

Using the PCAL IP&R resource

The PCAL IP&R resource can assist local councils to embed healthy eating and active living strategies into their CSPs, delivery

and action plans. For example, an objective to 'increase community access to healthy food options' can be operationalised in different ways including: 'ensure that healthy food outlets are easily accessible by active travel'; 'provide fresh drinking water in public places'; and 'implement a council procurement policy on healthy food options' (PCAL IP&R website). Many of the actions on the site are linked to examples of how they can be implemented in local council policies (for example, Cessnock City Council's healthier oils initiative to reduce saturated and trans-fat intake and the Illawarra Regional Food Strategy).

Major sources of potential funding are also included on the PCAL IP&R website. Several state agencies offer periodic funding opportunities for local councils to encourage implementation of healthy planning infrastructure. For example, NSW Roads and Maritime Services 50:50 funding to construct active transport infrastructure and activity programs is currently available. Local council submissions to the program are encouraged to demonstrate how the proposal links with existing IP&R plans.

Into the future...

The NSW Government has announced that just over 80 local councils not subject to mergers are to proceed with local council elections in September 2016. The majority of these councils are non-metropolitan. The remaining councils that are merging (or subject to merger proposals) are scheduled to undertake local council elections in September 2017. CSPs are updated as part of local council elections and articulate the community priorities that are determined during compulsory pre-election community consultations. Accordingly, the period prior to local council elections provides a significant opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to influence forthcoming CSP updates. Make sure you use the PCAL IP&R resource as you go about this critical work to ensure that your community develops a health supportive environment ■

Endnotes

¹ See: www.olg.nsw.gov.au

² See: www.nswpcalipr.com.au



Figure 1: The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework showing relationships between plans and the evaluation and monitoring process (Source: www.olg.nsw.gov.au, 2016)