



# Child Friendly Communities Engagement Framework

## Version 1.0

### Sensemaking and Action

Developed by ARACY for the Australian Government  
Department of Social Services



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*Please note that this resource is a working version for use among Facilitating and Community Partners of the Communities for Children Program (CfC) and is not for general circulation.*

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## How to use this Framework

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This Framework is composed of 4 sections (see Figure 4.1):

1. Introduction – information regarding the underlying concepts of The Nest (Children’s Wellbeing Framework), Child-friendly Communities, and Why Children’s Voice is important
2. Planning – considerations of the purpose and resourcing of consultations/data collection
3. Listening – considerations in developing and implementing a localised tool or approach
4. **Sensemaking and action– Synthesising and analysing information and data, and implementing feedback loops**

It is supported by the following attached Appendices:

Appendix A: Statement and Prompts Relevant to Section 3: Listening

Appendix B: Tool Examples Relevant to Section 3: Listening

Appendix C: Resources and References

Figure 4.1 shows the potential sequence you may work through the Framework. The process, however, may not be linear. Users may revisit earlier sections or steps, or jump through certain sections and steps, depending on their circumstances.

Each section includes:

- General information and links to existing resources
- Prompts for you and/or your team or working group to consider and work through
- Reflexive questions to consider after each step
- Worksheets and ideas for activities to be used in workshops or team meetings

## Section 4: Sensemaking and Action

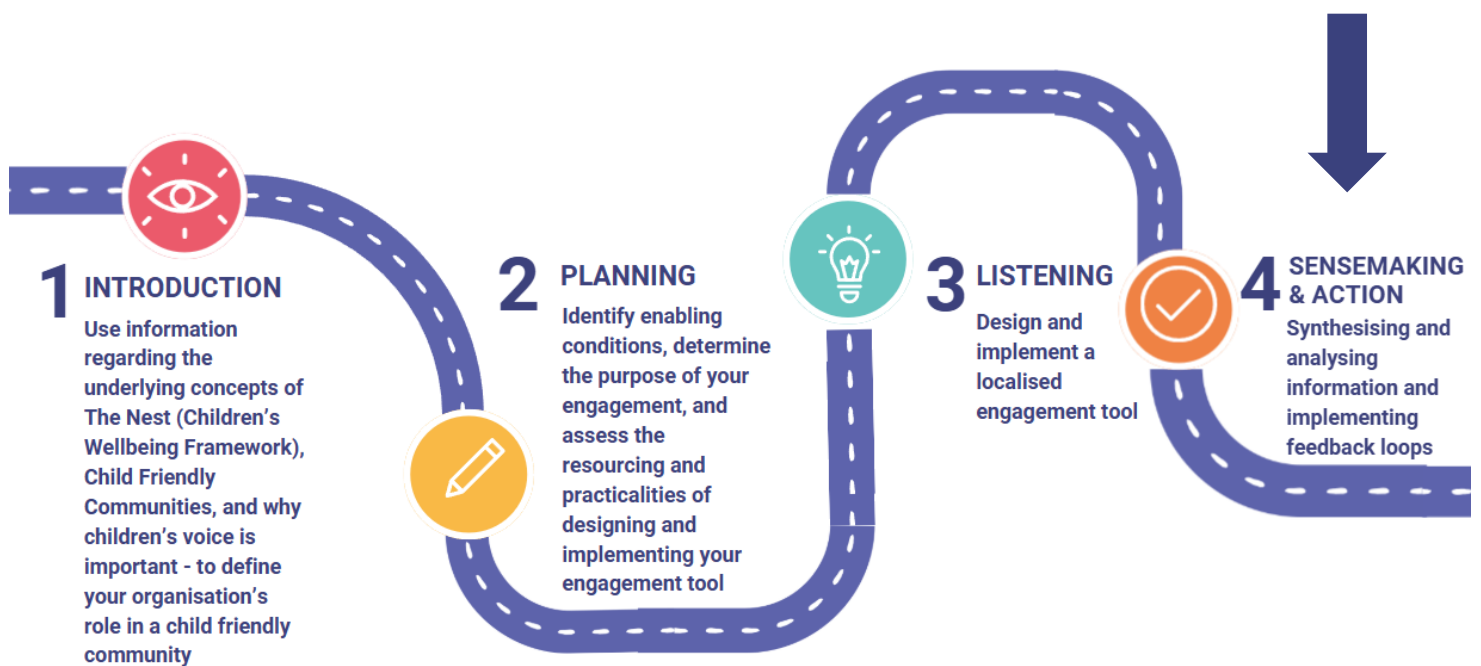
This section explores the cyclical process of interpreting and actioning findings from consultations.

### Outcomes

This section provides guidance and information on:

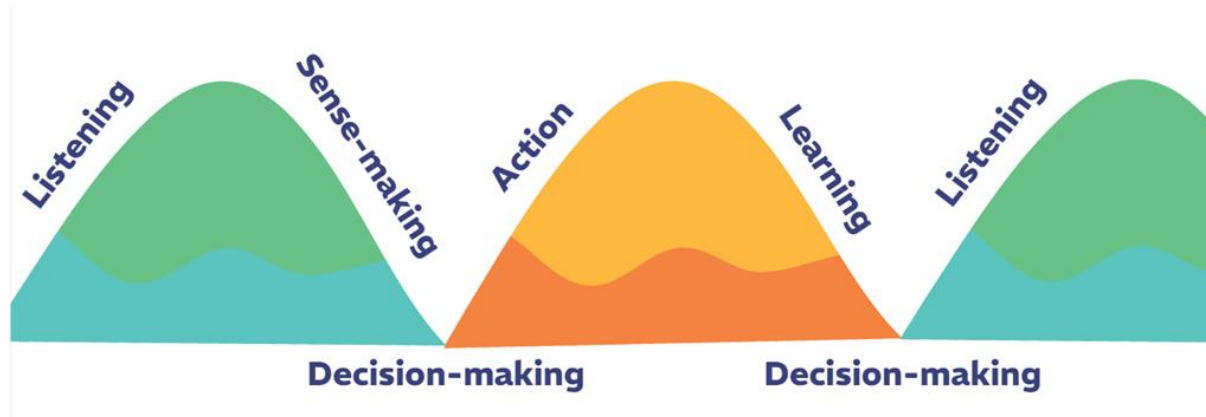
1. Ways to interpret, analyse and synthesise the information and data you have collected in your engagement.
2. How to collaboratively and in a child-centred way use your findings to inform decision-making, actions, and learnings (including incorporating feedback loops).

Figure 4.1: Roadmap of Child-friendly Communities Engagement Framework



## From engagement to action – what do we need to do?

Figure 4.2



This diagram (Figure 4.2) outlines a practical pathway for turning child engagement into meaningful action. It encourages us to move beyond simply listening to children and toward making real, tangible changes based on what they share.

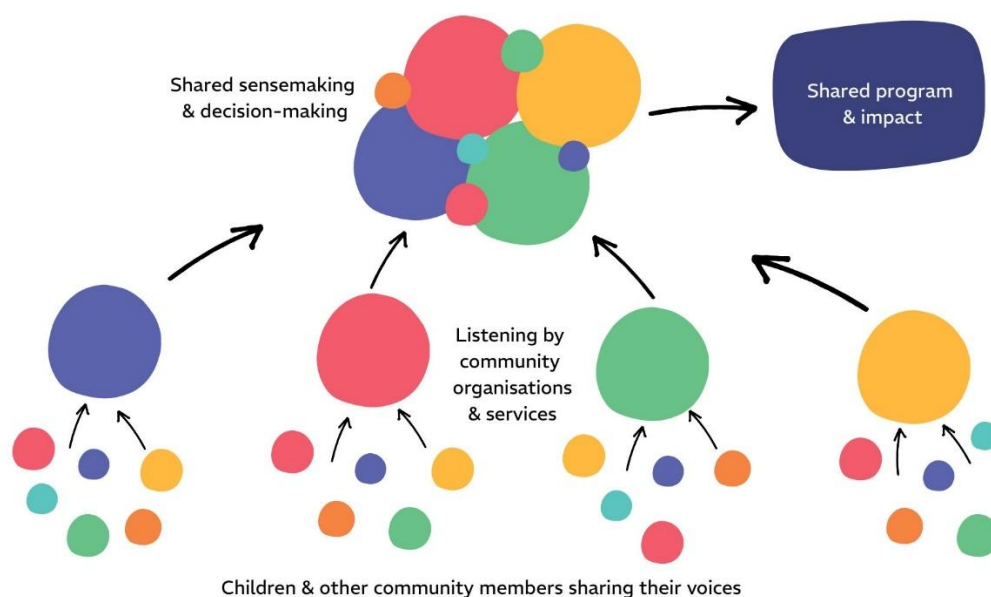
The process involves 5 interconnected and continuous steps: listening, sense-making, decision-making, action and learning.

- **Listening:** Creating safe, inclusive spaces where children feel heard.
- **Sense-making:** Interpreting and understanding what children have shared in a respectful and meaningful way.
- **Decision-making:** Generating findings and insights and deciding on next steps.
- **Action:** Translating findings and insights into meaningful action in practice, policy, and/or collaboration.
- **Learning:** Reflecting on the progress of actions, what worked, what didn't, what could be improved.

## Sensemaking

Sensemaking is about interpreting what children share so their voices lead to meaningful action and decision-making. This may look different, and involve different people, depending on your context, including the purpose of your engagement, the type of information and data you collected, and local place-based factors. Figure 4.3 below shows the visual representation of the process of listening to children and other voices in parallel, but working together to interpret and understand the findings, and/or make decisions and take action.

Figure 4.3



### Circling Back

When making sense of your data and information, circle back to the following from the Planning Section:

- People and groups that need to be part of the sensemaking process and provided with the findings

*This may include:*

- *Participating children*
- *Families and carers*
- *Consultation and engagement facilitators*
- *Individuals and groups that will provide follow-up information and support, and are potentially accountable for follow-up actions. This may include relevant funders, government departments, project teams, community organisations or services, local Elders or other important community members.*

## Interpreting – analysing and synthesising

### Types of Data

The process of interpreting types of data varies according to the type of data you are dealing with – whether it is qualitative or quantitative in nature.

#### Qualitative data

Qualitative data is information that is language-based, visual or audio. It captures narratives, descriptions or opinions, that can be quantified but is primarily used to establish themes or experiences. The benefit of this data is that it is not constrained by pre-determined response-types, and can be used to examine the 'why' behind observations.

**Interpreting and analysing: Extract the recurring ideas, themes and patterns that emerge from the information collected. These can be grouped into categories that you may already have formed (e.g., Nest domains, indicators of outcomes or impacts), or categories created from the content of the information.**

#### Quantitative data

Quantitative data is information that can be quantified into numbers or numeric values, such as counts, averages, or ratings. This also includes categories which can be numbered and turned into counts (i.e. how many people select certain categories of responses). The benefit of this data is that it can be standardised and compared across groups, and be statistically analysed to examine whether certain variables or characteristics are related to each other (ie. are associated or correlated with each other), or vary to each other in a consistent way. The limitation of this data is that it can be difficult to interpret the 'why' of patterns and other findings.

**Interpreting and analysing: Examine the total numbers, proportions or averages of the different categories included in the engagement tool survey questions. This may include examining changes over time, or differences between groups (i.e. age, place, background, project participation status etc.)?**

In the context of the engagement tool developed using this Framework, most of the data generated will be qualitative. However, quantitative data can be generated through responses to survey questions developed using the closed statements, or multiple-choice responses from survey questions from open statements.

When interpreting data identify:

- Process/es for children to be part of the interpretation of the findings  
*For visual or creative outputs, this could include notes taken and responses to follow-up questions asked on the day of the engagement about their work (e.g. "Tell me about what you drew/created? Why did you decide to include that in your drawing/creation?"). For any kinds of data (including quantitative), this could also include opportunities for children to provide feedback on the findings of initial analysis.*

...and ensure

- The data is analysed according to what was agreed to by parents/carers and children in the informed consent process (e.g. quotes are anonymous etc.)

## Circling Back

When analysing your data, circle back to the considerations in the Planning Section, specifically:

Purpose

- What is the purpose of your engagement? *What questions do you need the data and information to answer, and what analyses would support that?*

See also Section 8 of Children's Voices for more information on analysing data from consultations with children.

## Synthesising

Synthesising your findings from consultations with children involves interpreting it within existing data and information from other sources, or at different times and/or places.

### Circling Back

When synthesising your data, circle back to the considerations in the Planning Section, specifically:

#### Purpose

- Existing internal or external data and information the findings from your engagement can be analysed with
- Engagements with family and community this can sit alongside

For examples of synthesised analyses, see:

- [Thriving Kids in Disasters](#)
- [City of Ballarat Municipal Early Years Plan 2022-2026](#)

## Decision-making and Action

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This process involves using the synthesised information from your consultations to make decision on next steps, and to action these.

### Identify:

- Outside of those already taking part in the sense-making process, who needs to be involved in the decision-making and action process, and what would that involvement look like? Specifically: *What individuals, groups, services, and organisations are relevant to the topics and issues raised in the consultations?*
- The next steps and actions as determined through the sense-making process, and who to provide the findings and feedback to

To meaningfully involve children in this process, ensure that the feedback provided to them is (see Lundy, 2018):

#### **Full**

Demonstrate that their views have been considered, and include a comprehensive explanation of which views will be acted upon, and which will not be, and why.

Providing answers to: *What did you agree with? What surprised you and why? What did you disagree with and why? Who is taking this forward? When will this happen and what is happening next?*

#### **Friendly**

Feedback should be delivered in a way is accessible – this extends to ensure that not just a summation of the findings are provided, but on how the findings will be used and that they were taken seriously.

#### **Fast**

Feedback should be delivered in a timely way, before children age-out, or their momentum or interest is lost.

#### **Followed-up**

Feedback should be delivered in a timely way, before children age-out, or the momentum or their interest is lost.

For more information see

- 'Involving' section of the [Centre for Community Child Health Voice of the Child Toolkit](#)
- Section 9 of [Children's Voices](#)

## Circling Back

When using your data to make decisions and act, circle back to the considerations in the [Planning Section](#), specifically:

Purpose

- What is the purpose of your engagement with children about the extent and nature their community is child-friendly? What are you going to use the information for? *This will inform your next step actions. If the purpose is to inform a needs-analysis and/or project/service/policy design, how do the findings inform features, resources, or adaptations?*

## Learning – Reflexive questions

Once you have interpreted the product/s of your engagement and have used the information to inform decisions and actions, these reflexive questions may inform your next steps.

- Would we conduct the engagement again? *Why or why not? What would we do differently?*
- Who was involved in the sensemaking and decision-making process? Who was not? Who should be next time?
- What has been the impact of incorporating children's voices? How has this improved or validated our service/project/policy/advocacy or collaboration?
- How can our findings further inform our organisations' outcomes and impacts/or project logic?
- What, if any, further capacity-building or connections are required if our organisation were to conduct engagement again?
- How can we embed further engagement with children into our business-as-usual?

## Thinking and Discussion Activities

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The following worksheets are designed to help organisations take action with their teams in prompting important discussions and allowing time and space to lay strong foundations of practice before engaging with children. This exercise can assist with internal planning and management to ensure operational factors have been considered.

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN SENSEMAKING AND DECISION-MAKING?

PURPOSE AND USE OF DATA	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED IN DATA ANALYSIS AND SENSEMAKING?	HOW MIGHT THEY BE INVOLVED?	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DECISION-MAKING?	HOW WILL DECISIONS BE MADE AND SHARED?