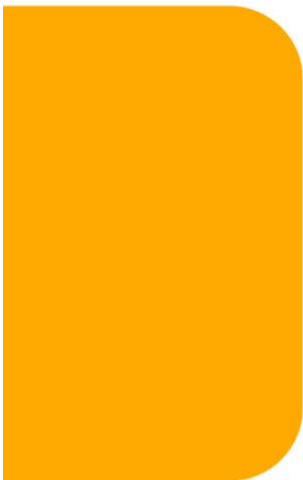


**SOCIAL IMPACT  
MEASUREMENT  
FRAMEWORK**



**FEBRUARY 2026**



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## 1 Purpose of the Measurement Framework

The Ballarat Foundation Social Impact Measurement Framework provides a structured and practical approach to understanding how the Foundation’s grants and programs contribute to meaningful change in the community. It translates the Theory of Change and the 2024–2028 Strategy and into a small, consistent set of outcomes and indicators that can be measured, aggregated, and reported over time.

The framework is designed to:

- Demonstrate contribution to community-level change
- Support learning and improvement in the Foundation’s on-going strategic work
- Enable consistent reporting across diverse programs
- Align with the Australian Government’s Measuring What Matters (MWM) wellbeing framework
- Avoid over-burdening funded organisations and staff.

The framework focuses on outcomes (changes experienced by people or communities), rather than only activities or outputs.

## 2 How the Framework is Structured

The Framework operates across four linked layers:

1. Foundation Outcomes (strategic level)
2. Focus Area Outcomes (focus-area level)
3. Indicator Codes (measurement level)
4. Grantee and Program Data (project level)

Data flows upward from grantee reporting to priority area indicators and then to Foundation outcomes.



### 3 Foundation Outcomes

Foundation outcomes describe the highest-level changes the Foundation seeks to contribute to:

#### **FO1 – Reduced disadvantage in the Ballarat area**

Represents measurable improvements in the material and social conditions that limit people’s ability to meet basic needs and participate fully in community life.

#### **FO2 – Increased community connection and cohesion**

Represents stronger relationships, trust, and a sense of belonging within and between communities. This includes increased social participation, reduced isolation, and improved connections across diverse groups.

#### **FO3 – Improved life opportunities**

Represents increased access to pathways that enable individuals to improve their long-term prospects.

#### **FO4 – Stronger community-led solutions**

Represents the capacity of communities to identify, design, lead or play a role in shaping solutions that respond to local challenges. This includes increased leadership, participation in decision-making, and locally driven approaches to addressing disadvantage.

Foundation outcomes are not measured directly through separate data collection. Instead, they are calculated by rolling up relevant focus area indicators that have been mapped to each Foundation outcome.

### 4 Focus Area Outcomes

Each strategic focus area has one or more clearly defined outcome. Examples of focus area outcomes include:

- Food insecurity – Households experience improved access to sufficient and nutritious food
- Youth support – Young people increase their readiness for employment, education or training
- Mental health – Participants experience improved mental wellbeing
- Homelessness – Participants experience improved housing stability
- Community equity & leadership – People from priority cohorts increase participation in community decision-making

These outcomes describe the type of change expected for people or communities within each focus area. See Appendix 1 for the full set of outcomes and outcome indicators.

## **5 Cross Cutting Outcomes**

The focus area outcomes are largely individual outcome domains related to a specific topic. However, Foundation outcomes 2 and 4 are relational and systemic outcomes which cut across each of the focus area outcomes. Foundation outcome 2 responds to community connection, while Foundation outcome 4 relates to community-led solutions and building social capital to address disadvantage in Ballarat.

## **6 Quantitative Stream**

### **6.1 Indicator Codes**

Each focus area outcome is paired with a small number of standardised indicator codes (e.g., FI1, YS1, MH1). Indicator codes define exactly how change will be measured, for example:

FI1 – % participants running out of food less often

Y1 – % youth completing licence, training or credentials

MH1 – % participants reporting improved wellbeing

Indicator codes act as the common language across all programs and grants. In their final acquittal, grantees will select or are assigned indicator codes that best reflect the changes their project contributes to.

### **6.2 Grantee Reporting**

Grantees create their own outcome measures as part of their grant applications, but the Community Impact Manager will assign the most closely aligned indicator codes to these outcomes. For each relevant indicator, grantees provide:

- The number of participants experiencing change (both direct and indirect), which is disaggregated by gender.
- The degree to which the outcome was achieved
- Type of evidence used (survey, observation, admin data, etc.)
- Outcome strength rating (1–5)

Each row in the dataset represents one project reporting against one indicator code.

### **6.3 Program reporting**

The programs run by the Ballarat Foundation already have their own program logic, with set outcomes. These outcomes are mapped against the focus area outcomes and the Foundation outcomes in the same way that the grantee outcome measures are mapped.

### **6.4 Outcome Strength Rating (1–5)**

The outcome rating provides an indication of the depth or strength of change:

- 1 = Minimal change
- 3 = Moderate change
- 5 = Transformational change

The rating is used for learning and interpretation, not for calculating participant totals or ranking organisations. Clear instructions and definitions will be provided to grantees to help them make a self-assessment.

### **6.5 Program outputs**

The current grants management database collects output data from grantees and will provide complementary evidence to support outcome results.

Non-grant programs, for example Volunteering Ballarat and the TAC L2P program, also collect output data through the MEL databases established by the Community Impact Manager.

### **6.6 Aggregation and Reporting**

Aggregation occurs by indicator code:

- Participant numbers are summed for each indicator
- Indicators are grouped under their focus areas
- Indicators are then mapped to Foundation outcome codes

This allows the Foundation to report statements such as: “In 2026, Ballarat Foundation funded projects contributed to improved food security for approximately 450 people and improved life opportunities for 320 young people.”

## **7 Qualitative Stream**

In addition to quantitative outcome indicators, the Ballarat Foundation will collect significant change stories as a complementary qualitative data source. Significant change stories will be sourced primarily through interviews with participants and acquittal reporting.

The Community Impact Manager will tag each story to the relevant focus area, indicator code, and Foundation outcome. Stories will not be used as standalone evidence of scale or performance, rather, they will be used to illustrate how change occurs, provide context for quantitative results, and support organisational learning. One important function of the significant change stories is to collect unintended impacts, both positive and negative.

A small, curated selection of significant change stories will be used annually in Foundation reporting, to relevant donors, external communications, and on the Ballarat Foundation website.

## **8 Alignment with Measuring What Matters**

Each indicator is mapped to the Federal Government's Measuring What Matters (MWM) Framework. Each indicator is mapped against the MWM Theme (e.g., Living Standards, Health, Cohesive Society, Environment) and then the MWM Domain: (e.g., Food Security, Housing, Mental Health, Social Connection). This enables national alignment to a set of similar indicators.

The reason we use the MWM Framework is:

1. Strategic coherence. The MWM Framework represents the Australian government's agreed national wellbeing architecture and has a closer line of sight in terms of systems change.
2. Sense making and framing. The MWM framework gives us a clear classification system for our focus areas and is better aligned than other measures such as the Sustainable Development Goals, often used by grant makers and philanthropic organisations.
3. Contextual benchmarking. Because the MWM is built from population databases, it allows the Ballarat Foundation to place our results alongside a broader population context.

It should be noted that aligning with the MWM framework is not for the function of benchmarking because we are only measuring program-level change and there is no causal link.

## **9 Alignment with Vital Signs**

Where the MWM framework is the broader population level context, our Vital Signs report is the local level context layer that sits alongside the Foundation's program-level outcome data and is the bridge between our results and the MWM domains.

The Vital Signs report answers what’s happening in Ballarat and provides population level conditions, trends and gaps at the local government level. Vital Signs is used for sense-making and, with the Vital Conversation piece, lets us know what the community thinks are important focus areas. The results of our Social Impact Measurement framework let us know the degree to which we are contributing to the focus area-level outcomes.

The Vital Signs report provides evidence on what focus areas the Ballarat Foundation should fund from year to year. The report is a decision and interpretation tool and provides clear line of sight to meet the Foundation’s strategic goals.

It is important to note that we cannot make causality claims between our grant or Foundation level outcomes and the Vital Signs report (e.g.: that because of our funding we have “moved the needle” in a Vital Sign domain or indicator<sup>1</sup>). This is because the Ballarat Foundation work is too small/narrow to make a significant impact on the domain system.

## **10 What this Framework Does and Does Not Do**

This Social Impact Measurement Framework:

- Measures contribution, not attribution
- Focuses on short- to medium-term outcomes
- Supports aggregation and learning

The Framework does not:

- Attempt to measure whole-of-community impact
- Replace population datasets (ABS, AIHW, etc.)
- Create excessive reporting burden for grantees.

## **11 Learning and Continuous Improvement**

The Ballarat Foundation uses data from this framework not only for reporting, but as a structured tool to improve how we design, fund, and deliver programs.

Data collected through indicator codes, outcome strength ratings, and qualitative insights will be reviewed regularly to identify:

- Patterns of effectiveness across focus areas
- Variations in outcomes between different types of projects

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<sup>1</sup> This was a KPI in the 2024-2028 Strategy

- Indicators that consistently show strong or weak results
- Gaps where outcomes are not being achieved or measured well
- Unintended outcomes, both positive and negative

This analysis will occur at both the indicator level and the Foundation outcome level, enabling insight into what is working across the system, not just within individual grants.

### 11.1 Improving processes and tools

Insights from the data will be used to refine internal systems, including:

- **Grant guidelines** by adjusting priorities and eligibility criteria based on evidence of what leads to stronger outcomes
- **Application forms** by improving how applicants articulate outcomes so there is better alignment with focus area outcomes and indicator codes
- **Acquittal forms** by further simplifying reporting requirements or providing more instruction on how to improve the quality and consistency of outcome data
- **Indicator set** by refining or replacing indicators that are unclear, difficult to measure, or not producing meaningful data
- **Assessment guidelines** by providing more guidance to the assessment panel on what a good project logic look likes and what types of activities are more likely to lead to success.

This ensures the framework remains practical and reduces unnecessary burden on funded organisations

### 11.2 Strengthening Practice and Decision-making

Learning from the framework will inform:

- **Funding decisions** by prioritising approaches that demonstrate stronger or more consistent outcomes
- **Program design** by adjusting Foundation-run programs based on evidence of participant outcomes
- **Strategic planning** by identifying emerging needs, gaps, and opportunities across the Foundation's focus areas
- **Sector development** by sharing insights with funded organisations and the broader community to improve collective impact.

### 11.3 Learning Cycle

Learning will occur through structured cycles:

- Annual analysis of aggregated outcome data
- Periodic review of indicator performance
- Integration of significant change stories to understand how and why change occurs
- Ongoing refinement of the framework as part of implementation stages

This approach ensures the framework remains adaptive, evidence-informed, and aligned with the Foundation's strategic objectives.

## 12 Next Steps

The implementation of the Measurement Framework will commence immediately because the revised grant strategy and guidelines have been signed off. There will be a staged approach:

Stage 1 – Coding this year's grant acquittal outcomes based on the revised acquittal form (due June 2025).

Stage 2 - Refining of indicators based on testing. Due August 2026

Stage 3 – Introducing dropdowns and automation in the Framework database once indicators have been finalised. Due mid-July 2026

Stage 4 – Updating acquittal forms to include outcome grading. Due August 2026.

This staged approach reduces risk and supports continuous improvement.

### 13 Appendix 1: Program level outcomes and Outcome Indicators

Focus Area	Outcome	Indicator Code	BF Outcome Code	Indicator Description	Data Source	Frequency	MWM Theme	MWM Domain
Food insecurity	Households experience improved access to sufficient and nutritious food	FI1	FO1	% participants running out of food less often	Grantee report	Annual	Prosperous	Household income and wealth
Food insecurity	Household members increase food preparation skills and confidence	FI2	FO3	% participants reporting increased food skills and confidence	Grantee report	Annual	Prosperous	Skills development
Youth support	Young people increase their readiness for employment, education or training	Y1	FO3	% youth completing licence/training/credential/skills	Program data, Grantee report	Annual	Prosperous	Skills development
Youth support	Young people experience reduced social isolation	Y2	FO2	% youth reporting feeling less socially isolated	Program data, Grantee report	Annual	Cohesive	Social connections
Family violence	Participants increase knowledge of the drivers of gendered violence	FV1	FO2	% participants reporting increased knowledge of the drivers of gendered violence	Grantee report	Annual	Secure	Experience of violence
Mental health	Participants experience improved mental wellbeing	MH1	FO2	% participants reporting improved wellbeing	Grantee report	Annual	Health	Mental health
Homelessness	Participants experience improved housing stability	H1	FO1	% participants moving to more stable housing	Grantee report	Annual	Secure	Financial security and access to housing
Community equity & leadership	People from priority cohorts increase participation in community decision-making	CEL1	FO4	% participants reporting increased confidence to participate	Grantee report	Annual	Cohesive	Civic engagement
Environment	Participants adopt more sustainable behaviours	EV1	FO1	% participants adopting sustainable practices	Grantee report	Annual	Sustainable	Protect Repair and manage the Environment
Early Childhood Support	Children experience improved early literacy and development readiness for school	EC1`	FO1	% participants reporting age-appropriate early literacy and school readiness	Grantee report	Annual	Prosperous	Education