Evaluating civic activity:
The University of Winchester story

This pack

This pack contains the slides presented by Sarah-Louise Collins, Head of Widening Participation at the University of Winchester at a Civic University Network webinar on March 9th 2021.

It also includes:
- The University of Winchester Flourishing Communities Framework
- The University of Winchester's Draft Evaluation Framework

Civic University Network

Flourishing Communities – Evaluating our Civic Impact

Civic University Network Webinar – 09 March 2021

Sarah-Louise Collins,
Director of Widening Participation

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WINCHESTER

Community Engagement ➡ Community Impact

- ## Community Engagement Strategy (2012-2016)
  - Institution focused and activity level
  - Lack of coherence, impact evaluation, and understanding of community needs

- ## Community Impact Strategy (2017-2020)
  - Community focussed, asset-based, strategic level
  - Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)
  - Solution-focused (de Shazer *et al*, 1986)
  - Aims:
    - improve coherence;
    - enhance reach and impact;
    - improve awareness and reputation

VISION	PARTNERSHIP	ASSETS
Our commitment to build thriving lives	**Our commitment to genuine partnership**	**Our commitment to use our best assets**
We will seek to understand what makes communities thrive and work with them to realise this shared vision	We will work to combine our best assets with those of key partners to impact on targeted priorities	We will continually enhance our assets and their effective application to community impact

All life and communities thrive sustainably

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Values driven, asset-based and community focussed
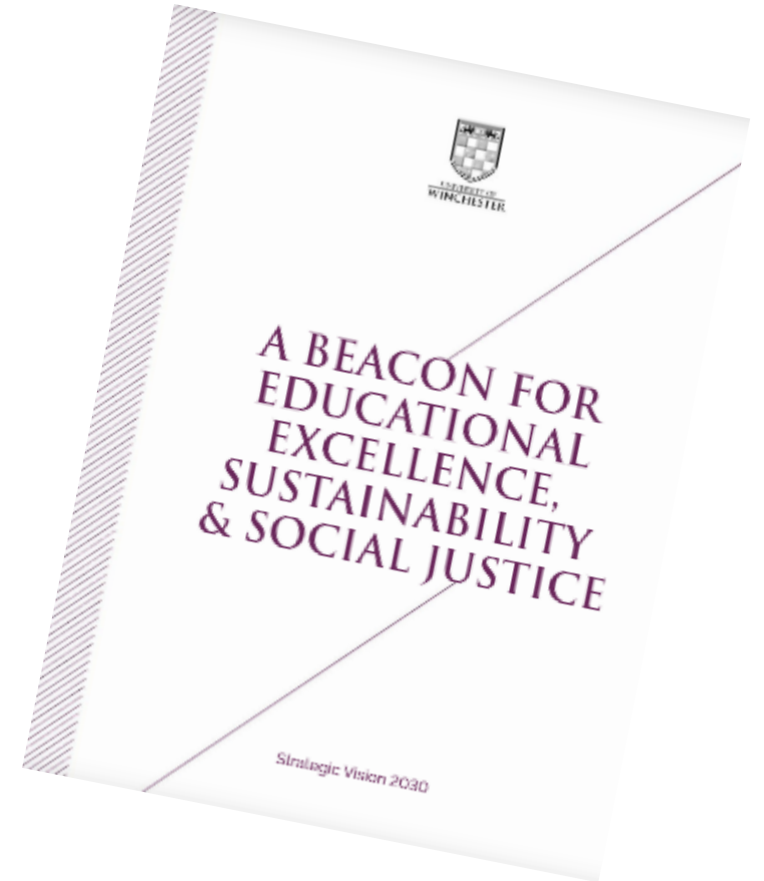
All life and communities thrive sustainably

Developing a community impact framework

- New strategy, limited resource

- Tender for external consultants and established a working group

- *Phase 1 – Consultation* – identify features of flourishing communities and how university can most effectively create a positive community impact

- *Phase 2 – Information Gathering* – audit of current activity against features identified in consultation

- *Phase 3 – Develop a theory of change* (Community Impact Framework) and Evaluation Framework

- Tiller acted as a critical friend and facilitator for working group discussion

All life and communities thrive sustainably

A community where people…

Work together

Care for each other
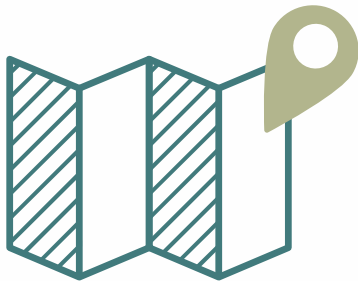
Learn and grow

Have a sense of place

Feel connected

Feel safe
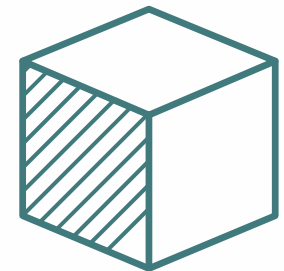
Feel stable

Important features of a flourishing community:
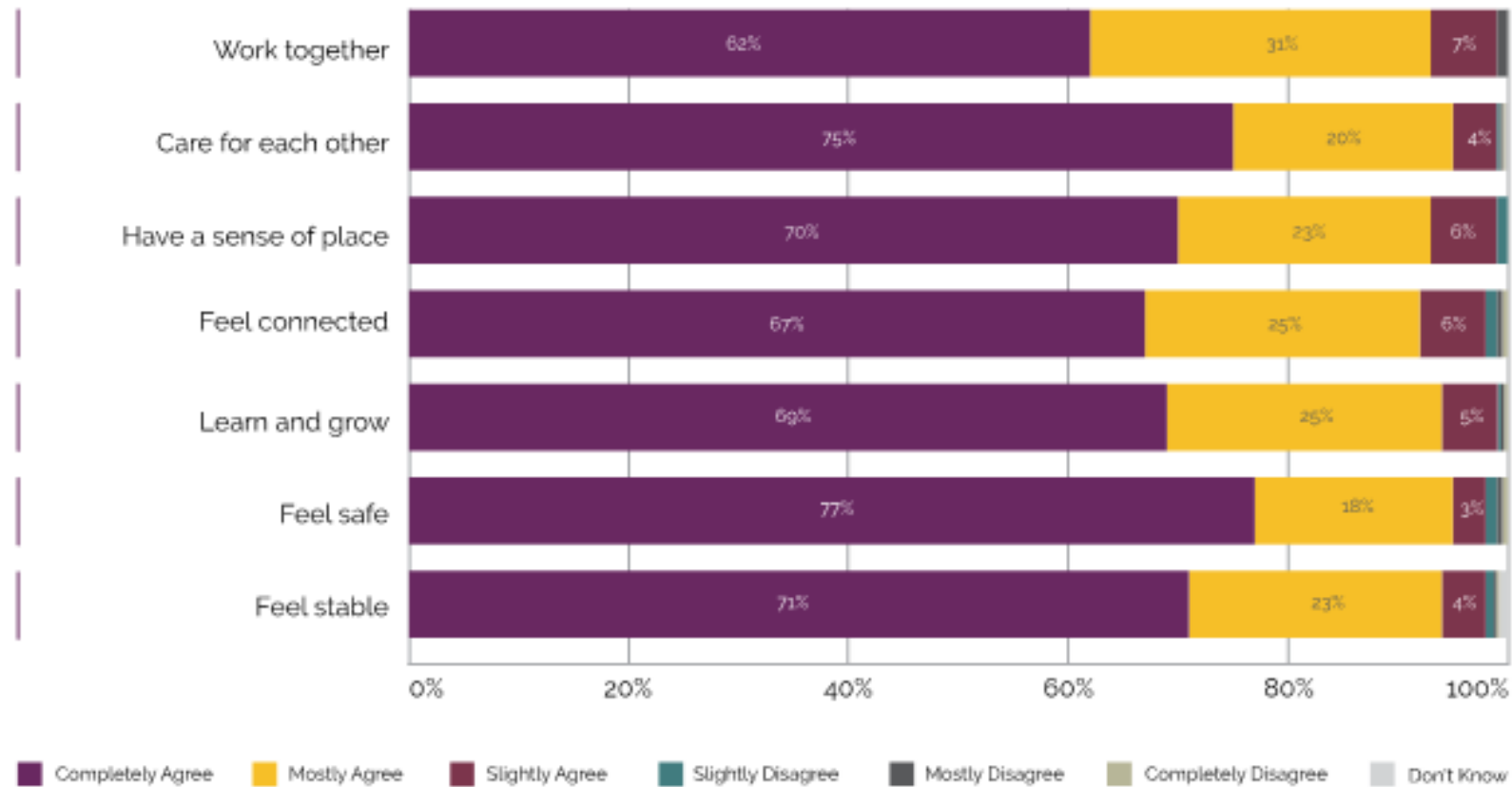
All life and communities thrive sustainably

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8

The University of Winchester currently makes a positive contribution towards this feature:

Feature	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree	Don't Know
Work together	14%	38%	27%	5%	3%		12%
Care for each other	18%	31%	24%	7%		3%	15%
Have a sense of place	24%	36%	21%	4%	4%		9%
Feel connected	17%	33%	27%	5%	3%	3%	13%
Learn and grow	26%	37%	23%				8%
Feel safe	21%	24%	19%	10%	6%	4%	16%
Feel stable	16%	26%	24%	9%	4%	5%	16%

All life and communities thrive sustainably

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This is an area in which the University of Winchester should make a significant contribution in the future:
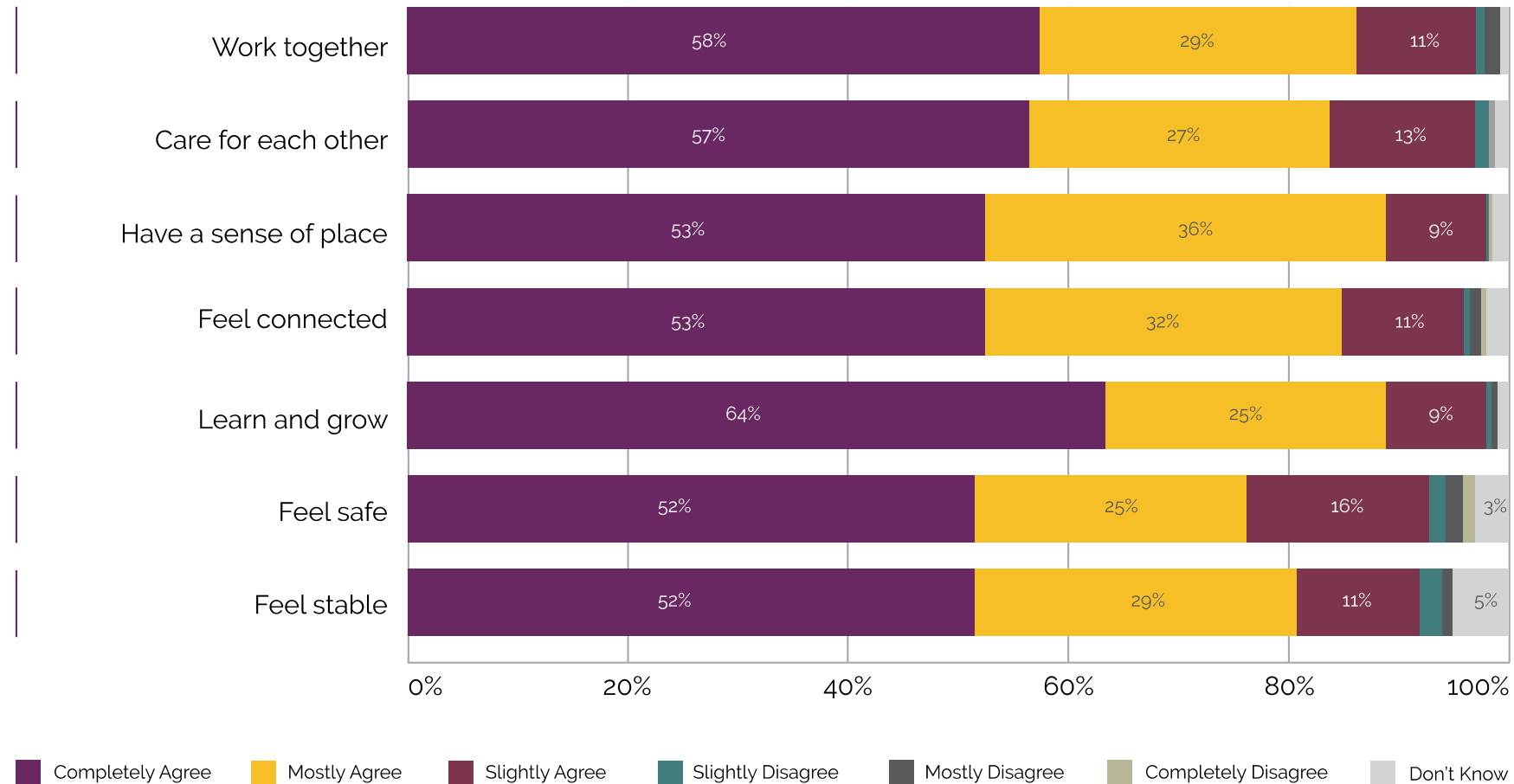
	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree	Don't Know
Work together	58%	29%	11%				
Care for each other	57%	27%	13%				
Have a sense of place	53%	36%	9%				
Feel connected	53%	32%	11%				
Learn and grow	64%	25%	9%				
Feel safe	52%	25%	16%				3%
Feel stable	52%	29%	11%				5%

Legend: Completely Agree, Mostly Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, Mostly Disagree, Completely Disagree, Don't Know

Flourishing Communities Outputs

- In –depth community consultation and internal evidence-gathering – *What does community impact look like?* and *Supporting Community Flourishing*

  Findings and Recommendations
  - Strong consensus on seven features of community flourishing
  - Need for a diverse approach
  - Importance of communication
  - Working with willing partners
  - Acknowledging potential negative impacts
  - Core business, not more business
  - A new framework for community flourishing
  - Integrated impact evaluation

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER: FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES FRAMEWORK

Our Theory of Change

Our approach is *as much a way of working as the work itself*.

In all we do we let's...

- Start together
- Start by listening
- Start with values

And we start as we mean to go on.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER: FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES FRAMEWORK

We are the university for sustainability and social justice. We are working for a world in which all life and communities thrive sustainably.

THE VISION
WE SEEK

To address the challenges facing our world, we need all people and communities to flourish sustainably

A community that flourishes (not just functions)

Where everyone benefits (not just a few)

For the long term (not just today)

OUR RESPONSE
TO THIS VISION

Our approach is as much a way of working as the work itself. We combine our best assets with the unique strengths found throughout our community.

— OUR APPROACH —

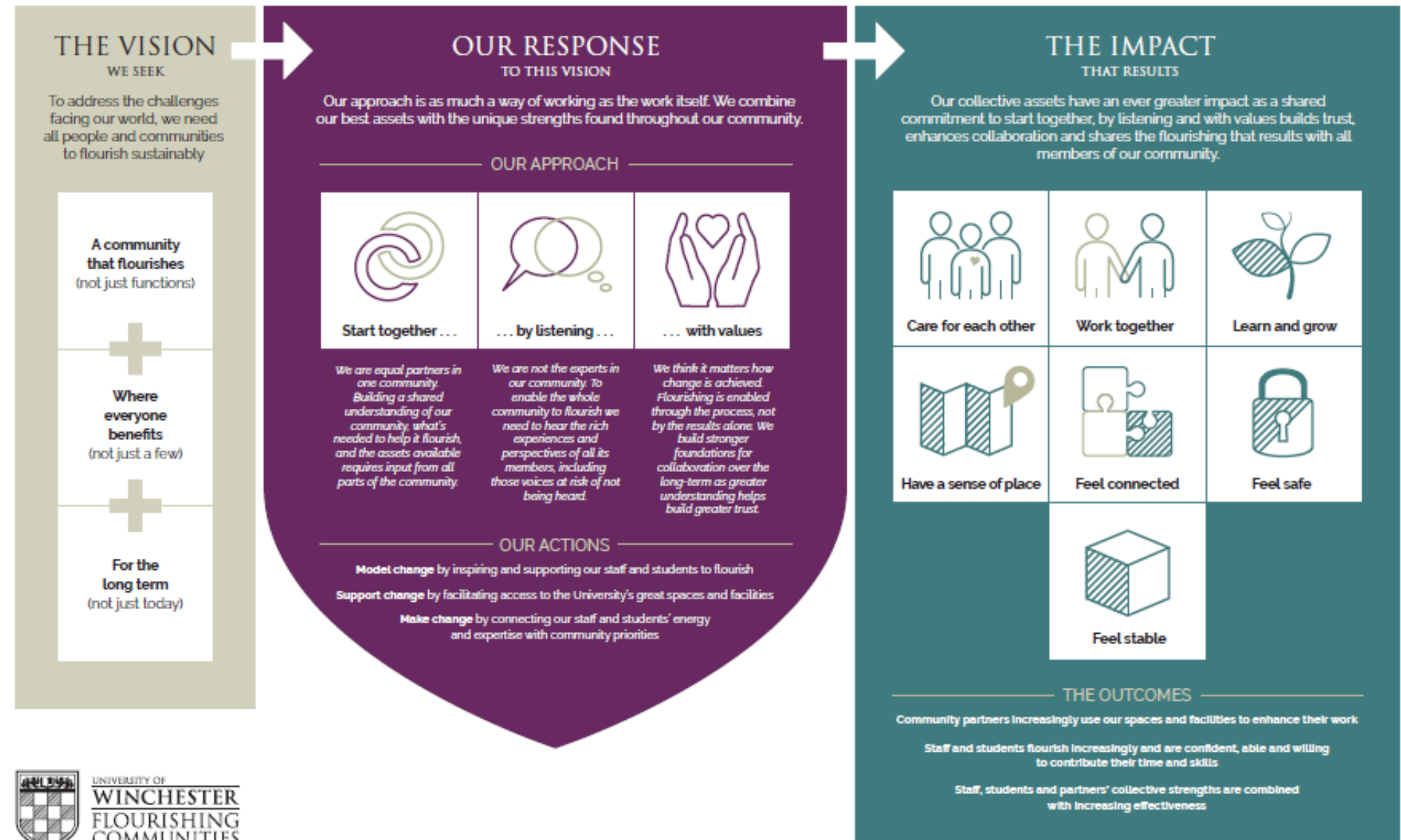Start together . . . | . . . by listening . . . | . . . with values

We are equal partners in one community. Building a shared understanding of our community, what's needed to help it flourish, and the assets available requires input from all parts of the community.

We are not the experts in our community. To enable the whole community to flourish we need to hear the rich experiences and perspectives of all its members, including those voices at risk of not being heard.

We think it matters how change is achieved. Flourishing is enabled through the process, not by the results alone. We build stronger foundations for collaboration over the long-term as greater understanding helps build greater trust.

— OUR ACTIONS —

Model change by inspiring and supporting our staff and students to flourish

Support change by facilitating access to the University's great spaces and facilities

Make change by connecting our staff and students' energy and expertise with community priorities

THE IMPACT
THAT RESULTS

Our collective assets have an ever greater impact as a shared commitment to start together, by listening and with values builds trust, enhances collaboration and shares the flourishing that results with all members of our community.

Care for each other | Work together | Learn and grow

Have a sense of place | Feel connected | Feel safe

Feel stable

— THE OUTCOMES —

Community partners increasingly use our spaces and facilities to enhance their work

Staff and students flourish increasingly and are confident, able and willing to contribute their time and skills

Staff, students and partners' collective strengths are combined with increasing effectiveness

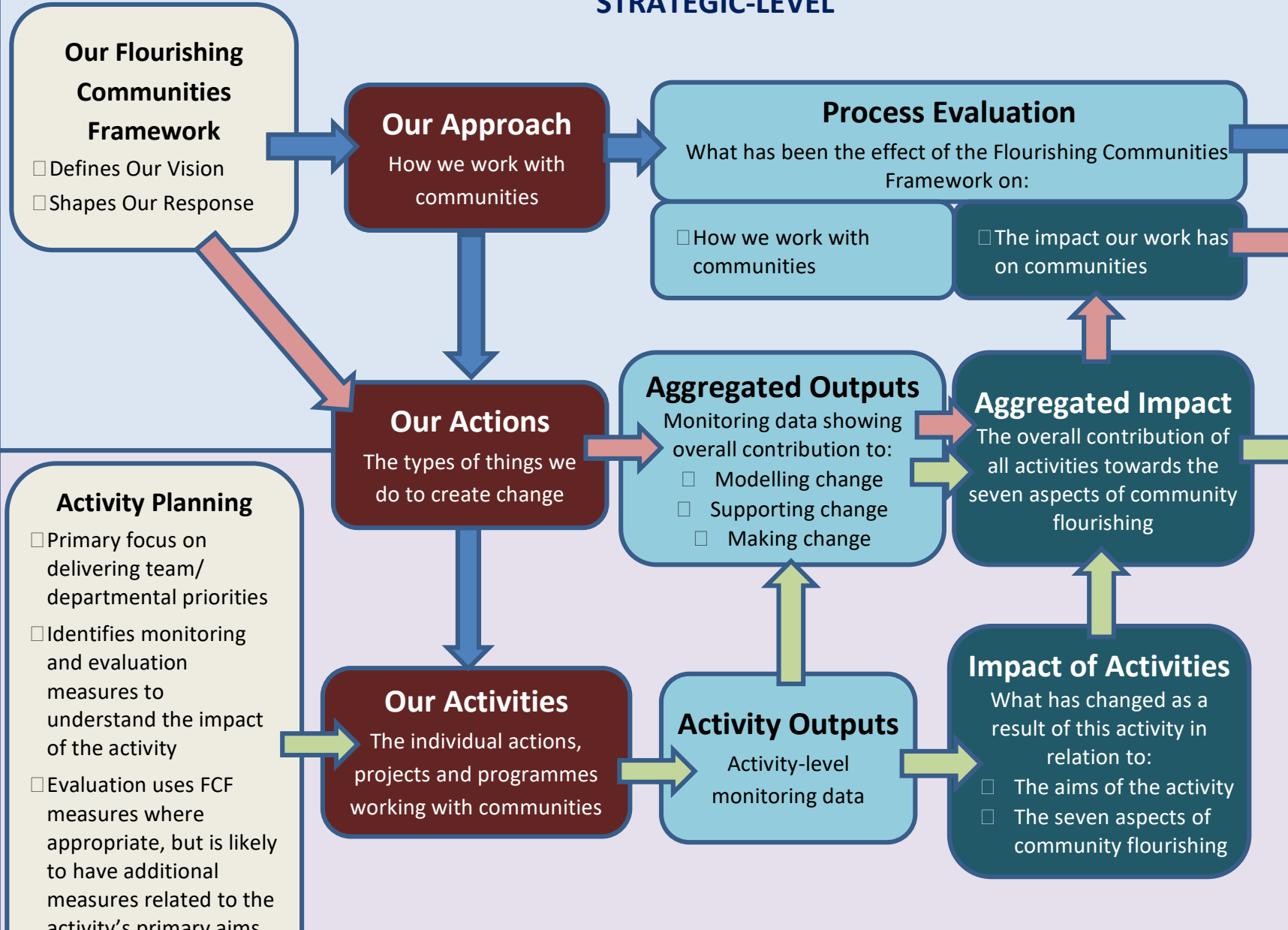UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES

Evaluation Framework - Key Considerations

- Components
  - Process, Perception, Positive Impact
- Levels
  - Activity Level and Strategic Level
- Challenges:
  - Measuring a 'way of working'
  - Existing activities and evaluation processes
  - Resource demands
  - Diversity of activities

Our Flourishing Communities Framework
☐ Defines Our Vision
☐ Shapes Our Response

Our Approach
How we work with communities

Process Evaluation
What has been the effect of the Flourishing Communities Framework on:

☐ How we work with communities

☐ The impact our work has on communities

Outcome Evaluation
How our work together has made a difference to communities:

Increased Scale, Quality and Targeting of Work to Deliver Community Priorities
Indicators:
☐ Number of staff/student interactions with community partners;
☐ Number of space and facility uses by community partners;
☐ Increased satisfaction with community partners of interactions with and impact of staff/students;
☐ Increased use of Community Flourishing indicators within activity-level planning and evaluation.

Our Actions
The types of things we do to create change

Aggregated Outputs
Monitoring data showing overall contribution to:
☐ Modelling change
☐ Supporting change
☐ Making change

Aggregated Impact
The overall contribution of all activities towards the seven aspects of community flourishing

Activity Planning
☐ Primary focus on delivering team/departmental priorities
☐ Identifies monitoring and evaluation measures to understand the impact of the activity
☐ Evaluation uses FCF measures where appropriate, but is likely to have additional measures related to the activity's primary aims and objectives

Our Activities
The individual actions, projects and programmes working with communities

Activity Outputs
Activity-level monitoring data

Impact of Activities
What has changed as a result of this activity in relation to:
☐ The aims of the activity
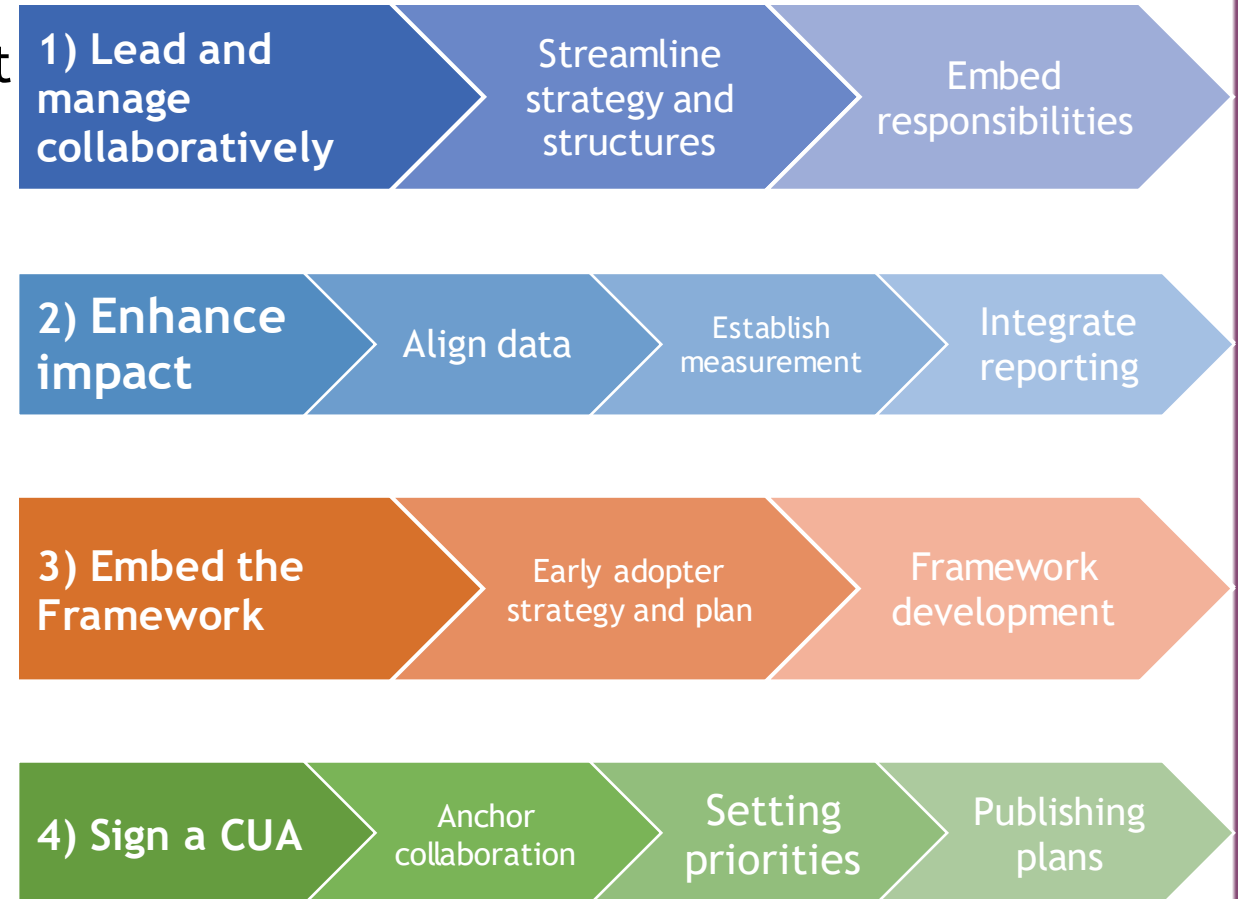☐ The seven aspects of community flourishing

Strategic Impact
☐ Indicators that our activities have made a positive contribution to community flourishing, where communities:
☐ Work together
☐ Care for each other
☐ Learn and grow
☐ Have a sense of place
☐ Feel connected
☐ Feel safe
☐ Feel stable

ACTIVITY-LEVEL

14

	Understanding the Impact of Our Actions			Understanding the Impact of Our Approach	
	Activity-Level Evaluation		**Strategic-Level Impact Evaluation**		**Process Evaluation**
	Outcomes of Individual Activities	*Activity-Level Impact*	*Our Impact on Community Flourishing*	*Impact on Stakeholder Perceptions*	*Impact of HOW we work with communities*
Purpose:	Understanding the immediate benefits of each activity	Understanding the longer term benefits of activities	Understanding and evidencing UoW's contribution towards enabling flourishing individuals and communities	Understanding how our approach has affected how stakeholders view UoW's role in the local community	Understanding **how** our approach has enabled flourishing individuals and communities
Key Questions:	What positive changes have resulted from our activities working with communities: • for community partners? • for individuals? • for UoW staff? • for UoW students?	What longer term contributions towards the seven aspects of Community Flourishing have been made by our activities?	What is the total contribution of our activities towards Community Flourishing?	What do our stakeholders identify as our contributions towards Community Flourishing?	What effect has the Community Impact Framework had on how we work with communities? What have been the results of this way of working?
Measured by:	Outputs and outcomes of individual activities	Activity-level impact evaluation	An aggregation of activity-level evidence of impact	Stakeholder perception surveys with (a) external and (b) internal stakeholders to be undertaken yearly online	Reflections on use of the framework by UoW activity leaders and lead contacts from external partners
Key Indicators:	Project-specific indicators, designed to identify: • What changed as a result of this activity, and how do we know? • What have we learned from undertaking this activity, and how will this learning be applied to future activities?	Longitudinal review of project-specific indicators related to one or more of the seven aspects of community flourishing.	Shared activity-level impact indicators.	• "To what extent do you agree or disagree that the University of Winchester currently makes a positive contribution towards [the seven features of community flourishing]?" • Internal stakeholders will also be asked to identify how they contribute to making a positive community impact, in a format that allows analysis of **the range, volume and level of participation** in activities over time.	Examples of components of the Flourishing Communities Framework being embedded within practice. Qualitative examination of how the Flourishing Communities Framework has affected the nature and the effectiveness of UoW's work with communities.

Next steps:

- Establish cross-institutional strategic oversight

- Enhance evaluation
  - Public First - social impact headline measures
  - Establish Action Plan
  - Integrated Reporting

- Embed the approach
  - Diffusion of innovation (Dearing, 2009)
  - Community of Practice
  - Draft a communications strategy

- Sign and publish a CUA
  - Establish themes under the seven features
  - Set priorities

1) Lead and manage collaboratively → Streamline strategy and structures → Embed responsibilities

2) Enhance impact → Align data → Establish measurement → Integrate reporting

3) Embed the Framework → Early adopter strategy and plan → Framework development

4) Sign a CUA → Anchor collaboration → Setting priorities → Publishing plans

All life and communities thrive sustainably

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Thank you for listening

- Any questions

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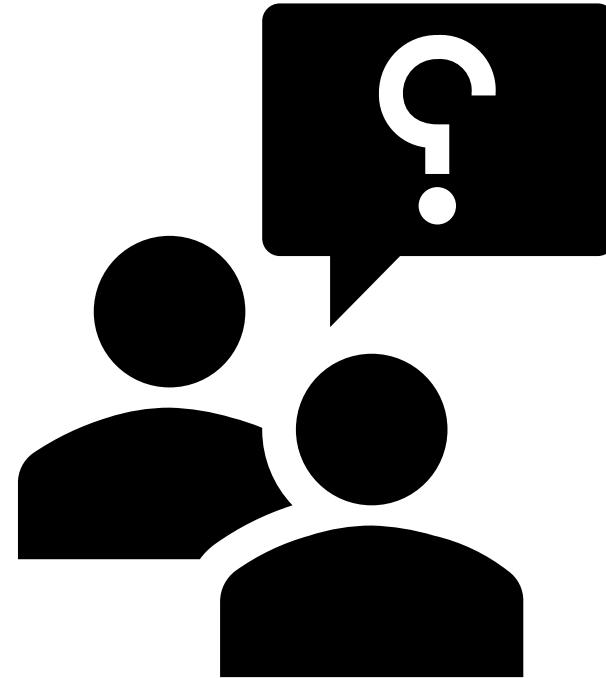
Additional resources

- The University of Winchester Flourishing Communities Framework
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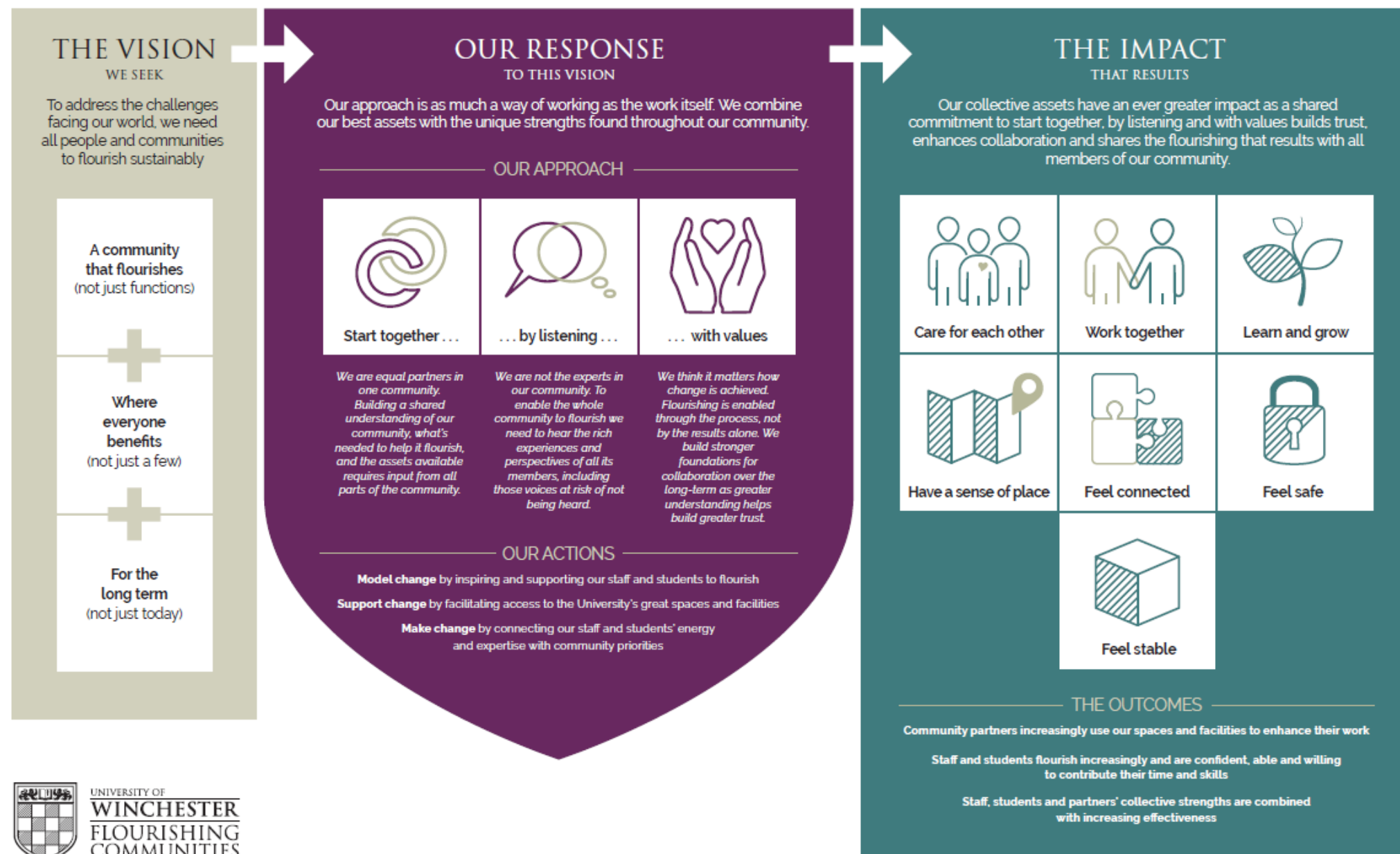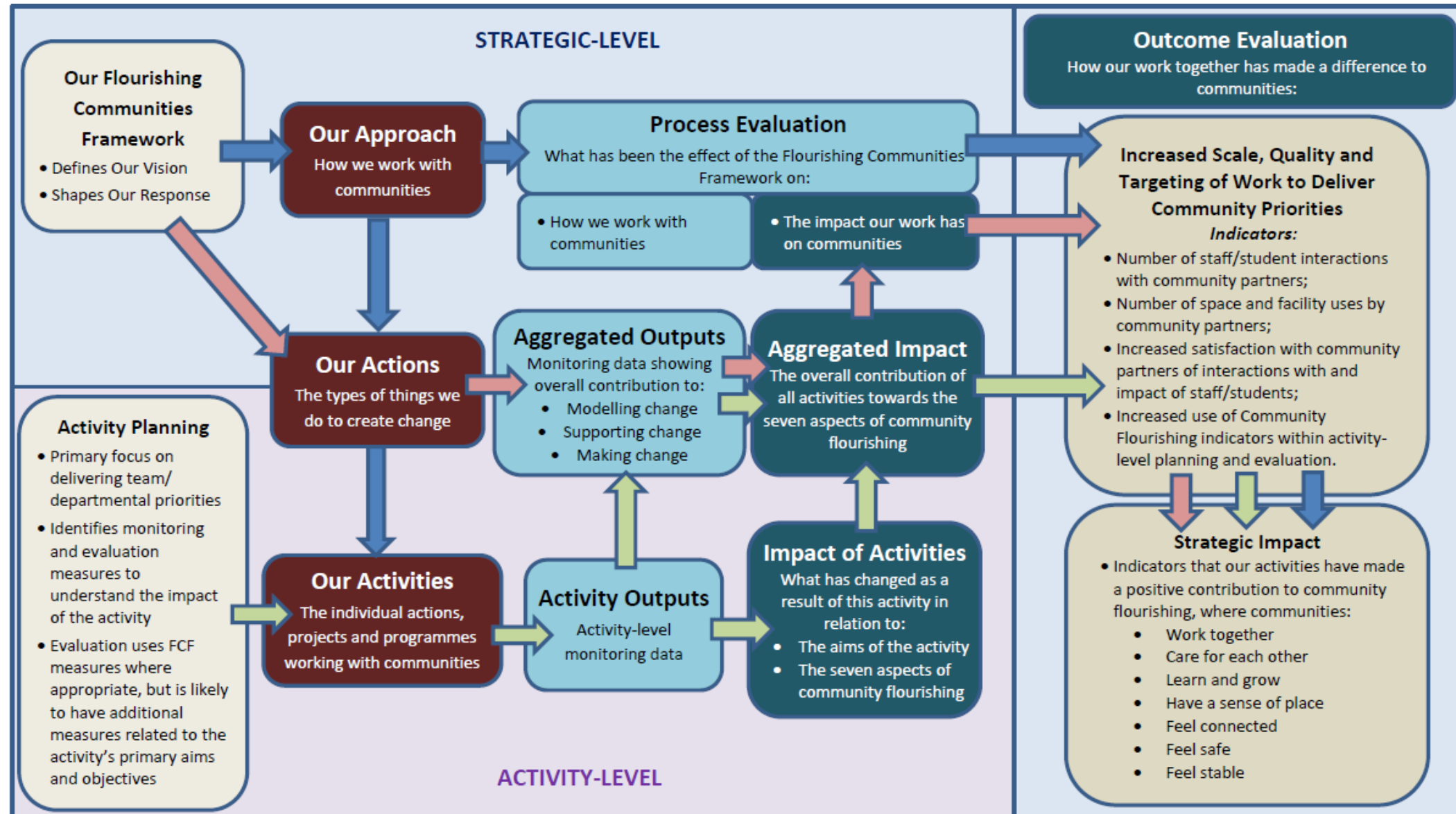
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UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER
FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES

University of Winchester Community Impact Strategy
Draft Evaluation Framework

Tiller research

STRATEGIC-LEVEL

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Strategic Impact
- Indicators that our activities have made a positive contribution to community flourishing, where communities:
  - Work together
  - Care for each other
  - Learn and grow
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ACTIVITY-LEVEL

University of Winchester Community Impact Strategy
Draft Evaluation Framework

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• Internal stakeholders will also be asked to identify how they contribute to making a positive community impact, in a format that allows analysis of the range, volume and level of participation in activities over time. | Examples of components of the Flourishing Communities Framework being embedded within practice.

Qualitative examination of how the Flourishing Communities Framework has affected the nature and the effectiveness of UoW's work with communities. |

Recommendations for Implementation

The evaluation framework identifies a range of data that is required for understanding the impact of the University of Winchester's Flourishing Communities Framework. It is recommended that two distinct action plans are developed to identify and collate the required data:

1. **Action Plan to collect new Strategic-Level data**

   Process evaluation and evaluation of impact on stakeholder perceptions will require new data collection exercises to be undertaken.

   a. We recommend establishing an annual stakeholder consultation exercise. The core of this exercise should be a consistent set of questions that allows analysis of changes over time;

   b. We recommend designing an ongoing process to identify additional stakeholder engagement that would be useful in understanding the impact of the Flourishing Communities Framework. We anticipate that these will mostly be one-off exercises in response to developing needs and opportunities. For example, during the first year there is likely to be value in undertaking additional work to identify appropriate evaluation measures and/or examine the experiences of those stakeholders involved in piloting new processes introduced to implement the framework. Future focus might then be on understanding how learning from the pilot exercise can be shared effectively with other new and existing activities, and on collecting evidence of the benefits of these ways of working.

2. **Action Plan to strengthen insight from Activity-Level evaluation**

Understanding the impact of the University of Winchester's actions relies on good quality and consistent activity-level evaluation. It is acknowledged that there is a large volume of existing activity that contributes to community flourishing, and that existing evaluation practice is both diverse and activity-specific. We caution against actions that may be perceived as a top-down imposition of a standardised evaluation framework, as this risks failing to recognise the primary objectives of each activity and may result in the framework being perceived as a negative imposition rather than as a positive enabler.

Instead, we recommend developing an action plan that:

a. Promotes high quality evaluation practice being embedded in activity management processes;
b. Sets out a long-term process for building a set of consistent measures that will allow aggregation of impact evaluation from different activities. We anticipate that:
   i. The first year focus will be on identifying measures used by existing activities, assessing their suitability for shared use, and developing an initial set of recommended measures for use by new activities;
   ii. The second and subsequent years will focus on developing ever-greater activity-level consistency in the use of evaluation measures and processes related to the seven areas of community flourishing identified in the framework;
c. Focusses on identifying existing good practice, and building shared measures based on this;
d. Identifies the minimum number of shared measures required to answer the evaluation questions, to sit alongside activity-specific evaluation measures;
e. Recognises, accommodates and aligns with the multiple evaluation and reporting expectations placed on activity-leads, for example from external funders and specific activity stakeholders;
f. Establishes an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement. We recommend explicitly acknowledging that any given snapshot of aggregate impact will be incomplete, but establishing a commitment to making incremental steps towards the most complete assessment possible.