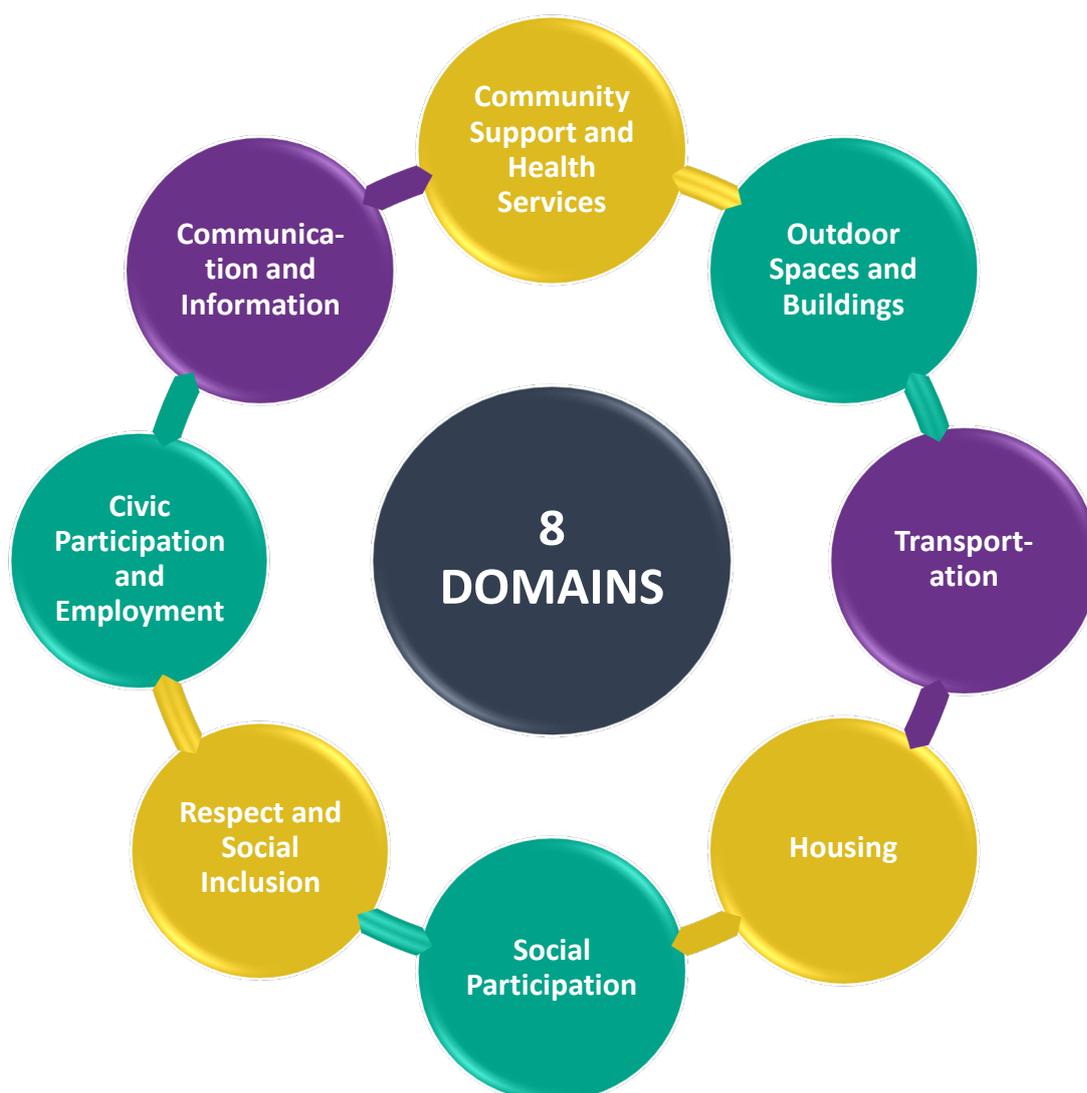


Auditing your community – strengths or gaps approach?

Age Friendly Illawarra used the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Age Friendly Cities Domains as a reference point for collating and evaluating the region’s needs. WHO provides a range of resources in relation to self-assessing the essential features of Age-Friendly Cities. This includes a checklist, resources and research to support communities’ development of a healthy ageing framework.

Age Friendly Illawarra’s approach was to use the WHO domains as benchmarks and map community assets to identify gaps to inform future direction.

The WHO eight domains of Age-Friendly overlap and impact on the age-friendliness of a city or region. They are:



Framework for consultation

Once the benchmark standards were identified in the WHO domains, it was time to consult with the community. Multi-channel, mixed method consultation included the Kiama Forum held in August 2016; research gathered from regional plans and initiatives and a consultation held in 2018. Further, information was also integrated from Wollongong City Council's Ageing Plan 2018-2012 Consultation outcomes. The 2018 consultation was implemented using three key methods of participant engagement: online, hand delivered and via email and phone.

Based on the breadth of the domains and the limitations of the body, a deliberate and strategic decision was made to develop a communications strategy that highlighted strengths rather than try to 'fix' gaps.

The intention was set to use the event-based consultation to establish what our region is good at, where are our strengths and what resources we have available to us. This intention prevented the build-up of momentum behind complaints and counter-active negative sentiment when faced with 'wicked' problems.

The appointment of a facilitator was instrumental to draw out the strengths, particularly in areas where we couldn't have influence.

Outcomes from this process included a determination to capitalise on areas we can create change and have more influence, refining our priority areas to just three domains. This strength-based approach assists with applicability and support cross jurisdictional and cross disciplinary influence.

Key Learnings

When determining the best approach for your community, you may wish to consider the following:

- 1) Your organisation's capacity to influence change.
- 2) The level you want to create change.
- 3) The momentum behind your consultation process. Is the climate ripe for action or do you need to do the groundwork first?
- 4) The background of your stakeholders and what has already happened in this space.
- 5) The criteria you will sort and rank the feedback you receive to identify priorities.
- 6) Agree on your objectives and stick to them.
- 7) Create ground rules for discussion and give fair representation to all stakeholders. Support marginalised participants.
- 8) You are asking the right questions and are not skewing the responses.