



Northeast Health
Wangaratta

RESPOND WANGARATTA - FINAL REPORT

March 2025

Overview

Using an exciting approach, community members and organisational representatives came together in three workshops (known as Group Model Building workshops or GMBs) held March, May and June 2023 to better understand the health and wellbeing of children and their families living in the Rural City of Wangaratta. Local factors influencing childhood health and wellbeing were identified and explored, and based on this information, community led action ideas were developed.

The organisations working in partnership that have facilitated this process and supported action ideas from the workshops have been Gateway Health, the Rural City of Wangaratta (RCoW) and Northeast Health Wangaratta, referred to as the Partnership Group (also referred to in the Timeline image as Backbone Group). Deakin University was behind RESPOND as the funded research body and supported the Partnership Group to deliver it.

Key Achievements:

- Delivered three Community Workshops, workshop summary report, found [here](#).
- Development of a 'systems map' outlining underlying factors that influence children's health and wellbeing locally (see Figure 1.)
- Implementation of seven action ideas that were identified as top priority - community members at the workshop identified these, prioritised them and led/supported them as a working group with support.
- Development of RESPOND Wangaratta newsletter to keep community informed, the most recent newsletter can be found [here](#).
- RESPOND Wangaratta video developed to showcase the community-led action ideas, found [here](#).
- Hosted a Celebration Event to share outcomes of action ideas delivered, presentation found [here](#).

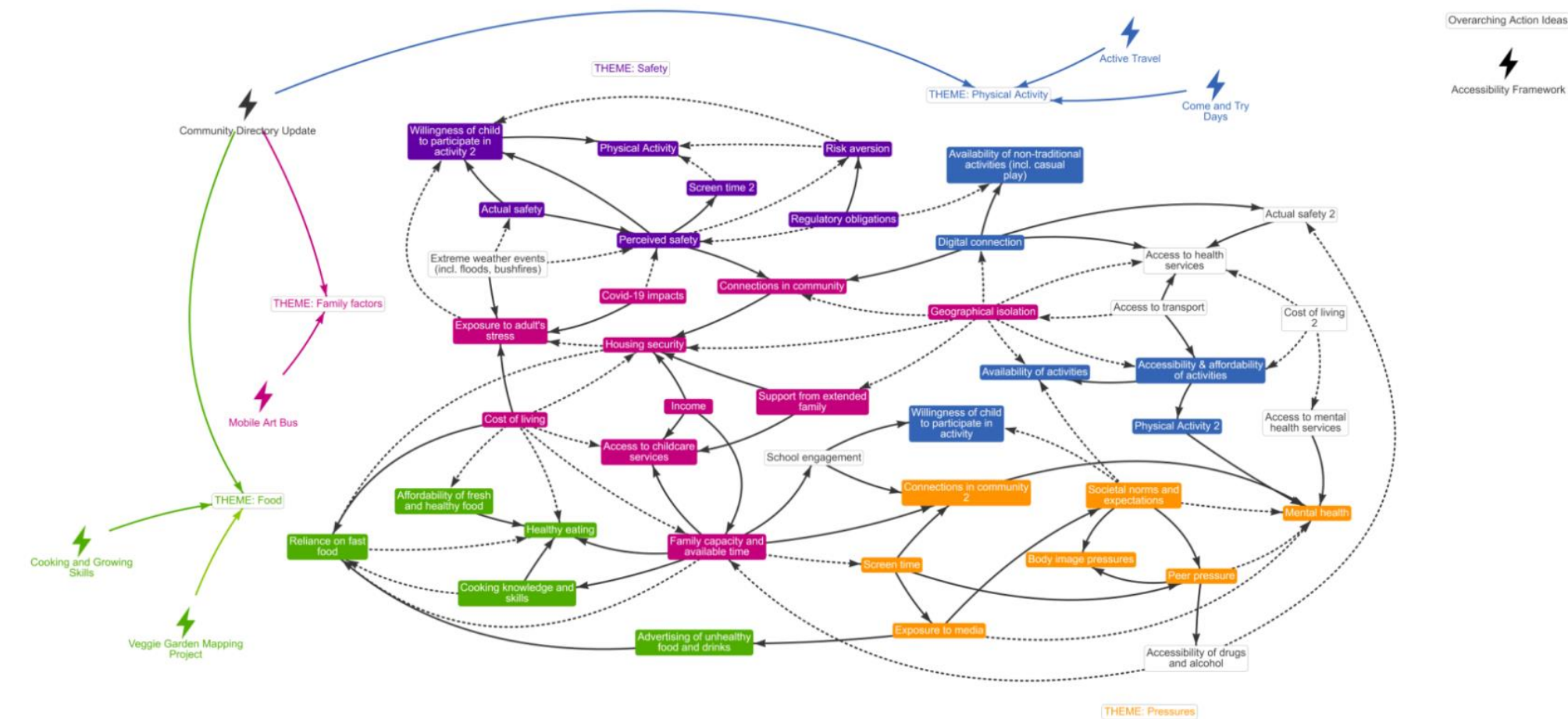
The RESPOND Wangaratta project has now concluded, this report provides an update on all the action ideas that were identified during the Community Workshops. The top priority actions ideas were all implemented, learn about these in the video and updates below. There are also updates and information on many of the other action ideas identified.

The Partnership Group have enjoyed gathering insights from our community and supporting community-led action ideas. Many new partnerships and great connections have been made through this project. Thank you to all community members and organisational representatives for their commitment to supporting the health of children and their families in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

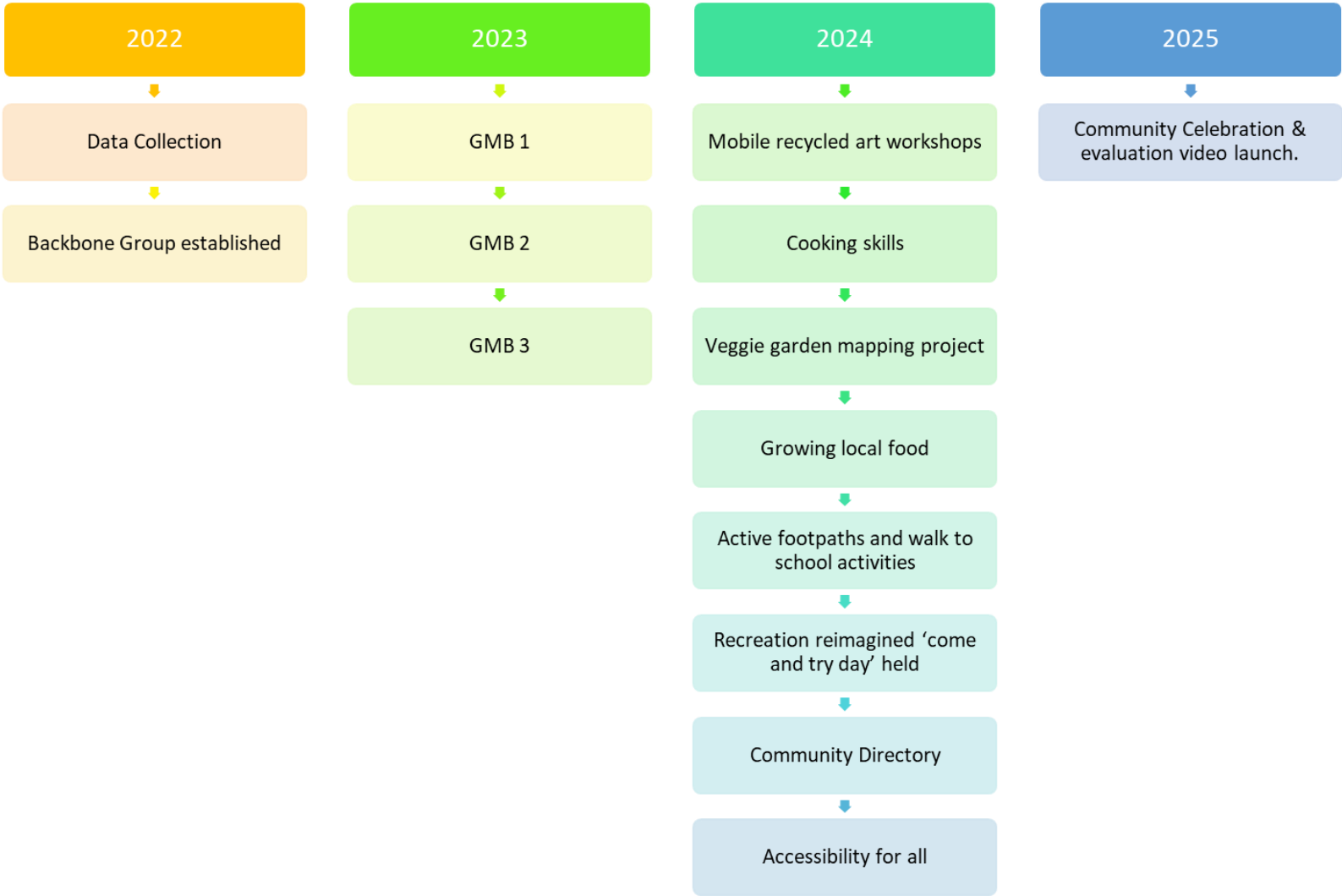
Click on the RESPOND Wangaratta video below to watch and here is the link to it to share: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKlyZlqRX7M>



Figure 1. Systems Map developed at Community Workshops



Timeline



Action Ideas

At the community workshops participants contributed to the development of a 'systems map' by outlining underlying factors that influence children's health and wellbeing locally. Five key themes came to light from the map that the factors lie under: Food, Physical Activity, Family Factors, Pressures and Safety. Participants identified a total of 46 community-led action ideas (i.e., projects) in relation to these themes and factors. Twenty-two of these ideas were deemed as priorities because they were ideas that were considered feasible and to have high impact. Within the twenty-two priority ideas, many community members committed to lead, support and/or keep up to date with these priorities. The RESPOND Partnership Group supported community members to deliver seven priority ideas and outcomes of these are outlined below. Remaining action ideas are also shared below along with related updates and information.



Delivered Action Ideas

Recreation Reimagined 'Come and Try Day'

Rural City of Wangaratta

In October of 2023, representatives from fourteen local clubs showcased their offerings and were interactive in their displays for people to come along and have a try.

Youth Sport and Recreation Expo 2024

Rural City of Wangaratta

The Rural City of Wangaratta Youth Council held a Sport and Recreation Expo focussing on opportunities for young people to become more active and engaged, with 22 clubs and groups represented.



Active Travel

Rural City of Wangaratta, Gateway Health

Funded through VicHealth Local Government Partnership program action: *Increasing active travel for children and young people*. Project pilot rolled out at Appin Park Primary School in 2023, then rolled out at Wangaratta West Primary School in 2024 and Oxley Primary School in 2024-2025. Students designed artwork with messaging to encourage their peers to walk, ride, scoot or skate to school. The artwork has been installed as stickers on footpaths and/or signs along fences.



ENCOURAGING SIGNS

OXLEY Primary School students Morgan Loechel, Libby McDonald and Eli Heafield, with (back) Susie Pasquali and principal Tim Seal at the Oxley Memorial Park, are among those helping encourage active travel to school. Story page 7.

PHOTO: Kurt Hickling

Accessibility Working Group Initiatives

Gateway Health, Northeast Health Wangaratta, Rural City of Wangaratta and Latrobe Community Health

- A draft Accessibility checklist for RESPOND initiatives was completed and shared with the RESPOND project participants the checklist is being piloted, and we will collate the feedback and update the checklist.
- The draft Inclusive Wangaratta Action Plan includes input from the accessibility group members.
- A storytelling project idea is being developed to share local people's stories of places and spaces that they feel are safe, welcoming and inclusive.

For more information about our accessibility initiatives please contact clare.schultz@gatewayhealth.org.au



Growing and Cooking Food

Cooking Workshops at Whitfield Primary School

Cooking and Growing Activities at Whitfield Outside School Hours Care Service

Two cooking sessions were held at Whitfield Primary School in June 2024 involving around 20 students from grades 3-6. The sessions were organised and facilitated by two community members that attended the RESPOND workshops and it has been great to see them get their idea off the ground. The cooking sessions focused on using local produce (including from the school garden) and making affordable, easy, nourishing meals/snacks and reducing food waste. Several of the students said that they cooked some of the recipes at home with their families!

A short video was made about the cooking and growing activities happening at the Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program at Whitfield PS. The video will be used to share these ideas with other local Outside School Hours Care services. The Health Promotion Team at Gateway Health will continue to offer support in this area, particularly with support for implementation of the free, statewide Vic Kids Eat Well program, get in touch with Felicity Kennedy if you'd like to hear more: felicity.kennedy@gatewayhealth.org.au, 0460 436 304.

Check out the video below that was created to showcase the project! Here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTB_w0xWbzo



Food Growing Garden at Yarrunga Children's Services Centre

A new food growing garden has been established at the Yarrunga Children's Centre for supported playgroup families. Parents and their children worked with Council, Bunnings Wangaratta and Gateway Health staff to set up the garden beds, fill them with soil and plant the seedlings. The garden is going crazy! The families love it and pick their produce each week. The families also share recipe ideas, the children love watering while munching on the basil. They have received positive feedback also from the public walking past, 'Sunny' the scarecrow receives a lot of waves and high fives!



Veggie Garden Mapping Project

Gateway Health, Bunnings Wangaratta, Northeast Health Wangaratta, Rural City of Wangaratta

The Veggie Garden Mapping Project involved mapping of the locations and status of veggie gardens in educational and community settings across the Wangaratta LGA. The key goals were to understand garden usage, challenges, and enablers, and to explore opportunities for community engagement, sharing knowledge, and supporting food security initiatives. The project involved:

1. Stakeholder Engagement: Collaboration with various local health, education, and community organisations.
2. Surveys: Conducted in educational and community-based settings to assess veggie garden locations, usage, and challenges.

Results highlighted that common challenges include time, maintenance, and costs, while successes stemmed from community involvement, donations, and student engagement. Gardens that thrived had strong community partnerships, volunteer involvement, and curriculum integration. These findings match up with what the literature shows.

The outcomes of these findings have included:

- A partnership with Bunnings Wangaratta to provide gardening resources.
- Funding to schools and early childhood services to support garden sustainability.

Following this mapping project, partnerships will continue, along with support for education and community-based settings. Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of support provided. This project also supports broader local policies aiming to create healthier food systems to improve health outcomes in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Click on RESPOND Wangaratta [here](#) to read the full report, summary report and results infographics.



Mobile Recycled Art Bus Workshops

Bunnings Wangaratta, Pangerang Community Hub, Mend Make Grow, Gateway Health

This project group has developed workshops with the aim of providing open-ended, creative opportunities for children to tinker and explore materials, use their imagination and unlock the hidden potential of “waste”. The main outcome is having fun and supporting children to play creatively with materials. The workshops have been run at local Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services at Whitfield and District Primary School, Glenrowan Primary School, Whorouly Primary School and Moyhu/Myhree Primary Schools. Here, students have had the opportunity to get creative using recycled materials to foster their sense of imagination and social connection. To ensure sustainability of this project, a resource kit has been developed so that OSHC services, schools and interested community groups can run the workshops themselves. The resource kit includes a Facilitator Manual and overview video and can be found on Gateway Health’s website [here](#).

Check out the overview video of the project below and here is a link for sharing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9qBIXfgmxU>



Community Directory, Rural City of Wangaratta

- The Rural City of Wangaratta is updating the Community Directory on their website. The new Directory will be a place for the community to find out the clubs, groups and organisations available in the Rural City of Wangaratta.
- The new directory is now live on the RCoW website: <https://www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au/Residents/Community-Directory>
- This project will link with RCoW’s Grit & Resilience Program and their work on increasing visibility of social groups within the region.

Remaining Action Ideas

Gateway Health and Northeast Health Wangaratta receive Community Health, Health Promotion funding to work in the food and movement space. Where the funding guidelines allow, these organisations will continue to support relevant action ideas that came out of RESPOND. Similarly, the Rural City of Wangaratta will continue to support relevant actions that align with the priorities in the Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. This work will no longer be referred to as RESPOND but will become imbedded into the upcoming Health Promotion plans of the respective organisations.

Below is a list of action ideas that were identified at the community workshops that remain an opportunity to be delivered or advocated for by organisations and community groups/members.

Theme	Action Ideas Identified	Status
Physical Activity	<u>Hockey</u> Installation of tower lights for hockey pitch Build a hockey facility in Wangaratta with clubrooms, lights and rainwater tanks	Current hockey pitch is located at Cathedral College. After advocating, this action idea is now included in Council's Recreation Strategy (Ref. pg. 40 for proposed support for the Hockey club https://www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Policies-and-documents/Strategies-and-Plans)
	Explore a car-pooling system for people to get to sporting activities (e.g., Facebook page)	No action to date
	Parents and friends network/exchange that supports parents/carers/friends to build stronger networks when accessing recreational activities	No action to date
	Central collection space for second- hand sports gear and buy/swap/sell events	No action to date

Food	<u>Resources</u> Resources to proactively find grants, help community to apply for grants and build awareness of what is available	Grant information platforms to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RCoW Community Grants https://www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Grants-and-funding/Community-Grants - Helen Haines Portal https://www.helenhaines.org/resources/grants/ - Into Our Hands https://intoourhandsfoundation.com.au/
	Develop community identity as one that prides itself on physical activity as part of daily life Indoor Play and Activities Centre – for under 10s, climb, jump, play, trampolines, toddler gym etc. Indoor Sports Centre – soccer, cricket, roller derby/skating, badminton etc. Boxing or Martial Arts tournaments	No action to date
	Set up the Tone Road GoTAFE campus as a growing hub/market/education/garden (move community garden to a safe space).	No action to date
	Food swaps (E.g., school gate sessions, encourage families to bring foods to swap)	Existing community food swaps are held in Eldorado and Moyhu and existing school produce stalls are at Everton and Springhurst primary schools. Gateway Health, health promotion staff can continue to support establishment of local food swaps/stalls with interested local communities. https://www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au/Residents/Community-Projects/Community-Food
	Morning tea club – food literacy, nutrition education and social connection in schools and early childhood services	Gateway Health, Health Promotion staff can support schools and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services that are interested in nourishing food options or establishing food growing gardens.

Family Factors	Access to public transport on weekends to improve access to recreation activities/work	This action idea has been advocated for as part of the Accessibility action idea working group and is also included in Inclusive Wangaratta (draft) action plan. Further, there are opportunities for community members to advocate on this in relation to relevant Council Plans, for example the RCoW's Health and Wellbeing Plan.
	<p>Health services/programs that visit education settings/kindergartens (e.g., delivered by nurses, allied health staff, like the Smiles 4 Miles program)</p> <p>Community support in schools for education about health topics, resources and programs in Wangaratta</p> <p>Knowledge sharing between schools about health programs that work</p>	<p>Existing programs:</p> <p>Smiles 4 Miles dental program – Northeast Health Wangaratta's dental staff deliver this locally</p> <p>Health Eating Active Living (HEAL) Program - delivered by North East Support & Action for Youth (NESAY)</p> <p>Healthy Start for School – health check for 4 year old children whose parents access the Family Tax Benefit.</p> <p>Veggie garden Programs and Resources Table</p> <p>Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) provide resources in their Community Health Clinic to support active play.</p>
	Parent and baby early help support group for new parents, (e.g., group chats, early parenting advice, invited speakers)	<p>Existing RCoW Maternal and Child Health programs:</p> <p>'First time parents groups'</p> <p>INFANT program</p> <p>Supported playgroups offered at Yarrunga</p>
Safety	<p>Youth 'drop in' Centre to offer programs for life skills, cooking, health, nutrition, finance and to encourage connection/safety</p> <p>'Lighting the dark' – map/app of where it is safe to run/walk/travel at night, identify safe routes.</p> <p>Hands on learning/basic life skills in schools, including cooking/gardening</p>	<p>New Youth Hub for Teenagers -29 Flanagan Street Wangaratta. RCoW have fitted out a space next to the Maternal Child and Health Centre (opposite Yarrunga Primary School). Bunnings Wangaratta provided resources to establish a small veggie garden there</p> <p>RCoW Walking and Cycling Strategy under review opportunity to participate https://connect.wangaratta.vic.gov.au/wheeled-activity-strategy</p> <p>Health Eating Active Living (HEAL) Program - delivered by North East Support & Action for Youth (NESAY)</p>

Advocacy Opportunities

All Councils in Victoria are required to complete a new Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) every 4 years. The RCoW is currently in the process of developing their Council Plan for 2025-2029, which will integrate the MPHWP.

The RCoW is also undertaking a Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) designed to provide strategic direction for the development and coordination of early years programs, activities and other local community development processes that impact on children aged 0 – 12 years and their families.

The systems map and action ideas that came out of the RESPOND Community Workshops have been shared with the RCoW to be included into the above plans showing the importance of advocating for important issues, in this case, community identified factors and ideas to support children's health and wellbeing locally.

Advocacy can be done at a local, regional, state and federal level, the Public Health Advocacy Institute defines advocacy as 'a deliberate attempt to influence decision makers and other stakeholders to support or implement policies, practices, laws, regulations, programs, products and prices that contribute to improving community health and wellbeing equity using evidence'. The Public Health Advocacy Institute website has a range of resources that support advocacy initiatives, check them out [here](#).

The Gateway Health website also has information and resources that demonstrate advocacy in action and stories of local advocacy, check them out [here](#).

Thank you for your involvement in RESPOND Wangaratta!

For more information about RESPOND Wangaratta, please visit the Gateway Health website [here](#) or get in touch at: HealthPromotion.Team@gatewayhealth.org.au

