



CHANGEFEST 24 EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ChangeFest (CF) is a nation-wide movement that stands for community-led systems change in Australia. Its vision is “for a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable Australia where every Australian and their community thrives.” ChangeFest the event is the one of the principal mediums through which the national movement pursues its agenda. CF events bring people together from community, service organisations, government, philanthropy, intermediaries and researchers to learn about community-led systems change including place-based approaches, create and strengthen relationships and networks for collaboration, and share success stories of community voice being elevated and centred in change making.

Central to CF is the centring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective and the convening of cultural leadership in each location. [The ChangeFest Statement](#) (drafted in 2018 and handed across CF events) remains a central and critical guiding framework for CF, and Elders from each of the locations have provided a primary source of cultural authority and leadership through an informal CF Elders governance structure.

ChangeFest24 (CF24) took place on Latji Latji Country in Mildura, on the banks of the Murray River. CF24 was convened by the CF national backbone, **Collaboration For Impact (CFI)** and local hosts **Hands Up Mallee (HUM)** and **Connected Beginnings Mildura (CB)**; an interim **CF Advisory Group** was created to provide strategic advice to the collaboration. Six desired outcomes and six key learning priorities were identified for CF24. These included but were not limited to: communities **collaborating for change**, strengthening **conditions for community-led collaboration**, **learning, understanding, confidence, knowledge and skill-building** and **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership for a better, shared future**.

The **CF24 evaluation** was undertaken with the desire to understand whether CF24 achieved its desired outcomes for the event, including successful collaboration between the CF national backbone and local hosts, and to reflect on what the results of ChangeFest24 mean for the national movement.

Designed in collaboration with CF24 partners, the evaluation draws on multiple sources of evidence collected from CF24 participants and collaborators both during and after the event. The following page presents the key findings of the evaluation and recommendations for future CF events and the national movement.





KEY FINDINGS

EVENT



- Overall, participants had an **overwhelmingly positive experience** at CF24.
- Most participants and organisations had **never attended** ChangeFest before; CF24 drew a fresh audience who held a wide spectrum of experience with community-led change.
- Participants found the most **impactful sessions** to be ones that showcased the local context, capabilities and culture of Mildura; encouraged reflective thinking; or were delivered by compelling speakers and created an emotional connection, such as the opening session delivered by Stan Grant and the closing session delivered by the Hon. Dr. Jim Chalmers.
- In line with the CF principle of inclusion and diversity, most participants felt **safe, welcome and included** during their time at CF24, with many participants who had attended previous events stating that this felt like the most culturally safe CF to date.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, perspectives and expertise was **centred and celebrated**.
- **Connecting with others** was a clear highlight of the event, with 4 out of 5 survey respondents reporting that they felt they had the **opportunity to grow their network** at CF24
- CF24 hosts were largely **successful in achieving the outcomes** they set out for this year's event. Local community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice and leadership was elevated and celebrated.
- Additionally, there is evidence of:
 - Commitments to changing practices and policies,
 - New cross-sector relationships being made,
 - Communication of CF24 learnings with people outside of the CF community, and
 - Shifts in participants' mindsets about the community-led change ecosystem and their role in it.

These are all indicators of **enabling conditions for systems change** and will most likely contribute to the movement's continued growth in reach and influence.



Recommendations for future events:

- **Program and content:** Continue to diversify session topics, speakers and modes of engagement through increasing resourcing and longer lead times to work with session leads to design sessions and grow the engagement of the movement in the co-design of the program; continue with the government and philanthropic sector reform agenda (that began at CF23), ensuring this builds across each event, and between events.
- **Pre event preparation:** A pre-event opportunity for an induction to community-led change for those early on their journey.
- **Logistics:** Earlier and more frequent communication of event logistics; making ChangeFest events more affordable for individuals and small organisations.
- **Cultural safety and diversity:** Future CF events should make efforts to ensure accessibility of all CF spaces, and have increased consideration, engagement and visibility of marginalised and diverse communities, including LGBTQIA+, CALD, persons living with a disability, neurodivergent, and youth.



COLLABORATION



- For CF24, **enabling conditions for a successful collaboration** were in place to a certain extent.
- What supported the CF24 collaboration included:
 - The **existing relationship** between local hosts and the national backbone team that enabled co-design of a strong ways of working and event program.
 - Local Elders being able to hold and exercise **strong cultural authority** over the event, acknowledging this required significant effort and time to achieve.
 - Allocating **event management responsibilities** to a third-party organisation, despite additional responsibilities emerging for the national backbone team and in particular local hosts.
- While there were some governance structures in place to oversee decision-making, all partners agree there was a **need for more shared understanding** of roles, responsibilities, risk management and contributions. A fit-for-purpose governance model with independent oversight of the event and event governance procedures and mechanisms established and agreed upon early on could better support future collaborations.



Recommendations for future events and the national movement:

1. Consider what specific and fit-for-purpose structures are needed for the annual gathering and collaboration.
2. Strengthen cultural governance and oversight at a national level.
3. Continue to enable the cultural authority of future host communities.
4. Create conditions for shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.
5. Recruit a dedicated, locally based project coordinator.
6. Establish systematic knowledge sharing across ChangeFest events.
7. Move towards a multi-year funding model.