Evaluation of the
Stronger Families and Communities Strategy
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Annotated Acronyms

AIFS  Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIFS hosted the Stronger Families Learning Exchange and has an ongoing role in the SFCS 2004-2009 hosting the Communities and Families Clearinghouse. www.aifs.gov.au

ARACY  Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ARACY is a national collaboration of researchers, policy makers and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines to generate and translate knowledge to enhance the well-being and life chances of children and young people. ARACY is now using online conferencing technology to conduct presentations and discussions with the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners at 45 sites around Australia. www.aracy.org.au

CAFCA  Communities and Families Clearing house Australia
Funded by the SFCS 2004-2009 the CAFCA, within the AIFS, aims to improve access to current information and resources to assist those working in the field of early childhood and community development. It continues the work of the Stronger Families Learning Exchange which supported the 2000-2004 Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/index.html

FaCS  Department of Family and Community Services

FaCHSIA  Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

SFLEEx  Stronger Families Learning Exchange
A research unit of AIFS funded by the SFCS 2000-2004 to provide support to 2000-2004 Strategy projects funded under the Stronger Families Fund to implement action research. Under the new Strategy, this type of support will be provided by Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners. In addition through CfC and Invest to Grow (ItG) the department has funded Local Evaluators to assist with project design, action research, and evaluation. Three streams of the new Strategy (all streams except for small equipment grants) are provided with support through the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA) and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) www.aifs.gov.au/sf

SFCS  Stronger Families and Communities Strategy - also referred to as the Strategy www.facs.gov.au/sfcs

SFCS 2000-2004 – seven linked community based initiatives, as well as several broader initiatives, to strengthen families and communities

Executive Summary

This report has been produced as part of the evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 (‘the Strategy’). Through the Stronger Families Fund (SFF) initiative, one of the Strategy funding initiatives, 49 diverse projects were funded across Australia to strengthen families and communities. This study is an interim evaluation of the SFF initiative based on the evidence so far available on the outcomes of projects. Most SFF projects were either still operating, or had not completed final reports in time for this report. However, 75% of SFF projects did respond to either the final, or interim final evaluation questionnaire, providing information about their activities and outcomes at that stage.

SFF projects were complex, multi-strategic projects working on a larger scale with longer timelines than other Strategy initiatives. They had a strong emphasis on building capacity and many developed ‘upstream’ capacity, building the skills and knowledge of organisations and individual project staff before implementing project activities in communities.

SFF projects also focussed on working in partnership and developing interventions in consultation with families and communities. The time required for inclusive planning processes and upstream capacity building meant that SFF projects often took longer to demonstrate outcomes for families and communities. There is therefore a real risk of underestimating the achievements of SFF projects if achievements are assessed prior to the completion of projects and it is important that there be further follow-up of the outcomes of SFF projects once they are completed in June 2006.

SFF projects demonstrated substantial and broad ranging positive outcomes for participating individuals and families, that are expected to directly contribute to stronger families and communities in the longer term. SFF projects also demonstrated capacity building outcomes for communities and organisations that are expected to continue strengthening and building the capacity of families and communities into the longer term.

The Strategy processes helped to build the capacity of communities and organisations to participate in the Strategy and supported the development of proposals in communities with high levels of need that otherwise may not have had capacity to successfully apply for funding. The Strategy principles were reflected in the development and implementation of SFF projects and were important in achieving outcomes. Action research helped to mediate risks associated with the complexity, scale, diversity and emergent nature of many SFF projects and supported both the application of evidence based practice and contributions to the evidence base.

However, many projects did not anticipate being able to sustain project activities after Strategy funding ended and there is a risk that some outcomes may not be sustained without additional resources. Some projects that did succeed in building capacity ran out of time to fully utilise and consolidate their gains.
1 Summary

1.1 Summary of Findings

Project outcomes

SFF projects have resulted in substantial and diverse outcomes for participants, for the broader community and for community organisations. The way in which Strategy projects contributed to creating stronger families and communities can be understood in terms of an outcomes hierarchy that shows a causal pathway from immediate outcomes through a series of intermediate outcomes to long-term outcomes. An outcomes hierarchy was developed in the early stages of the Strategy, and subsequently used to develop performance indicators for all projects, and to provide a common framework for the evaluation. There is evidence of outcomes at all levels of the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy, however not all projects achieved outcomes (nor necessarily expected to) at the higher levels of the hierarchy during the life of the project.

Many projects, especially if not building on a previous project, have developed ‘upstream capacity’. These communities and organisations now have skills and expertise in planning and implementing community building activities. They also have a greater awareness of the positive outcomes that can be generated from family and community strengthening activities and action research processes.

It is clear that SFF projects increased opportunities for social and economic participation for project participants and volunteers. Developing informal community networks (bonding and /or linking social capital) was an important outcome that strengthened families. Relationships that were developed through informal community networks seem likely to be sustained beyond the life of the projects and they have increased the level of social participation of some previously socially isolated families. Some SFF projects successfully developed partnerships with private businesses - creating bridging social capital that may create sustainable opportunities for communities and project participants to apply newly developed capacity.

SFF projects generally resulted in improved relationships within and between families, groups, organisations and governments. In some cases the positive change in relationships was outstanding. For example, previously isolated parents who had negative memories of school became active members of the school community encouraging others to participate, or students who had been disruptive in class became role models for other students. However, in a few cases SFF projects were less successful in improving relationships. This occurred when there were deep divisions in the community, or a lack of shared priorities that were not successfully resolved.

A positive outcome for one stakeholder may have negative consequences for others - for example, a volunteer moving on to paid work is a positive outcome for the volunteer, but a negative outcome for the agency that loses the services of the volunteer.

Some negative unintended outcomes in terms of reduced trust in the Australian Government and organisations were reported in communities where proposals were developed but not approved and in communities where projects ended while needs remained unmet.
Factors influencing outcomes

Community participation

Actively involving communities and agencies in developing and implementing projects took time and other resources, however, there is evidence that where this was done well the time invested in planning and building relationships paid off.

Community participation in identifying strengths and issues, developing responses, and implementing projects contributed to a shared vision and ‘can-do’ attitude.

The right people

The right people were important to achieving project outcomes - project workers, volunteers, community leaders and those involved in the governance of projects.

The skills and experience of SFF project workers varied considerably and made a difference to project outcomes. Difficulties recruiting suitably skilled staff, particularly but not exclusively in remote areas, delayed the implementation of several projects.

In the longer-term, the ad hoc nature of opportunities for the employment and professional development of people undertaking community building work creates risks for the sustainability of a skilled workforce.

Working in partnership

Working in partnership supported improved coordination between services by developing relationships amongst service providers and increasing awareness of the range of available services.

New referral pathways and an increased awareness of the needs of specific groups, including barriers to accessing services have been developed by projects and are expected to have sustained benefits beyond the life of the projects.

Addressing barriers to achieving planned outcomes

Adopting strengths based approaches has assisted projects to engage ‘at risk’ families and individuals in preventative and early intervention focused activities.

Many projects, especially if not building on a previous project, needed to develop upstream capacity in order to implement the project. Upstream capacity building could apply to individuals, organisations and the community.

Barriers to participation and collaboration, unforeseen changes in the context in which projects were operating, inadequate resources within the project and in the broader service system and the particular challenges associated with working in very remote communities were identified as other factors that could be barriers to the achievement of project goals.
Interactions between SFF projects and other activities undertaken prior to or concurrently:

Activities undertaken prior to, or concurrently with SFF projects were important factors in enabling SFF projects to achieve their outcomes. Previous projects usually enhanced the capacity of organisations and communities to undertake SFF projects as a result of building human, social organisational or economic capital. However, negative experiences of similar activities could result in barriers to the implementation of a later SFF project.

Action research

Action research processes supported the iterative building of knowledge – assisting projects to both draw on and add to the evidence base. Action research generated evidence during the life of SFF projects about what was working well, or not so well, and how projects could be improved.

Action research methods assisted in tailoring solutions to local conditions and experience of what works, and provided a safe space for reflection, learning and adaptation.

1.2 Summary of Learnings

Key learnings from this case study have been grouped according to the potential application of the learnings

Implications for the selection of projects

Strengthening families and communities in highly disadvantaged communities requires coordinated and long-term planning. Communities that lack pre-existing capacity require support to develop project proposals to ensure that they are not further disadvantaged.

The rationale for providing short-term funding for a direct service that is likely to be needed into the longer term needs to be clear from the start.

It is imperative that messages about opportunities for further funding be clear and consistent to reduce the likelihood of damage to communities and to minimize risks of demoralizing project workers and volunteers, as a result of short term project funding.

To maintain relationships and momentum developed during the development of project proposals a timely project approval process is important.

A balanced portfolio approach may be the best way to address competing imperatives for making the investment count – making some investments on the basis of need, and some on the basis of greatest chance of success. This approach, taken both at the level of investment across projects and within projects, can provide some ‘early wins’ which can encourage support for the more difficult and longer-term challenges.

Implications for the management of clusters of projects

In order to mediate the higher risk of failure associated with innovation, flexibility and responsiveness in the management of an initiative is needed. Flexibility also increases a project’s capacity to respond to new evidence regarding community needs and to make the most of opportunities arising.
There is potential to add value to projects by coordinating initiatives with the strategies and activities of other levels of government in an area, and by facilitating new partnerships at project level.

Projects need timely advice about the likelihood of additional funding to reduce the risk of experienced staff leaving because their employment is not secure.

Project workers – who may be managing ‘up’ as well as implementing the project – often need external support and access to expertise during the implementation of projects.

Most projects need support to draw on, and add to the evidence base.

The Strategy was a new way of working for many agencies and communities. There is scope to further promote early intervention and prevention as well as strengths-based, participatory approaches to strengthening families and communities.

**Implications for the management and implementation of individual projects**

Strategic partners should be identified and involved as early as possible in the development of proposals. It is important to investigate other projects or initiatives being undertaken or planned in the area to make the most of common strategic aims.

Projects should prioritise and plan for the recruitment, training and on-going support of project staff. Consideration should be given to the advantages and disadvantages of developing the capacity of existing staff versus recruiting people with expertise.

Engagement strategies need to be tailored for different groups and take into account whether projects are taking a universal approach or have a specific target group. Projects should plan and budget for the provision of childcare and transport to ensure accessibility.

Projects may need to address the immediate needs of participants experiencing a crisis, either through the direct provision of services or referrals to agencies. Consideration needs to be given to monitoring and managing the impact of the project, in terms of changes in the level of demand, on other service providers.

The strengths and needs of communities differ – some communities need to develop services while others need to improve the coordination and integration of the work of existing service providers.

A staged approach, that plans for the long term but also builds in ‘early wins’ along the way, supports continued participation.

**1.3 Structure of the report**

This report addresses the following questions: What was done? What were the outcomes - intended and unintended as well as positive and negative? What features of the Strategy, and of the SFF initiative made a difference? How did the projects interact with other projects and initiatives in an area? What else helped or hindered?

This chapter outlines the structure of this case study into the Stronger Families Fund initiative and sets out the methodology used in preparing this report.
Chapter 2 describes the State and Territory distribution of projects, funding levels, project duration, and diversity of project settings. Four types of projects with different levels of local planning or applicability to other areas are identified. The types of activities undertaken by projects and the resources they developed to strengthen families and communities are described.

Chapter 3 considers how SFF projects have contributed to family and community strengthening in the short, medium and long term. Outcomes from projects are considered in terms of the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy and are summarised in terms of short-term capacity building outcomes and potential medium to long term outcomes for participants, auspice agencies and the community. Longer-term outcomes need further follow up and it shouldn’t be assumed that early intervention, on its own, will build enough resilience to overcome all future barriers. Additional support may be needed at times of crisis or transition periods to make the most of the benefits of early intervention and preventative programs.

Chapter 4 considers the unintended positive and negative outcomes realised by SFF projects. The positive unintended outcomes identified by projects indicate that the Strategy has successfully supported a new way of working with families and communities.

Chapter 5 focuses on the underlying Strategy principles and how they made a difference. The Strategy principles defined the new way of working with families and communities and were reflected in the planning and implementation of the SFF initiative and the projects. Agencies and communities have developed skills and experience in working in partnership, adopting strengths based approaches and developing local solutions to local problems. Early intervention and prevention were a refreshing change from crisis response work for some project staff. Targeted funding of communities and tailored strategies to engage isolated families helped to ensure that projects assisted those most in need.

Chapter 6 discusses the impact of Strategy support on the development and implementation of SFF projects. Strategy support mediated risks associated with innovation. The impacts of short term funding when addressing long-term disadvantage are discussed.

Chapter 7 considers the support provided to projects by the Stronger Families Learning Exchange to implement action research and evidence based practice. Key concepts relating to evidence based policy and practice are discussed. Action research was a requirement of all SFF projects and helped to mediate risks associated with the complexity and developmental nature of the projects.

In chapter 8 the impact of previous or concurrent projects or initiatives on the outcomes of SFF projects are discussed.

Chapter 9 identifies other factors that either helped or hindered SFF projects and discusses how the Strategy can achieve better outcomes by considering what worked best for whom, why and when. Characteristics of the auspice agency could both help and/or hinder projects. Having the right people involved was important and a hindrance if they left. There is not sufficient information to conduct a systematic analysis of what worked best for whom, when, however some tentative observations are offered.
The final chapter presents feedback from projects about what advice they would give to others undertaking a similar project. To conclude, the lessons learnt in this case study are summarised and grouped into implications for i) project selection, ii) the management of clusters of projects, and iii) implications for the management and implementation of projects.
2 Overview of the Initiative

2.1 Summary of Overview of the Initiative

This chapter describes the aim of the Stronger Families Fund Initiative in the context of the linked community based initiatives funded under the Strategy.

The distribution, funding levels, duration, diversity and types of projects funded through the SFF initiative are discussed. Information is provided about the types of activities undertaken by SFF projects as compared to other Strategy projects. In addition to providing funding to projects the Strategy supported SFF projects in two ways:

1. FaCS provided support during the development and implementation of projects;
2. The Stronger Families Learning Exchange (SFLEx) supported SFF projects to implement action research.

The support provided to SFF projects by FaCS and SFLEx are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

2.2 Context and Aim of the SFF Initiative

The Stronger Families Fund was one of seven linked community based initiatives funded under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 (the Strategy). The community based initiatives were primarily focussed on either families or communities as shown in the following table.

Table 1: Community-based linked initiatives of the Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family-focused initiatives</th>
<th>Community-focused initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention, Parenting and Family Relationship Support</td>
<td>Potential Leaders in Local Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Families Fund</td>
<td>Local Solutions to Local Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Early Childhood Agenda Early Childhood Initiative SFCS</td>
<td>National Skills Development for Volunteers Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can Do Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The aims of the six community-based linked initiatives initially announced were:

**Stronger Families Fund** – to encourage better co-ordination and integration of local services to help communities to find better ways to strengthen families, with a focus on early childhood development and effective parenting.

**Early Intervention** – to encourage communities to provide innovative services and activities like parenting support and play groups, marriage and relationship, education and family counselling.

**Potential Leaders in Local Communities** – to develop skills, opportunities and support for potential community leaders.

**Local Solutions for Local Problems** – to help communities to develop solutions to their own local problems and in the process build up their ability to deal with similar issues in the future.

**Can Do Community** – to showcase real life examples where people have worked together to revitalise and strengthen their communities. Rather than fund new projects, this initiative will highlight the good work that is already going on in communities.

**National Skills Development for Volunteers** – to ensure that volunteers have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to really make a difference.

In practice distinctions between these initiatives were sometimes blurred and the range of projects funded under the Stronger Families Fund initiative in particular, which are discussed in the next chapter, included aspects of all of the initiatives described above.

**Box 1: Strategy information about the Stronger Families Fund**

The aim of the Stronger Families Fund is to improve the resilience and functioning of families, with a focus on early intervention and prevention. Particular emphasis is placed on early childhood development and effective parenting. The care and nurturing that children receive in the first few years of their lives have an enormous impact on their development. The Stronger Families Fund will establish projects across Australia to support parents and families in their role of caring for young children. Each project will be developed locally and designed to help communities strengthen families in their area. Projects will help families to create their own solutions, develop skills that can be used in the future, and promote the value of prevention and early intervention. The fund will support projects that will: help families with their parenting; provide young children with development opportunities; help balance the needs of work and family; and provide resources to deal with relationship difficulties.

(Strategy Information Kit – Department of Family and Community Services)

A list of all 49 Stronger Families Fund projects which shows the diversity of these projects and their activities is presented in Appendix 2.
The following examples of SFF projects illustrates some of the differences between projects in terms of scale, settings, target groups, priority issues being addressed and project interventions. These project descriptions have drawn on project profiles and updates published in the Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin, and on project progress reports and final reports when available.

Example 1: Examples of projects funded under the Stronger Families Fund Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>$136,695</th>
<th>West Belconnen Good Beginnings Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based in West Belconnen in the north-west of Canberra this project targeted families who are isolated, depressed, lacking positive role models or could benefit from support during their children's early years. Families have a child under 4 and live in the West Belconnen area. The aim of the Good Beginnings program is to improve parenting skills and family functioning through early intervention. The main activity is home visiting by volunteers trained as community parents to assist with parenting skills and reduce isolation by assisting families to create links with their local community. A playgroup has evolved from the project and there are plans to start a &quot;Life Changes&quot; group to assist families to manage life transitions such as becoming a parent, depression or loss of employment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>$393,000</th>
<th>Minto Under 12's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This project worked with residents of a public housing estate that was undergoing significant re-development to create a neighbourhood culture of caring for children and families and to provide opportunities for children to participate in positive activities. Parents and other adults were resourced to understand and meet the needs of children in age appropriate ways, and advocate on their behalf. Project activities included: piloting 'paint and play' programs for children in 3 precincts; developing and implementing street projects for 0 to 5 year olds and 6 to 12 year olds; designing and piloting a Kids Council at a local school; providing leadership training to community leaders, providing family support, publishing and distributing residents stories, conducting parent education, anti-violence and social skills training for high needs children, and providing events and activities to enable the community to interact in constructive ways, for example, developing the community park, local BBQs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>$342,150</th>
<th>Ashmont Community Resource Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.geocities.com/ashmont_community_resource_centr/">http://www.geocities.com/ashmont_community_resource_centr/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashmont, a suburb of Wagga Wagga with a high level of public housing, is geographically isolated and was lacking in local services. This project has provided funding to refurbish a church building to create the Ashmont Community Resource Centre (ACRC) with suitable offices for counselling services, office space for workers and space for education programs. The project employs 2 part time community liaison officers, one of whom is Indigenous. The project has coordinated involvement by a number of agencies who now provide sessions from the ACRC. Services provided include: Tenancy Advocacy and Support Service, Fair Trading. Relationships Australia provides counselling one day per week, Court Assistance Scheme assists people affected by family violence, Aboriginal Medical Service provides a doctor 2 days per week, and an Early Childhood Van is located at the centre 2 days per week. A range of education and training programs are run from the centre including TAFE courses, parent education, workshops, an ongoing men's group for fathers affected by separation, and a sexual assault support group. Action research approach is followed and many activities have been initiated by the local community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overview of SFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Funding Amount</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$110,150</td>
<td>DALE Young Mothers Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The program provided a Dynamic Alternative Learning Environment (DALE) for teenage mothers in the Newcastle and Hunter area. The project focused on supporting the young women to continue their secondary education, improve community connectedness and enhance their options for employment or further study upon finishing their high school education. The project liaised with other services to improve access to mainstream services and provided a life skills program with a focus on parenting skills and child development. Participants were actively involved in setting the direction of the project and ex-students who had been through the program were involved in an advisory capacity and acted as mentors for the young women. Leadership training was planned and some young women have addressed students at other schools about their experience of being a young parent.

| NT    | $95,728        | Parent Infant Connection Service Project |

Located in Palmerston, one of Australia’s fastest growing areas located 21 km south of Darwin where the population is primarily families with a relatively high proportion of Indigenous residents, this project worked with communities to develop innovative ways to strengthen family functioning. The project mapped community services identifying gaps in available services, ‘play and learn’ activities were developed to support young children and parents including sessions run with fathers in prison to build their capacity to relate positively with their young children. A girls group formed providing intensive support and development opportunities for late primary school girls referred by their school because of behavioral issues. Teachers reported significant changes as a result of the project; girls who been disruptive or withdrawn in class were now positive role models for other children. Through work with children the project successfully engaged families who previously did not normally access services. Action research methods were embraced by the project and have influenced the way that the whole agency approaches its work with the community.

| QLD   | $524,320       | Young Family Support Project |

The Young Parents Support Service, based at and auspiced by Centrelink, aimed to support young parents and parents-to-be in Townsville. The service built on the learnings from a pilot project that targeted young mothers and pregnant young women offering individual assessments and intensive support. The service used SFF funds to employ 2 social workers to provide individualised assessment, intensive support, one-off assistance and referrals, a range of groups and brokerage funding to assist participants to improve their independence, parenting skills and to link them into education, training or work. Action Research methods were used to develop the service and young people were involved in planning and reviewing groups offered by the service. Groups run by the service included: Preparation for Parenthood, Young Parent's Group, Play Groups, Anxiety Group, Parenting Skills for Toddlers, and Participation Pathways for Young Parents. Brokerage funding enabled flexible responses to each family's needs and was often used to provide transport to assist young people to attend groups. In recognition of the transport difficulties faced by young people home visiting and telephone contact supplemented centre based activities. This project could be a model for other Centrelink based services targeting young parents.

| QLD   | $420,650       | Beenleigh Families' Information Centre (FIC) |

Families NOW a family information centre is located within the Beenleigh Centrelink office in Brisbane. This project provided a central access point to preventative and early intervention services for families with an emphasis on early childhood and parenting. Early intervention was enhanced by: providing a confidential screening, assessment, support, information and referral service; establishing support groups; coordinating on-site parent education and relationship training and workshops; coordinating a Community Desk where community agencies could provide and promote services. Through action research and links with other agencies the project aimed to influence funding decisions to meet gaps in services and to become sustainable without ongoing SFCS funding.
### QLD
- **$172,761** The Strengthening Families Project

This project was based in an area covering both suburban areas and geographically isolated communities such as Stradbroke Island, the Bay Islands, Redland Bay and Victoria Point. The project provided parenting courses and supported parents to establish groups that continued to meet after the parenting courses ended. Participants were involved in decision-making about the direction of the project and listening circles were used to gather quality feedback from parents about what was working well and how the project could be improved. One of the sustainable outcomes from this project was that the local government established a home based child care service in a new area. The project trained volunteers to provide additional support to parents when requested. Stage 2 of this project was funded under the Early Childhood Initiative to train people from the local community to deliver parenting courses.

### SA
- **$764,721** Bright Start

This project aimed to strengthen families with young children in Peterborough and Port Pirie in South Australia. The objectives of Bright Start were to: improve partnerships between service providers to more effectively respond to identified needs; provide opportunities for parents to influence service providers; enable parents to enhance their parenting skills and family relationships; promote the safe and healthy development of children; improve community responsiveness to the needs of families and children; and to work with Aboriginal families to enhance parenting skills. Parenting Information Centres established by the project offered information on parenting and assisted referrals to other services, parenting workshops, school holiday programs and groups for parents. Workshops with parents were used to identify the needs of parents. Aboriginal project staff consulted and worked with Aboriginal families. Professional development opportunities were offered to other service providers and activities were planned in partnership with relevant agencies.

### VIC
- **$318,000** The Platforms Strategy

This project set in Moonee Valley in Melbourne’s northern suburbs aimed to increase community awareness of the importance of the early years of life and to acknowledge and validate parents as experts in their child’s development and their critical role in the early identification of concerns. Activities included the establishment of a community based advisory group; community education activities and supporting professionals to value parents as experts in their child’s development. The project trialed the systematic use of an evidence-based tool to support structured discussions between parents and professionals to improve the early detection of concerns about the health, development and behaviour of children aged 0 to 8 years. Service system development focussed on increasing community and professional awareness of the range of services available to support children and families and improved coordination of primary care and early childhood services by increasing the knowledge of professionals and families about the range of available services.
## WA
### Strengthening Families across the Ngaanyatjarra Lands

$1,041,250

**Overview:**
This project adopted a comprehensive, flexible and holistic approach to preventative and early intervention strategies aimed at strengthening families in 11 local communities throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, a vast and remote central desert region. The project assisted communities to develop their own solutions to enhance family functioning, parenting skills and child health and development through a comprehensive range of preventive and early intervention strategies, both clinical and educational. Project activities included establishing playgroups for pre-school children, supporting female elders to work with young mothers and their grandchildren to assist them to develop parenting skills and to enhance the teaching of culture, culturally appropriate play, story telling, and art and music activities. The project developed to also involve fathers and organised visiting speakers in remote communities eg Centrelink Aboriginal advisor, child health nurse.


## WA
### Building Strong and Healthy Families in Derby

$564,610

**Overview:**
This project worked with Indigenous people in Derby, in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia. The Warrwa and Nygina people are the traditional owners of Derby and about 20 tribal groups now live in or around Derby. The town has a long and recent history of trauma and genocide with massacres occurring into the 1930s. As a consequence the community has high levels of alcoholism, drug abuse, unemployment, family violence, suicide, crime, truancy amongst children and malnutrition. The Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation has been active in the community since 1994 providing low cost food and clothing and emergency food supplies to people who are homeless. The project promoted a co-ordinated and early intervention approach to addressing major issues affecting family strength and health with a particular focus on meeting fundamental needs (such as adequate nutrition) of Indigenous parents and young children. Funding was used to employ a co-ordinator to promote linkages and greater co-ordination between key stakeholders in the town, to test new ways of delivering services, to develop appropriate resources to assist parents, and to provide education for parents, older children and pregnant teenagers/young mothers in life skills (including the preparation of nutritious food). Approaches included a focus on education and mentoring by community elders. Project activities included providing meals on wheels to needy kids; health and nutrition checks using a mobile health van, providing family support to individuals and families, intergenerational bush trips, and a drop-in centre.


## WA
### Quality Relationships Alliance

$407,870

**Overview:**
Mandurah, in the south of Western Australia is a rapidly growing regional city with a high proportion of young families who are often isolated from family and friends. This project aimed to reduce isolation and marriage breakdowns by taking a four pronged approach to building quality relationships. Activities included: supporting human service providers through networking, training and support; raising public awareness of the importance of quality relationships through a public relations strategy; recruiting and training volunteers to provide support and information; and providing practical, proactive preventative community education services.

### Strengthening Mining Families in the Eastern Goldfields

This project aimed to improve the social, family, psychological and physical wellbeing of men and their families in the rural and remote mining communities in the Eastern Goldfields of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia using preventative and early intervention strategies. Project activities focused on the men and their families, employers and service providers. Culturally appropriate information developed for men and their families was disseminated with the aim of improving men’s insight into their needs and their willingness to access appropriate services. Raising the awareness of employers of the impact of current shift work arrangements on the wellbeing and health of the men and their families as well as improving the skills of Occupational Health and Safety professionals and mining site nurses the project aimed to increase referrals to support services. A network of key stakeholders: employers, government and non-government health and social service providers was formed to improve early identification of issues, coordination, accessibility and comprehensiveness of responses.

## 2.3 Funding and Duration of SFF projects

### Funding received

A total of $18,157,874 funded 49 projects through the Stronger Families Fund. Project funding levels ranged from $45,165 to $1,447,987 and the average funding per project was $370,569.

Most projects (63%) received funding of between $100,000 and $400,000. Table 19 in Appendix 3 provides further detail about the range of funding for individual projects. Two projects initially funded through the SFCS Early Intervention initiative each received funding from the SFF initiative for a project to run a second phase. These projects received the lowest amounts of SFF funding.

The two projects funded for over $1,000,000 were both undertaking developmental work with remote Indigenous communities in different and very large geographic regions. One of these large projects was based in Western Australia and the other was funded as a National project. As discussed in the Qualitative Cost Benefit Case Study there were substantially higher costs associated with implementing projects in remote areas that covered large regions.

Many SFF projects received additional funding from a range of sources that included other Australian government programs, State, Territory of Local governments, non-government organisations. The amount of funding secured by projects in addition to Strategy funding is not known, nor is there information available to identify the number of cases in which Strategy funding enabled projects to leverage additional funding although this was clearly the case for some projects. Table 20 in Appendix 3 provides further information about the proportion of SFF projects that received funding from other sources.
There is a significant risk of under-estimating the true cost of SFF projects, as many received joint funding either sequentially or concurrently, and information about the other resources expended (in addition to Strategy funding) was not systematically reported. There is the real possibility, therefore, of claiming that a project has achieved its outcomes through an expenditure that is only a fraction of its true cost.

For example, one of the case studies completed as part of this evaluation collected additional data about a particular project, the Gilles Plains Community Garden. The study found that Strategy funding had provided less than a quarter of the funding used to achieve the outcomes, together with building on existing capacity of various types. This finding does not diminish the achievements of the project, or the value of Strategy funding. It does, however, mean that there is a risk in comparing projects’ achievements and in expecting to replicate these outcomes with a similar level of Strategy funding.

**Distribution by State and Territory**

New South Wales had the greatest number of projects (14) and Queensland received the greatest proportion of SFF funding at 21.5% followed closely by New South Wales. The Australian Capital Territory had the smallest number of projects (2) and the smallest proportion of project funding (1.6%).

A relatively low number of projects and proportion of funding was allocated in Victoria. Victoria took a staged approach to developing proposals. Targeted areas were identified and local governments were funded to map services and undertake consultative project planning processes. This process took longer to develop proposals (although proposals were well informed and developed with communities) with the consequence that Victoria underspent its allocation in the first year of the Strategy. Later project proposals had a higher risk of not being funded because funds had already been allocated. After underspending in the first year of the Strategy, the total allocation to the Strategy, and hence to funding initiatives, was reduced.

The three National projects had the highest average funding, due to a single project of more than $1m. Further detail of the distribution of projects and project funding by State and Territory are shown in Table 21 in Appendix 3.

**Duration of projects**

The duration of SFF projects varied from 1 to 4 years. Many projects had shorter timelines than originally anticipated because of delays in the funding approval process. At the time of preparing this case study many projects had not been completed and only 6 final reports were available. Many projects re-negotiated contracts, sometimes extending timelines where there had been unforeseen delays for various reasons. Anticipated completion dates for projects at May 2005 are shown in Table 22 in Appendix 3.

**2.4 Diversity of SFF projects**

SFF projects were undertaken in diverse communities, based in a range of settings and worked with different target groups. Projects also differed in their approach to developing project activities; four types of project development processes have been identified. Table 2 summarises these differences.
Table 2: Summary of differences between SFF projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>Economically disadvantaged, socially isolated, transient populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remote, rural, regional centres, suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth areas, areas in economic and population decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varying levels of human, social, economic and institutional capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project settings</td>
<td>Public housing estates, Schools, Community centres, co-located with existing services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single and multi sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target groups</td>
<td>Families with pre-school aged children, socially isolated families, Indigenous communities and families, Culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Young mothers, Men, families where a parent has a mental illness, Young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universal (whole of population) and/or specific ‘high need’ groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to developing projects</td>
<td>Projects with clear aims and intentionally fuzzy objectives and workplans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projects with pre-established aims, objectives and interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pilot projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Franchised or ‘pre-packaged’ interventions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diverse communities

The communities where projects were based varied widely in terms of pre-existing capacity. While areas with high levels of disadvantage were targeted for Strategy funding it is important to note that the factors contributing to indicators of disadvantage varied. Disadvantage was not necessarily related to economic circumstances. For example, one project was based in mining communities where families often had good incomes and communities had access to financial resources, but where there were high levels of work-related transience, social isolation, a lack of extended family support, and high levels of relationship breakdown.

Some SFF projects were located in rapidly growing regional areas with high proportions of young families where services struggle to keep up with demand such as Palmerston in the Northern Territory or Mandurah in Western Australia. Other communities were experiencing declining populations, economic downturn and a loss of services.

Geographically defined communities included very remote Indigenous communities, large regions, regional centres, small rural communities and suburbs or parts of suburbs. The population of targeted communities varied from a few hundred to tens of thousands in growing urban areas. For example, Gwabegar and Pilligar in NSW had total populations of 290 and 174 people, Palmerston, in the Northern Territory had a population of 25,000.
Project settings

Several projects were based on public housing estates, in one case during the redevelopment of the estate when residents were being relocated. Some projects were based in primary or secondary schools; others were based at community centres, or were co-located with existing services such as Centrelink.

Many SFF projects worked across multiple sites, for example, a project based in Wagga Wagga worked with seven discrete communities. Projects targeting remote Indigenous communities commonly worked with multiple discrete communities. Some multi-site projects while taking into account local circumstances were undertaking similar activities across different sites. Others undertook discrete planning processes resulting in the development of different strategies and action plans at different sites.

Targeting of SFF projects

Seventeen SFF projects specifically targeted Indigenous communities. There were no Indigenous specific SFF projects in South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria or the ACT. However, non-Indigenous specific projects often also included Indigenous participants and 80% of SFF projects that responded to the final questionnaire had partnerships with Indigenous organisations.

Some communities had high levels of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For example, one project was set in the Melbourne municipality of Moonee Valley where over 100 languages are spoken and a third of the population was born overseas. Projects based in these areas often developed culturally specific responses to the local community. For example, one South Australian project trained Indigenous, Malay and Maori playgroup leaders. Data on the full range and extent of culturally and linguistically diverse groups participating in SFF projects was not however systematically recorded on the Strategy database.

Within geographic areas, projects targeted specific groups such as families with very young children, pregnant young women and young mothers or families where a parent has a mental illness. The FaCS database indicates that 5 projects were based in communities facing challenges, 6 targeted families living in remote areas, 30 targeted families with very young children, and 2 targeted young people.

Different approaches to developing project activities

Differences in processes used to develop and / or implement project activities can be conceptualised in terms of the following distinctions:

1. Projects with clear aims and intentionally fuzzy objectives and workplans
2. Projects with pre-established aims, objectives and interventions
3. Pilot projects
4. ‘Franchised’ or ‘pre-packaged interventions’
As expected given the differing settings and starting points of projects different approaches were taken by projects funded under the SFF initiative. Many projects were developed ‘from the ground up’ using community development practices, others started with a detailed implementation plan. A few SFF projects were piloting new models or tools and several projects implemented pre-existing ‘packages’ of interventions.

Often the timing of Strategy funding influenced the nature of the project, for example scoping work undertaken in consultation with the community prior to the Strategy meant that some communities were further down the track in terms of identifying community issues and developing responses. The impact of previous projects is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 in the context of how SFF projects interacted with other interventions.

The target groups of different projects also influenced the types of project activities undertaken.

1. Projects with clear aims and intentionally fuzzy objectives and work-plans

Some projects started with clear process aims and objectives and intentionally fuzzy project plans in terms of specific activities. They had a firm commitment to participatory process, initial ideas about priority issues and possible interventions and developed detailed project plans during the establishment phase of the project. This developmental approach supported the principles of building community capacity, working in partnership and developing local solutions.

**Example 2: Description of a developmental project with emerging interventions**

The “Connecting Families in Wagga Wagga” project worked with seven discrete communities to develop support strategies for children and families at risk, in the eastern suburbs and rural villages of the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area. The initial aims of the project were to:

- Develop service access and partnerships to meet the needs of isolated, rural and at risk families.
- Assist parents to develop informal social support networks, and to be able to identify where to find help when it is needed.
- Provide community capacity building skills to community members e.g. leadership skills, grant seeking skills and team work skills

As stated in the final project report:

*The project undertook a developmental approach so that there was flexibility for developing or growing responses with the communities' identified needs and solutions. This allowed for changes to occur in the project direction, rather than a fixed implementation model, and therefore the action research model complemented this approach.*
2. Projects with pre-established aims, objectives and interventions

In contrast, other projects had clear aims and objectives and some activities and expected outcomes were identified prior to the project commencing. These projects were often building on previous work and employed action research methods to monitor and further develop projects during implementation.

Example 3: Description of a project with pre-planned interventions

The "Bright Start" project in South Australia started out with a very clear and detailed project plan. All families who have a baby in the [region] receive a resource manual - in regular installments for first 4 years of child's life. Children received a book at birth and subsequently at each birthday up to and including their 4th birthday. The project also established Parenting Information Centers offering information and assisted referrals to a range of services and community resources. Workshops were held with parents to identify needs in each community and activities developed during the project were planned in partnership with relevant agencies.

3. Pilot Projects

Some projects set out to develop and / or to pilot models of service delivery or community capacity building, or tools such as a child development screening instrument that may have wider utility. These projects aimed to add to the existing base of knowledge and had a focus on research and evaluation.

Example 4: Projects that developed new models

**Rauh Inreach** - This project was a jointly funded collaboration with the Office of Mental Health and Department of Community Development in Western Australia. This state-wide pilot project aimed to increase awareness amongst service providers of the need to coordinate services for families where a parent has a mental illness. The Department of Health funded the development of accredited competency based training and best practice protocols. Local networks were developed in three pilot communities and training was provided at a local level to build the capacity of agencies to support coordinated family focused, evidence based approaches to providing preventative and early intervention services to children and their parents who have a mental illness. The project supported a State-wide Strategic Committee that included consumer representatives to oversee the project and conducted action research during the life of the project.

**The Platforms Strategy** - This project trialled systematic use of an evidence-based tool to support structured discussions between parents and professionals to improve the early detection of, and coordinated responses to, concerns about the health, development and behaviour of children aged 0 to 8 years. The project also focused on increasing awareness in the community of the importance of the early years of life and of early identification and responses to concerns. The role of parents as experts on their child's development was validated and a partnership approach between parents and early childhood professionals was encouraged. Service system development was an integral part of the project seeking to increase the number and level of coordination between primary care providers using systematic evidence based approaches to early identification and subsequent responses to identified concerns. The final phase of the project was an evaluation that developed recommendations for improving any future implementation of the Parent's Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) tool; highlighted the nature of concerns that parents had regarding their child's development and also documented issues arising in terms of process and outcomes to inform further research or the implementation of similar approaches.
4. Franchised or ‘pre-packaged’ interventions

Several SFF projects implemented franchised or ‘pre-packaged’ interventions that varied in the extent to which they encouraged or allowed projects to adapt interventions in line with local circumstances. In many cases the package provided access to additional resources such as staff training, resources for participants, evaluation tools, access to expertise and information exchange and opportunities for networking with other projects.

SFF projects implemented the following ‘pre-packaged’ models of intervention:

- Good Beginnings (3 projects)
- Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)
- Triple P Parent education
- 5 P Parent Education
- Families and Schools Together (FAST)

Example 5: Examples of franchised models implemented by SFF projects

The Indigenous HIPPY project funded in Wagga Wagga implemented a pre-existing package of interventions to encourage pre-school children’s learning and support the transition to school. The program recruited and trained parent volunteers who tutored other parents in how to support their child’s development. The program also encouraged the development of informal community networks and supported parents, who may not have had positive experiences of school themselves, to develop positive relationships with the school. During the project culturally relevant course material was developed in consultation with Indigenous families participating in the project.

In contrast, another project used Families And Schools Together (FAST), a franchised program developed by the University of Wisconsin that emphasises fidelity in the implementation of proven interventions and therefore does not allow program material to be modified. This was experienced as a strength by the project using the program. FAST was viewed by the project as a very worthwhile and proven model generating consistent, evaluated, positive results provided that the integrity of the program was maintained.

2.5 What was done - Project Activities

Description of activities to be funded under SFF

Strategy information about Stronger Families Fund projects reflects the principles underlying the Strategy with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, working in partnership, building capacity, creating links between services and a commitment to action research.
### Box 2: Strategy information about Stronger Families Fund projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stronger Families Fund projects must:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• identify and address major issues affecting family wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognise the value of prevention, early intervention and the development of skills and resources that allow families to become stronger and more resilient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be primarily aimed at families with young children (preferably with children aged 0-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• help families in times of life transitions e.g. having a baby, getting a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• coordinate and create links between local services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have the capacity to participate in action research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project proposals should take into account the higher costs that come with the extra components of Stronger Families Funds Projects, i.e. coordinating links and participating in action research.

The Stronger Families Fund could be used to:

| • Help local workers to identify needs and possible solutions, build partnerships, and work with partners in the community to provide more integrated services; |
| • Build partnerships between local residents, volunteers and paid professionals from business, government and non-government organisations |
| • Produce information and promotional material on family well being; and |
| • Provide small, local investments to help families to develop the skills and resources needed to deal with issues or problems they encounter and to take advantage of opportunities that arise |

(FaCS Information Sheet)

### Range of activities supporting families and communities

The SFF initiative, while focused on families, also incorporated aspects of the community focused initiatives such as volunteer training, leadership development and generating local solutions. Many activities undertaken by SFF projects were similar to activities implemented by Early Intervention initiative projects. For example, many SFF projects provided parent education courses or set-up play groups and other supportive groups for parents.

Many SFF projects recruited, trained and utilised volunteers. For example, one project that established culturally specific playgroups trained community volunteers (who had been cleared by the police) to act as interpreters for families and staff. Another project trained volunteers as ‘friendly visitors’ to provided one on one support to isolated families and to link families into community activities and services as needed.

The types of project activities undertaken were inevitably influenced by the context in which projects were implemented. Some projects, where there was already a range of organisations providing services to the community, focussed on developing the capacity and coordination of existing service providers. In contrast, projects set in communities lacking in basic services were more likely to take on a significant direct service role.
Seventy five percent of SFF projects responded to the final questionnaire (or the interim version if projects were not completed) providing information about major and minor project activities. Project activities have been grouped into four categories:

1. Activities that provided services directly to participating families
2. Activities that supported communities and built community capacity
3. Activities that developed relationships amongst service providers
4. Resources developed to support families, communities and organisations.

1. Activities that provided services directly to participating families

The majority of SFF projects provided services directly to families. SFF projects were more likely than projects funded under other initiatives to provide direct services or to address barriers that limit access to services, such as providing child care. SFF projects undertook a variety of activities to engage participants, particularly 'hard to reach' sections of the population. Projects implemented and developed diverse activities to facilitate the development of healthy relationships and community connectedness. Other activities included counseling and practical assistance as well as case management services. Table 23 in Appendix 3 presents responses from SFF projects to questions that asked them to indicate whether these were major or minor activities.

2. Activities that supported communities and built community capacity

Almost all SFF projects conducted community consultations and brought community members together, most provided skills training for members of the community and almost three quarters of SFF projects were involved in initiating or running significant community or cultural events. SFF projects were more likely to have undertaken these types of activities than other Strategy projects. Table 24 in Appendix 3 provides further detail about the proportion of SFF projects undertaking these types of activities.

3. Activities that developed relationships amongst service providers

Working in partnership was an underlying principle of the Strategy and a characteristic of all SFF projects. The types of partners, activities undertaken with partners and lessons learnt about working in partnership are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 in the context of the Strategy principles. Table 25 in Appendix 3 provides details about the proportion of SFF projects undertaking activities that developed relationships amongst service providers.

4. Resources developed to support families, communities and organisations

Almost all SFF projects produced resources that supported families and communities directly, or indirectly, by supporting organisations to support families and communities. Some resources were of time limited and project specific value, for example, flyers produced to promote the activities of the project. In other cases resources were substantial and likely to have longer-term benefits and/or the potential to benefit other communities, for example, Community Resource Centers or documented programs.
The following table summarises and provides examples of the types of resources produced by SFF projects.

**Table 3: Types of resources developed by SFF projects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Resources</th>
<th>Examples / details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service and Resource Directories</td>
<td>Organisational referral list, Web-based and hard copy directories Book list, list of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting project activities</td>
<td>Course brochures Newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Events Publicity</td>
<td>Annual community events calendar Monthly community calendar Newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational resources</td>
<td>Information leaflets (Parenting Skills, Children’s Self-esteem, 10 tips for Parents to build resilience, Keeping balance) Handbooks (Teen Mothers Living Skills Handbook, Budgeting handbook) Workshop kits (Raising Happy, Safe Children; Enjoying the Toddler Years; Learning to live with your kids 4-7) Parenting workbooks, Self esteem workbook Low cost recipe book Producing Videos (child development and nutrition - in English and local Aboriginal language, Video library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical infrastructure</td>
<td>Community centers Mobile health van Women’s meeting space Community mural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy documents</td>
<td>Good Governance Policy document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program documentation</td>
<td>Toddler tactics parenting program Volunteer training program Community and parent education workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools and checklists</td>
<td>Community fundraising checklist Engaging service providers as partners checklist child development sheet, behavioural management tools Educational tools and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training resources</td>
<td>Professional development workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3  How did these projects contribute to family and community strength in the short-term, medium-term and longer-term?

3.1  Summary of the contribution of SFF projects to developing stronger families and communities

This chapter discusses the outcomes of SFF projects for families and communities. Although SFF was a ‘family’ initiative it also had a strong focus on strengthening communities.

Outcomes for participating individuals and families identified by projects included a better understanding of child development, acquiring practical parenting skills, better relationships between parents and children, improved readiness for school, higher rates of school attendance and improved performance at school. Child and parental health and wellbeing were enhanced and there was increased awareness of the services available in times of crisis or transition and how to access them.

Projects provided evidence of greater social participation and the establishment of informal networks in the community amongst families who were previously isolated. There was also evidence of increased economic participation by project participants (including volunteers) who took up opportunities for training with some gaining recognised qualifications and/or employment before projects ended.

At the community level projects reported that participants had a greater sense of belonging and pride in the community, that they were more aware of community strengths and needs and were also more skilled and optimistic in identifying how the community could address challenges and make the most of opportunities.

Important outcomes were also reported for organisations, both auspice agencies and the organisations that they worked in partnership with, including different levels of government. For some organisations involvement in the Strategy introduced new ways of working that has had a far-reaching impact on how the organisation operates. Outcomes for organisations included: developing skills and knowledge about how to implement participatory approaches and to work in partnership with community members and other organisations. Organisations developed a clearer understanding of community strengths and challenges and a clearer understanding of the role and capacity of other agencies. Staff of participating organisations developed, or further refined skills in prevention and early intervention, strengths based approaches and action research.

The next section provides background on the characteristics of strong families and communities. Different types of capital, types of social capital, community capacity building processes, upstream and downstream capacity and the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy are briefly discussed.
Project outcomes are considered in the context of the Strategy hierarchy of outcomes framework, paying attention to both ‘upstream’ and ‘downstream’ capacity. Project outcomes are then summarised in terms of short-term outcomes for individuals and families and the capacity building outcomes for organisations and communities. The chapter concludes with information about how projects self-rated their achievements in the final evaluation questionnaire.

3.2 Strengthening families and communities – key concepts

This section describes the characteristics of strong families and communities and briefly reviews the different types of capital, including the different forms of social capital that strong families and communities draw on. An expanded diagram of the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy that summarises desired outcomes at different levels and illustrates the iterative nature of capacity building is presented. Community capacity building processes are described and the concept of upstream and downstream capacity building is discussed and broadened to apply to individuals, communities and organisations.

Strong families and communities have been described in Strategy documentation as:

Strong Families...support and care for each other...care for and nurture children...help children and young adults prepare to be active members of our communities...have members that communicate with each other...have a sense of togetherness and share activities...transmit culture, including social values and language.

Strong Communities...have strong leaders...have strong networks with other communities...can build on their existing assets and resources...have a ‘can do’ community spirit and are optimistic about the future...can grasp the opportunities that come their way...have a sense of ‘belonging’ to the community among its members...embrace change and take responsibility.

Black and Hughes (2001) defined community strength as:

…the extent to which resources and processes within a community maintain and enhance both individual and collective wellbeing in ways consistent with the principles of equity, comprehensiveness, participation, self-reliance and social responsibility.

A review of this literature conducted as part of the development of the evaluation framework for the Strategy (SuccessWorks et al, 2002:32) proposed the following domains as relevant to the evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.
### Table 4: Domains of stronger families and communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common to both stronger families and communities:</th>
<th>Specific to stronger families</th>
<th>Specific to stronger communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Resilience</td>
<td>• Parental competence</td>
<td>• Skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wellbeing</td>
<td>• Social functioning</td>
<td>• Knowledge building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Solution focus</td>
<td>• Risk behaviour</td>
<td>• Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Income and time</td>
<td>• Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Commitment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some descriptions of the characteristics of stronger communities combine both aspects of wellbeing and of the processes that build and maintain this wellbeing – for instance Gauntlett, Hugman, Kenyon and Logan (2001), described communities that:

- Provide a clean safe environment;
- Meet the basic needs of residents;
- Comprise residents that respect and support each other;
- Involve the community in local government;
- Promote and celebrate their historical and cultural heritage;
- Provide easily accessible health services;
- Possess a diverse, innovative economy;
- Rest on a sustainable ecosystem.
A common causal path for strengthening families and communities

Program logic is the conceptual framework that provides coherence across the diversity of the Strategy. It is particularly suited to the evaluation of complex and diverse projects such as those funded under the Strategy.

The process of developing the Final Evaluation Framework has led to a common outcomes hierarchy for the Strategy as a whole (the ‘Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy’), that can be adapted for particular projects, for clusters of similar projects and for initiatives. The Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy has been based on the hierarchy of outcomes that underpins the Performance Indicators for the Strategy, and further developed in the light of the literature review and consultations.

As illustrated in the expanded diagram of the hierarchy of outcomes on the following page, families and communities could take different pathways to developing strength and resilience. Pathways to stronger families and communities can be direct and/or indirect. Direct pathways have lasting benefits for participants but may have a limited impact in terms of developing capacity that can continue to drive the growth of stronger families and communities.

There is likely to be considerable iteration, where positive outcomes feedback to reinforce and encourage further participation, and also emergent outcomes, where the development of capacity leads to activities that develop skills and trust.

Different types of capital

Strong communities are able to draw on, and effectively utilise the different types of capital that exists in the community. Similarly, strong families are able to draw on, and effectively utilise, the different types of capital that they have. In their possible Indicators of Social and Family Functioning, Zubrick et al (2000) identified five major categories of resources that might be mobilised on behalf of children: income; time; human capital; psychological capital; and social capital.

Four types of capital are described in the Community Capacity Building Issues Paper and are included in the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy:

- Human capital – level of skills, knowledge and health status
- Social capital – networks, social norms and trust
- Institutional capital – leadership and capacity to plan and implement projects
- Economic capital – local services, infrastructure and resources

Other types of capital identified in the literature include natural, cultural, spiritual and environmental capital.
Figure 1: The sequence of outcomes leading to stronger families and communities illustrating the iterative nature of capacity building.

Level 1: Participation

Level 2: Greater awareness

Level 3: Greater capacity
- Human capital
- Economic capital
- Social capital
- Organisational capital

Level 4: Application of capacity to address challenges and seize opportunities

Levels 5 & 6: Resilience, sustained participation and self-determination

Level 7: Stronger Families and Communities
- Improved and maintained individual and collective wellbeing

Identification of existing capacity and gaps
Development of capacity
Identification of existing opportunities
Development of opportunities

Opportunities to apply capacity
Relationships between different types of capital

Different types of capital available in a community interact - for example strong social capital contributes to the development of human capital and vice versa. Individuals ‘do better’ physically and mentally in connected, tolerant communities where there are high levels of trust and opportunities for social participation. At the same time, it’s easier for healthy people, who have a sense of belonging and community pride, to participate in community activities.

While most SFF projects included activities to build more than one type of capital, some projects focussed on developing specific types of capital to meet identified needs in the context of the particular issues being addressed by projects. For example, the ‘Supporting children and families where a parent has a mental illness’ project was primarily concerned with developing institutional capital to enhance the capacity of adult mental health services and other support services to identify and respond to children’s needs. Increased institutional capacity, in turn assisted parents to enhance their capacity to adopt preventative and early intervention strategies to reduce negative impacts of their mental illness on their children.

The Family Income Management project was ultimately concerned with supporting families to care for children. The project had a focus on developing economic capital and worked with remote Indigenous communities to support families to gain more control of their finances. However to achieve this aim the project also built institutional capital by working with financial institutions to improve access to banking facilities, and enhanced human capital by developing the financial management skills of individuals and families.

Social capital – bonding, linking and bridging

Bonding social capital refers to relationships between similar people in similar circumstances - for example within families. Linking social capital refers to relationships between different people in similar circumstances - for example within a neighbourhood. Bridging social capital refers to relationships between people with different levels of access to influential contacts and resources.

The development and/or strengthening of bonding and linking social capital were evident in SFF projects as either intentional or unintentional outcomes.

Social participation in itself is correlated with improved physical and mental health and informal community networks are protective during times of stress or difficulty. Friends can offer emotional and sometimes practical support, or point you in the direction of a service that can help. Informal networks developed during many SFF projects, further building bonding and linking social capital.

For example, participants in one project that met fortnightly chose to meet informally during the weeks between structured groups. Bush trips for younger and older women resulted in improved relationships between generations. Playgroup members developed relationships that extended beyond playgroup time.
Some projects actively sought partnerships that could contribute to the development of bridging social capital. For example, one project involved the local Chamber of Commerce in project planning and implementation. Another project worked in partnership with a major bank.

**Building capacity**

The overall intent of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy is to build the capacity of families, communities, and organisations working with them. Capacity building is about increasing the personal and collective resources of individuals, families and communities so that they have the skills and capacities to respond to challenges and to seize opportunities that come their way.

Capacity, at a community level, refers to the potential for action arising out of the interplay between human capital, (levels of skills, knowledge and health status), social and institutional capital (leadership, motivation, networks) and economic capital (local services, infrastructure and resources).

**Community capacity building processes**

The Community Capacity Building Issues Paper prepared as part of the evaluation of the Strategy, identified a sequence of processes for planning capacity building linked to the Strategy outcomes hierarchy. The processes are based on an identified sequence of questions that a community would need to answer as part of planning a community capacity building strategy that was developed by Smith and Davies (2001). In summary the processes identified were:

1. Identifying the issue; the outcome of this process is that the community becomes aware of issues, opportunities and challenges and reaches agreement about those it will address.

2. Identifying what capacity (human, social, institutional, economic and natural) already exists in the community, resulting in community awareness of its existing capacity.

3. Identifying which element(s) of capacity needs to be created or enhanced and who or what needs to have capacity so that the community develops a better understanding of the relevance of existing capacity to taking up opportunities, projects and challenges and what further capacity is required and who requires it.

4. Identifying how to build on existing capacity and develop further capacity as needed. The outcome of this process is that the community successfully develops required capacity using a range of carefully selected activities or projects.

5. Identifying how the community can capitalise on existing or newly developed capacity to address its particular issues and/or opportunities resulting in the community applying capacity to seize opportunities and address challenges.

6. Finally the community identifies how to sustain and enhance its capacity and looks for new opportunities to apply capacity.
The ultimate outcome of these processes is stronger families and a community that enhance and maintains the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community.

Although described as a linear sequence that starts with identifying issues, communities start at different stages. Some communities have the capacity needed to identify and seize opportunities; others need to develop this capacity. As stated in the issue paper: “…capacity building is not a once-off exercise but rather a cyclical or spiralling process. If it is working well it will have ever-widening application and/or sophistication.”

**Upstream and downstream capacity building**

Funnell, (1998) described *upstream capacity* as what is required to establish and design capacity building and community strengthening projects while *downstream capacity* is what is required to deliver the projects. Communities that do not have a history of involvement in capacity building and community strengthening projects may need to work on developing upstream capacity first.

The concept of upstream and downstream capacity can be applied to project participants, organisations and communities.

At an individual level people may need ‘upstream capacity building’ before they can take part in group activities, or extend their participation in the community. Some projects took time to develop trusting relationships with individual participants, sometimes through the use of volunteers in friendly visiting roles, before introducing them to other activities. Many projects worked with people who have experienced a high level of social disruption, violence or abuse. Forming a trusting, positive relationship may be needed to build confidence needed to participate in ‘downstream’ activities like parent education courses or playgroups.

For organisations, upstream capacity may need to be developed in terms of skills and experience in working in partnership with the community and other organisations, or in applying strength based approaches and action research. Organisations also need to be able to attract appropriately qualified project staff and volunteers and to have the skills and experience to support staff and volunteers working in community development roles in order to successfully implement projects.

Upstream capacity building of physical and social infrastructure in the community was sometimes needed in terms of the availability of buildings to house activities and services. In remote areas, there were sometimes issues with accommodation for visiting project workers. In terms of social infrastructure upstream capacity building can refer to the need to repair damaged relationships, or to create structures that provide a positive experience of social participation and start to build trust.
3.3 Outcomes for Whom?

At each level of the hierarchy of outcomes projects achieved outcomes for different stakeholders; participating individuals, families, communities and agencies. Other potential stakeholders included private businesses and government departments. The following section provides a description of each outcome level and examples from projects of outcomes achieved at that level. The following example of outcomes for different stakeholders at level two of the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy illustrates how increased awareness and improved access to services can apply to different stakeholders

Greater awareness refers to both project participants, and service providers. Many projects incorporated training activities that aimed to increase the awareness of families and community members in areas such as child development, parenting, play, education, and physical and emotional health.

Many projects also provided professional development opportunities for agency staff (both paid and volunteer) in the areas detailed above. For service providers (and for community members participating in the management of projects) greater awareness of Strategy principles included awareness of the value of:

- Prevention and early intervention, particularly during periods of transition
- Strengths based approaches.
- Partnerships and networks
- Evidence based policy and practice and in particular action research
- Developing local solutions to local issues
- Planning for sustainability

Access to services can be improved by:

- Increasing the awareness of the range of available services amongst members of the community and service providers.
- Increasing the confidence of potential referring agencies about the quality and capacity of services provided by other service providers
- Reducing barriers to access, for example ensuring cultural appropriateness, changing the way in which services are delivered – examples are setting up services in different locations such as Centrelink, schools and community centres or introducing outreach models.
- Improved service coordination, for example, introducing systematic assessment process and referral processes tailored to the needs of individuals.

A description of each level of the Strategy hierarchy of outcomes and examples of outcomes reported by projects follows.
3.4 Examples of project outcomes at each level of the Strategy hierarchy of outcomes

Level 1 - Participation in the Strategy and enhanced trust.

This includes direct participation in the Strategy and/or the processes of the Strategy, including the application process, even if the application itself is unsuccessful. It refers to the extent, range, nature and quality of participation and consultation at the level of communities and individuals in communities. It also includes participation engendered by the Strategy (e.g. of volunteers).

Example 6: Examples of outcomes at Level 1 – Participation and trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 3 years the project assisted 349 families, of these 242 received intensive support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Community Centre is used by approximately 200 people per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166 parents attended parent courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 individuals from Government and Non-government sectors worked in collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 volunteers took part in a variety of roles: parent support, childcare, administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level 2 - Greater awareness

Awareness includes awareness of Strategy, its principles and values as well as subject specific awareness to be developed by projects. It also includes awareness of and improved access to services through awareness of services, links to services and service directories.

Example 7: Examples of outcomes at level 2 – Greater awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young parents have been assisted to access mainstream services as needed, and mainstream services have been assisted to work appropriately with young parents. Young parents' and service providers' have increased awareness of available services and resources in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of importance of antenatal care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased access to playgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents have increased access to parenting information and social networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral pathways have been firmly established and will continue to support children and families. These pathways include local schools working together to support children and families (through the primary to high school transition program); parents accessing pre-schools (commenced through pre-school integration program).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Level 3 - Greater choice, understanding, skills and capacity for initiative.

This includes not just the particular skills, confidence etc that might have been the direct target of a project but also the understanding, skills, confidence and capacity acquired by the participants in the course of planning and managing the projects. Greater choice could include access to a wider range of services or more appropriate services through greater availability of services arising from the project including any resources that are produced by the project e.g. manuals.

Example 8: Examples of outcomes at level 3 – Greater understanding skills and capacity

We found that the carers began to network with each other and most importantly the learning was passed on to families in the community.
The main outcomes for these families were reduced stress levels, increased parenting skills and confidence.
Families also accessed other programs and services
…families who have been through the program have taken on leadership roles, are studying, engaged in community activities and have increased knowledge about parenting to share with friends.
Builds on my skills to enable me to be supportive of others
The [project] gives us a break from our day to day struggles and it is a great social outlet for myself and my children. I’ve made a lot of new friends and learnt basic cooking skills.

Level 4 - Demonstration/application of greater understanding, skills and capacity

Application includes not just the application of skills during the life of the project but also the transfer of skills to other family and community issues and problems during and after participation in the SFCS project. It implies some sustainability of understanding, skills and capacity.

Example 9: Examples of outcomes at level 4 – Application of greater understanding, skills and capacity

Lack of baby change facilities in the main street was identified as a problem by participants. The participants have organised a baby change table to be available in the YMCA public access toilets.
Parents more patient with children, siblings also benefit from increased parent skills
Local community initiating activities, eg men’s group
The project developed a Noongar version of resource manual to meet identified needs. Volunteers in each community coordinate the delivery of resources to families
Many activities and events have been implemented in partnership with other groups and services, thus creating pathways of referral and raising awareness of other services and supports for children and families.

Level 5 - Family and community trust/resilience/adaptability

This is about trust that would transcend the particular project whereas level 1 might be about trust developed on a smaller scale through a particular SFCS project. It goes to the issue of sustainable levels of trust, improved family relationships, willingness to cooperate in future, optimism and adaptability as a way of addressing issues as they arise.
Example 10: Examples of outcomes at level 5 – Trust, resilience and adaptability

Survey of miners at one site identified fatigue as the most common health promotion topic that they were interested in. Sessions and speakers from relevant organisations were organised. The mine installed radios in all Haulpak trucks to help combat fatigue - example of partnership between project and employer. Demonstrates trust and willingness to cooperate between mine management, workers and project.

Parents involved in XXX are more confident in supporting their children’s learning. Parent’s negative perceptions of school based on their own experience has changed and participating in the project has given parents more confidence to approach and be involved in their child’s school.

Greater integration between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal community members, eg NAIDOC week events open to all.

Level 6 - An environment where communities participate in and drive their own solutions to strengthen their families and communities.

Participation at level 6 transcends the participation that occurs in relation to a particular project – level 1. It is about being opportune hungry, identifying issues that need a solution and taking initiative. It goes to the issue of sustainability of community participation and self-determination.

Example 11: Examples of outcomes at level 6 – Communities drive their own solutions

The project supports community members to resolve longstanding serious issue [the project] provided a sensitive and culturally appropriate space where people felt safe giving statements to the Police as well as linking people with legal support. The result of this long and quiet process was that the family group was relieved of ongoing strong-arm tactics and threats of violence and those involved gained a sense of empowerment and confidence to deal with such issues in the future.

100 healthy snack packs were made up and sold during the football carnival; this activity was initiated and executed by local women with some help from school children. Funds raised will be used to support the project.

Providing positive role models for the local community, the perception that the community can help itself is growing.

Level 7 - Stronger Families and Communities

This is about how families and communities apply the strengths from levels 1 to 6 to improve their wellbeing. Outcomes at this level include the various domains of stronger families and communities.
Example 12: Examples of outcomes at level 7 – Stronger families and communities

The project directly improved the wellbeing of participating parents and children. The all Aboriginal staff members also benefited directly from employment opportunities.

At least one parent group became incorporated and applied for state government funding for a mobile child minding centre. Council is responding to community needs raised through the project - looking into setting up in home family day care in an area that has no formal child care services.

Women in communities have established and are running their own playgroups

The evaluation of the project with parents demonstrated that parents feel more connected with the community and that the project has successfully engaged previously isolated families. The project has established Afghani and Iraqi playgroups and a playgroup specifically for children with language barriers. A range of community activities have been planned and implemented by the Community Advisory Group (parents). The project has lead to improved informal links between families.

Groups have been developed for parents to learn from each other. Parent group participants are "confidently making decisions about the program". Individuals from the community are mentoring activities such as nutritious cooking and craft activities.

3.5 Summary of short-term and anticipated medium to long-term outcomes

Once the capacity of individuals, families or communities has been built, it can be used in different ways depending on the particular combination of needs and opportunities. It is important, therefore when considering short and longer-term project outcomes, to look for evidence of:

1. **Short-term outcomes for individual participants and families** (and the extent to which these might be maintained and even grow over time);

2. **Capacity building of organisations** (that will then be more able to achieve subsequent additional outcomes for other individuals, families and communities);

3. **Capacity building of communities** (that will then be more able to achieve subsequent outcomes for individuals, families and the community).

This section provides an overview of project outcomes for participating individuals and families, for organisations and for communities. The likely medium and longer-term outcomes resulting from increases in capacity are also considered along with factors that might limit a family, organisation or community from fully realising the opportunities presented by the increase in capacity.
1. Outcomes for individual participants and families

Projects provided evidence of a range of short-term outcomes for participants as listed in the following table.

**Table 5: Outcomes for individual participants and families – short and longer term**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term outcome</th>
<th>Anticipated medium to long term outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased skills and confidence as parents</td>
<td>Improved health and wellbeing of parents and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased understanding of the importance of early intervention and prevention</td>
<td>Earlier identification and follow up of issues or concerns with children’s health or development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved childhood literacy and school attendance, continued secondary / tertiary education</td>
<td>Better educational outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents more involved with children’s school</td>
<td>Increased employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased knowledge of and access to services</td>
<td>Earlier intervention at times of transition / crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved relationships, between parents and children, between generations, between different cultural groups</td>
<td>Practical and emotional support available in the community at times of crisis,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased informal networks and support from the community</td>
<td>Increased resiliency and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased social and economic participation including volunteering, employment and training</td>
<td>More involvement in community issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long term outcomes for the broader community from increases in human, social and economic capital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The short-term outcomes achieved by project participants may not always be sufficient to achieve the desired long-term gains in strengthening families and communities. Project participants, although often better supported –self supported by new knowledge and skills and supported externally through new social networks and friendships – will still face challenges and future times of transition. Some project participants are living in social environments with higher than average levels of violence, suicide, mental health problems, poverty and substance abuse. Additional resources may be needed to maintain and build on gains from early intervention programs such as playgroups or parent education provided by SFF projects.

Further research into the long-term impact of SFF projects for participants (and organisations and the community) is needed to identify under what circumstances SFF project interventions lead to medium to long-term outcomes for families. The following feedback from projects (and project participants) illustrates some of the significant changes in knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and involvement in the community reported in the short term.
Example 13: Project outcomes for participants

I was always arguing with my children but now I actually enjoy my children and laugh with them.
The biggest thing I got out of it was you cannot actually change the children’s behaviour, you change what you do.

Increased confidence in parenting skills. Strengthening in family functioning. Reduced school absenteeism, Skills learnt by program participants will be on-going and long-lasting.

The adolescent mentoring training has changed the young women. The program focused on communication skills, assertiveness, and conflict resolution. One girl is now in a formal mentor program.

Some people have reduced substance abuse, gambling…there is early evidence of better school attendance.

...families who have been through the program have taken on leadership roles, are studying, engaged in community activities and have increased knowledge about parenting to share with friends.

Aboriginal families are now accessing services and becoming active members of the community.

Parents read more books to children. Children are coping very well at pre-school and school because of their involvement in the Program.

Development of social networks within the young participants has assisted some to leave family violence situations.

Community and families have a greater awareness of what local services are available in the community, what those services can do and how to access those services - services reporting increased numbers of referrals from aboriginal families. Students attending TAFE program with support ...have gone on to do further study and or find jobs. School performance of young people attending the homework centre has improved. Some of the women are acquiring the hands on experience, knowledge and skills to run supported playgroups themselves.

2. Capacity building outcomes for organisations

The degree to which SFF projects have resulted in improved organisational capacity depend to some extent on the pre-existing capacity of the organisation. Several projects reported that auspice agencies had developed capacity in the systematic application of action research and reflective practice and had extended its use to other program areas. Other auspice agencies were already very experienced in using participatory action research; strengths based approaches and community capacity building processes.
### Table 6: Outcomes for auspice agencies- short and longer term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term outcome</th>
<th>Anticipated medium to long term outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved knowledge of services, more extensive range of services and new referral pathways</td>
<td>Earlier intervention and people get to the services they need sooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased workload</td>
<td>Greater capacity to offer a comprehensive range of services if needed, although there may be a higher demand for case management services for those families needing assistance from a range of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased demand for services, greater awareness of unmet demand</td>
<td>Potentially a high staff turnover unless well managed – though off-set by professional development and preventative rather than crisis driven approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Skilled workforce and increased use of early intervention, capacity building and strengths based processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of the evidence base supporting early intervention, prevention, capacity building and strengths based approaches</td>
<td>Opportunities to utilise enhanced human capital of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased capacity for reflective practice and action research</td>
<td>Opportunities for prevention and early intervention identified and acted on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased capacity to work with volunteers</td>
<td>More resources contributed private sector partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved feedback from the community and increased knowledge of community needs and strengths</td>
<td>Collaborative planning and delivery of preventative and early intervention services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased involvement in community building</td>
<td>Better use of existing resources and coordinated strategies to attract additional resources when unmet needs are identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved capacity for collaborative work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The establishment of projects by partner agencies in response to community needs that could not have been undertaken by an individual agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most SFF projects developed the organisational capacity of the auspice agency and partnering agencies as a consequence of their involvement in the project; it was not necessarily an explicit aim of the project. Some SFF projects however, had a specific focus on organisational capacity building as illustrated by the following examples.

**Example 14: Projects that included an organisational capacity building focus**

**Quality Relationships Alliance.**

One element of this project that aimed to reduce isolation and family breakdowns by improving the quality of relationships was to focus on supporting human service providers through networking and the provision of professional training and support.

**Young children and families meet the service system**

The aim of this project was to engage a range of stakeholders, including service providers, schools and families, to look critically at the service system infrastructure and how it might better meet the needs of families at times of transition. Activities included documenting the existing services and gaps, researching families’ experiences of the service system, assisting parents to become more skilled at participating in service delivery and development and working with service providers to examine and refine their practices.
3. Capacity building outcomes for communities

SFF projects have generated a range of short term outcomes for communities and built community capacity in diverse ways. Newly developed social capital in communities with a history of social divisiveness often needs to be nurtured. Emerging trust and new relationships between previously disparate groups in a community can be ruptured if tensions arise and are not productively resolved.

Newly developed capacity – human, social, organisational and economic - also needs to be applied in order to strengthen families and communities. Communities that have achieved short-term outcomes may require additional resources to achieve the potential longer term outcomes that sustain strong communities.

Table 7: Outcomes for communities – short and longer term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term outcome</th>
<th>Anticipated medium to long term outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased opportunities for education and training</td>
<td>Enhanced capacity available in terms of physical infrastructure, human capital and social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased training and opportunities for volunteers</td>
<td>Enhanced capacity to identify and address opportunities and challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and supporting existing and emerging community leaders</td>
<td>Improved health as a result of a greater sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced physical infrastructure, for example, community centre</td>
<td>Increased social and economic participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved physical environment, for example, graffiti replaced by a mural</td>
<td>Increased involvement in decisions and processes that affect the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of community strengths and issues</td>
<td>Sense of belonging and pride in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased coordination between different levels of government</td>
<td>Community supports individuals resulting in better health and wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heightened sense of civic responsibility, pride and trust in communities</td>
<td>Less vandalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced collective action in the community, resulting from a shared strategic community agenda and enhanced trust between different members of the community.</td>
<td>Further development or strengthening of bonding, bridging and/or linking social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital developed or strengthened including increased informal networks in the community</td>
<td>Greater tolerance of diversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following comments from projects give examples of outcomes achieved for communities.

**Example 15: Project outcomes – building the capacity of a community**

The project has provided numerous opportunities for people to volunteer both formally and informally, and in ways which recognise their skills and capabilities - including volunteering in children's groups, playgroup and at community events. An accredited mentoring course has been established which targets emerging community leaders. The project has supported and resourced other community-based groups to deliver services. Resident planning forums have been held throughout the project so that their input into the project could be heard and valued. Groups such as Music & Movement were developed at parent forums.

This project aimed to empower community members to participate in the development of sustainable social networks to enhance health and wellbeing and to improve opportunities for parents with very young children. Project activities have included establishing a twice weekly playgroup with monthly visits from the local Child Health Nurse, and ‘whole of community’ activities, such as an Aussie Rules football clinic with members of an AFL team, and Christmas carol by the lake.

The potential longer-term outcomes of increases in capacity depend on opportunities to apply and continue developing capacity. It shouldn’t be assumed that early intervention, on its own, would build enough resilience to overcome all future barriers. Additional support may be needed at times of crisis or transition periods to make the most of the benefits of early intervention, prevention and capacity building programs.

**3.6 Perceptions of Project Outcomes - Questionnaire responses**

SFF projects, when asked how much the project had achieved what was wanted of it, were less likely than other Strategy projects, to have rated themselves as exceeding what they wanted, or to have achieved most of what was wanted. The high proportion of unfinished SFF projects will have influenced these results and further follow-up once projects have been completed may provide a different picture of the level of satisfaction with project achievements.

**Table 8: Project achievements – self rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much has the project achieved of what you wanted it to?</th>
<th>SFF</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded what we wanted</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved all of what we wanted</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved most of what we wanted</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved some of what we wanted</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made some progress toward what we wanted</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial project expectations may also have influenced these self ratings – several projects had to scale back anticipated project activities in response to reduced timelines available for project implementation.

**Example 16: Comments from projects regarding how much projects had achieved what they set out to do.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project has been extremely well received within the community. Services have worked together to achieve some exceptional outcomes. New services have emerged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded what we wanted - Program was funded to run 4 programs. By the end of the funding period 8 programs will have been successfully run. The result of this is that the number of families attending the program doubled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some objectives exceeded what we wanted and some objectives were not achieved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

SFF projects have resulted in substantial and diverse outcomes for participants, the broader community and organisations.

There is some evidence of outcomes at all levels of the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy.

Many projects, especially if not building on a previous project, needed to develop upstream capacity in order to implement the project. Upstream capacity building could apply to individuals, organisations and the community.

To realise the longer-term benefits of increases in capacity organisations and communities need opportunities to apply and continue developing capacity. Early intervention does not preclude the need for additional supports at times of crisis or transition.

Further follow-up and an analysis of the outcomes of SFF projects once they have all been completed is required. An analysis along the lines of the analysis undertaken for the Early Intervention initiative projects to draw out the characteristics of more successful projects needs to be done to fully realise the potential to learn from the experience of SFF projects.
4 To what extent did Stronger Families Fund projects produce unintended outcomes (positive and negative)?

Achieving intended outcomes is of course important, however unintended outcomes, both positive and negative can be also very important in the short-term and potential long-term impacts of the Strategy on building stronger families and communities. Risk management to avoid or ameliorate potential negative outcomes was an important part of the Strategy implementation.

At a whole-of-Strategy level, the intended outcomes were broad and wide-ranging (given all that strengthening families and communities entails) and it is hard to imagine other positive outcomes that might have been unintended. Therefore, unintended positive outcomes have been identified by projects because they were not stated objectives, or were not considered in advance. However, they may not have been unintended from the perspective of the Strategy as a whole.

Unintended (or at least unanticipated) positive outcomes included the high level of participation, the reach of projects and outcomes for participants. There were also unexpected benefits for agencies and communities from working in productive partnerships that took on new challenges. The sustainability of some project activities and personal satisfaction for project staff as a result of changes in families were also unanticipated positive outcomes.

Unintended negative outcomes can also be significant and it is important to be able to anticipate these as far as possible and put in place effective risk management strategies to prevent them from occurring and/or to address them swiftly and effectively when they do occur.

Some projects reported negative outcomes such as higher than expected demand and the loss of goodwill and trust resulting from unexpected staff changes. Loss of goodwill and trust in government was a negative outcome of the delay in the approval process and when raised expectations were not met, for example when organisations were supported to develop a proposal that wasn’t approved.

The unintended positive outcomes reported by projects suggest the Strategy has helped to develop awareness of the benefits of focusing on strengths and building capacity and that this was a new way of working for some organisations.

Lessons learnt from the unintended negative outcomes reported by projects and identified by this evaluation, are that it is important to actively monitor and, if needed, to manage the workload of staff and changes in the level of demand for services. In addition projects would benefit from strategies to manage the impact on participants if key staff members leave.
4.1 Positive unintended outcomes

Positive outcomes that had not been anticipated by SFF projects have been grouped into five themes:

1. Greater than expected success in terms of the number and range of community members participating in the project

2. The achievements of individuals and families as a result of capacity building (developing skills and confidence) through participating in the project

3. The sustainability of some project activities beyond the life of the project

4. The outcomes of working in partnership

5. The impact on project staff

1. Greater than expected level and breadth of participation

A number of projects reported that they had been more successful than expected at engaging members of the community in project activities. Projects also reported unexpected success at engaging sections of the community that they had not originally anticipated working with, for example, fathers.

Example 17: Comments from projects about the unanticipated level of participation by community members

| The extent to which the program developed and was utilised and supported by a large section of the community |
| ...as well as meeting funding stipulations, we started working with young fathers |
| Fatherhood support program will enable more outcomes working with fathers, we are now looking at a regional and capacity building approach than originally anticipated. |
| Success for supported playgroup for parent on supervised access visits |
| The involvement of young fathers in the project |
| We have been extremely successful in promoting the project and in working with children and families to deliver a service that meets the needs of an ever-changing community - and a community that is in crisis. |
| [The project] has provided the community with a substantially large amount of information through the provision of the project's newsletter, information stall and family fun days - the level and extent of which were not originally foreseen at the initiation of the project. |
| When the project was started, it hadn’t been planned to have a specific reference group that met regularly to influence the direction of the project. This has increased the participation of clients in the project. |
2. Greater than expected outcomes for participants

In addition to higher than expected levels of participation some projects identified greater than expected outcomes for participants as unintended positive outcomes.

Example 18: Comments from projects about unanticipated outcomes for participants

| Families who started in the program requiring assistance have undertaken the volunteer training to become community parents themselves and are offering their skills and experiences to other families. Other families have taken on a leadership role in groups for isolated women. |
| Competitiveness within the community has been pushed along by the projects very existence. Things are getting done in the community by members who have been spurred to action. |
| The development of a safety plan for families.... Parents [of the project] initiated the need for such a tool. |
| One of the home tutors - it's her first job and she has become a great role model for other mothers and her own children |

3. Sustainable outcomes

Several projects reported that an unexpected positive outcome was that activities initiated by the project would be able to be sustained beyond the life of the project.

Example 19: Comments about the unanticipated sustainability of project activities.

| The Festival which began in 2004 will become an annual event. |
| Schools interested in funding their own programs |
| We have been able to achieve 'hand over' of projects started by [the project] to the community to continue. |

4. Working in Partnership

Many projects reported unintended positive outcomes related to working in partnership. In some cases projects had greater than anticipated success in developing positive relationships with other organisations, including businesses in some areas. Other projects did not anticipate some of the outcomes of working in partnership such as an increased pool of volunteers or an increased range of project activities and social opportunities. Other projects reported that the benefits of networking, building stronger relationships and a change in culture towards a greater acceptance of the benefits of working in partnership were positive unintended outcomes of SFF projects. Working in partnership is discussed further in Chapter 5 of this report where the impacts of the Strategy Principles on SFF project outcomes are discussed.

Example 20: Examples of unexpected outcomes from working in partnership

| More agencies are now involved - identified that there is different agency level of partnerships and commitment. |
| Positive partnerships. Historically in [project location] the service provider network does not work well together. We have formed some strong and lasting relationships. |
| The overwhelming response from the community in terms of services wanting to work at the community centre. |
| Willingness for providers to look at other partnering opportunities together. |
Example 20 cont.: Examples of unexpected outcomes from working in partnership

A number of good, lasting partnerships have been developed in the communities - linking community together, bringing support agencies together, and increasing numbers of volunteers to support groups

The project never initially envisaged the intensive and broadly encompassing involvements that have been undertaken via numerous partnerships that have been either established or built upon by the project.

The project has attracted the support and has interacted with approximately 239 workers over the course of its activities and has provided direct, beneficial outcomes to the localized inter agency networks

...representatives from social, economic and environmental sectors of the community are working together successfully

Project has [created] a much higher profile of the project area both within council & by other local agencies. this has led to a much larger range of partnerships and agencies working in the project area.

The great success resulting from funding [from brokerage funds] smaller projects ($800 to $4,000). Many of these smaller projects have generated a sustainability that was not originally conceived in the proposal for funds. Through funding these smaller programs, relationships have been fostered between different service providers who may not ordinarily collaborate on a program initiative together, or otherwise have much interaction at all. The success of their funded programs has stimulated ideas, initiatives and networking, creating a 'snowballing' effect with ongoing collaboration and community assistance, which would not have arisen without the funding catalyst.

Addition of privately-funded program has supported integration of some of our most vulnerable families into the project and its activities. This has had major spin-offs which have enhanced original objectives e.g. social opportunities for families; families advocating and referring others to [the project’s] wider supports and resources.

5. Impact on project staff

One project had not anticipated how rewarding involvement in the project would be for project staff. This is an important observation, workers ‘at the coalface’ responding to often unrelenting demand from families in crisis may not usually have opportunities to adopt preventative approaches and to see positive changes as participants grow and develop new skills and approaches.

Example 21: Unanticipated satisfaction for project staff

Definitely the gratifying rewards which you get by seeing the change in families and individuals (personal)

Positive unintended outcomes - conclusions

Some of the examples that projects gave of unexpected positive outcomes while not ‘intended’ by projects initially, were very definitely intended by the Strategy as a whole. One interpretation is that projects may not have fully shared the vision of the Strategy at the outset and they may not have initially recognised the potential for impact that their projects could have. The Strategy may therefore have played a key role in educating communities and organisations about what could be achieved by focusing on strengths and building capacity – a new way of working for some organisations. This interpretation of the positive unanticipated outcomes reported by projects is supported by comments made by one project.
At the beginning of the project, it was difficult to identify the purpose, role and direction of a community capacity building project that was not a service provider, but rather strengthened the capacity of service providers and the wider community in developing and implementing collaborative and integrated responses to identified local issues.

An additional interpretation of this feedback from projects is that project staff may have welcomed the opportunity to state the positive outcomes from projects and did not pay particular attention to whether the outcomes had in fact originally been anticipated. Another consideration in understanding these responses is who actually completed the evaluation questionnaire – different staff within the auspice agency may have had different levels of understanding of project aims and objectives.

4.2 Negative unintended outcomes

Some of the unintended negative outcomes identified by projects can be considered barriers to the achievement of outcomes rather than actual negative outcomes. Barriers to the achievement of outcomes are discussed further in Chapter 9.

The evaluation has identified the following unintended negative outcomes, in addition to those identified by projects, on the basis of project progress reports and information gathered during case studies of particular projects or areas.

1. Loss of goodwill and trust
2. Loss of other resources

Negative unintended outcomes identified by projects in the final evaluation questionnaire were related to:

3. Staffing issues – unsustainable workloads and a loss of trust and momentum as a result of unexpected staff changes
4. Inability to meet demand
5. Conflict amongst participants
6. Attracting too much attention to the community
7. Challenges engaging participants
8. Challenges in working collaboratively

The outcomes numbered 1 to 6 are discussed in the following section.

The last two negative outcomes identified by projects (shaded): challenges engaging participants and challenges in working collaboratively are discussed in Chapter 9 as barriers to the achievement of project goals.
1. Loss of goodwill and trust

There was a risk that community capacity could actually be reduced through participation if there was a loss of goodwill and trust in governments and institutions as a consequence of either: delays in the approval process; a proposal not being funded; or project activities ending while community needs were still outstanding. The negative impact on trust and goodwill could result in community members being less likely to volunteer time and goodwill in the future.

Despite the work of FaCS officers in keeping applicants up to date with the progress of their proposal it is evident that delays in funding did erode trust and goodwill, at least in the short-term with potential longer-term consequences.

It is clear that considerable attention was paid to avoiding loss of goodwill, especially that arising from unsuccessful applications. State and Territory Offices worked to reduce the risk of reducing community capacity by working with unsuccessful applicants where possible to identify alternative sources of funding. However, despite these efforts the Mandurah Case Study (Scougall 2005) found that there had been a negative impact on trust and goodwill for some agencies that did not receive funding.

A significant number of projects consulted during the research for the Mandurah Case Stud, (Scougall 2005), commented on the fragility of community trust and goodwill and the fact that it was likely to diminish if the project also ceased when project funding ceased. Some projects even commented that communities with prior experience of short-term projects are reluctant to commit to projects knowing that they might be short-term. They want to work with people and projects that they know are there for the 'long haul'. Cessation of projects can in fact set the level of community trust back below where it was at the commencement of a project. Although we do not have strong evidence that this actually happened, several projects considered that it would be likely to happen.

The impact of short-term funding is discussed further in Chapter 6 in the context of the impact of Strategy processes.

2. Loss of other resources

In addition to the impact on trust and goodwill an added consequence of the delays in the proposal approval process for SFF projects was that many projects were funded for a shorter time period than originally anticipated during project planning. In some cases the reduction in the project duration was significant, for example, one project was funded for 18 months although the project had initially been conceived as a three year project. Time is needed to develop trusting relationships that underpin capacity building projects; having the same level of funds for only half of the time doesn’t compensate for the reduced duration.

The delay in the approval process also reduced the capacity of projects to coordinate funding from other sources:
3. Staffing issues - Unsustainable workloads and the impact of staff changes

Unsustainable workloads and the negative impacts of staff changes are unintended negative outcomes that also relate to the difficulties experienced by some projects in recruiting and retaining both paid and volunteer staff. The importance of ‘the right people’ and the barriers to recruiting and retaining them are discussed further in Chapter 9.

A negative outcome that sometimes occurred at project level relates to unsustainable workloads for paid and volunteer staff. The issue of recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers was a difficult one for many projects and we did find some evidence of heavy workloads that may have contributed to high turnover of volunteers and staff.

Some projects had not anticipated how much work would be involved. Stronger Families Fund projects found that in order to be effective they had to be alert to and address individual issues as they arose. These issues were often essential to the success of the project but the amount of work involved had not been anticipated. For example, the time required to transport participants to playgroups had not been anticipated by one project. Other examples related to the additional time that paid staff found they needed to commit to support and supervision of volunteers. This could detract from the time available for other services of the auspice organisation.

Several SFF projects commented on the workload generated by reporting and accountability requirements. SFF projects generated their own project specific performance indicators using action research as well as completing the Strategy performance indicators framework for progress reports to FaCS. The later introduction of additional performance measures related to the Australian’s Working Together strategy added additional reporting requirements. Some projects felt that the workload generated by meeting reporting requirements was not sustainable.

Unrealistically high expectations from the community can also lead to a highly intensive and unsustainable workload for the project and burnout for staff and volunteers. In more than one community project workers who lived and worked locally found that they became the first point of contact for any and all issues and were effectively on call all the time.

Even in the face of what appeared to be sheer exhaustion for some projects (judging from their comments in their final questionnaires) most remained positive and upbeat about the experience of the project and what it had achieved and were generally optimistic about the future.

Management of this risk largely needs to occur at project level and could involve structured support and supervision, professional development regarding burn-out and stress management, policies that support staff and volunteers to set more realistic and sustainable boundaries and reprioritising project activities.

At Strategy level the flexibility demonstrated by FaCS during implementation helped to manage this risk. At least one project managed the risk of unsustainable workloads by renegotiating their contract to reduce the geographic area covered.
The following comments illustrate concerns about the high workload experienced by some projects.

Limited funding - only part time staff, which meant that client to staff ratios were high. This fact made it difficult to provide intensive, detailed work with very many clients, due to time constraints. It meant that, on occasions, work was reactionary, rather than pro-active. We received many referrals but could not offer as much support as we would have liked.

Not having a person to focus on Volunteer/Peer Support program has hindered it's progress. FACS Jet funding - Maintaining staff continuity has impacted on providing quality children's program due to staff employment based on sessions casual basis resulting in regular staff changes.

The workload increased dramatically because of the use of volunteers which we didn't use prior to the funding through SFCS. This presented a difficulty for other areas of our service delivery which were impacted by (our project) workers spending more than their allocated hours (on the project). Volunteers, whilst a benefit to the program, require a huge amount of backup because of the intensive nature of the (project) role.

Case management proved to be very time consuming and the number of clients engaged too much for one worker.

The following comment illustrates the impact of staff changes on a project:

Unexpected staff changes produced a lack of trust by participants and in a small way from the schools. The loss of goodwill, trust and time has taken time to build up again.

4. Inability to meet demand

Projects reported an inability to meet demand as a negative outcome of inadequate resources compared to demand, both within projects and in the broader service system.

One project discovered that they did not have the capacity to work across the intended geographic area, for another project that matched volunteers with families seeking support with parenting; the geographic area limited their capacity to make these matches.

Some projects identified that families or individuals needed other services and that there was a lack of capacity in the service system to respond to identified needs as shown in the following comments from projects.
Example 22: Comments from projects about unmet demand

| Funding only being available to help families in the targeted area has been limiting. Sometimes the delay in matching families with community parents has meant that we have been unable to help families. |
| The project has not only supported families through this process, but has also identified many gaps that cannot be filled before the funding period expires. Other options will need to be explored. |
| The increased demand for crisis intervention for young parents and the service delivery gaps that still exist for this client group. |

5. Conflict amongst clients

One project working with young mothers reported “Conflict among clients within groups” as a negative unintended outcome. The same project also reported that clients found it difficult to disengage from the program. This outcome reinforces the need for skilled staff when working with vulnerable members of the community.

It would be interesting to know whether conflict amongst group members was also perceived as a negative outcome by the group members. Depending on whether and how the conflict was resolved the emergence of conflict within a group is not necessarily a negative outcome. It can be viewed as an opportunity to support participants to develop valuable life skills in successfully resolving conflict.

6. Attracting too much attention to the community

Feedback from one project illustrates how the values placed on outcomes differ according to context. Many projects considered a raised profile for the community or auspice organisation to be a positive outcome; however one Indigenous community identified a raised community profile as a negative outcome.

*We have attracted more public attention and comment than we welcome. Our method is to proceed very quietly and privately.*

4.3 Lessons learnt from unanticipated positive and negative outcomes

It is likely that projects did not initially fully appreciate the potential positive outcomes from capacity building projects. This suggests a need for further promotion and support for capacity building approaches.

That flexibility to expand or reduce the target group was important in both making the most of opportunities, for example responding to interest from fathers, and also in building trust by responding to identified community needs, for example, including all children in project activities not just younger children.

Projects should consider strategies to actively monitor and if needed to manage demand, both within the project activities and demand generated for other services.
In addition projects would benefit from strategies to limit, as much as possible, the impact on participants if key staff members leave the project. Strategies would need to be tailored in the light of local circumstances. They could include measures to build relationships between participants and other staff members of the auspice or of a partnering agency. Some auspice agencies have the capacity for another member of staff to provide a level of continuity when there are changes in project staff.

Outcomes, whether expected or unintended, need to be considered from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. A positive outcome for one stakeholder may have negative consequences for others. For example, for project participants increased awareness of and access to services is a positive outcome, however, if higher demand for services creates unsustainable workloads or increased staff stress then this is a negative outcome for the organisation experiencing higher demand.
5 What were the particular features of the Strategy that made a difference? – How did the Strategy principles make a difference?

The Strategy principles were important to SFF projects - they informed the proposal selection process (discussed in the next chapter) and were reflected in the processes and activities of projects.

The implementation of the principles underlying the Strategy and their impact on outcomes of SFF projects are discussed in this chapter. Other Strategy level features that made a difference to SFF projects were the Strategy processes and support provided by FaCS in the development and implementation of projects. These features of the Strategy are discussed in the following chapter.

5.1 Strategy principles

The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy was underpinned by a set of eight principles that reflect the way the strategy will work.

The eight principles that underpinned the Strategy were:

1. Working together in partnerships;
2. Encouraging a preventative and early intervention approach;
3. Supporting people through life’s transitions;
4. Developing better integrated and coordinated services;
5. Developing local solutions to local problems;
6. Building capacity;
7. Using the evidence and looking to the future;
8. Making the investment count.

The following table summarises the steps taken by SFF projects to enact the Strategy principles and lessons learnt or issues arising regarding the implementation of the principles. Each of the Strategy principles is discussed in more detail in the following section.
Table 9: Summary of Strategy principles as enacted in SFF projects and emerging issues and findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle 1: Working together in partnerships</th>
<th>Learning / Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How enacted in SFF</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad range of partnerships developed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad range of activities undertaken with partners</td>
<td>Participatory planning supported working in partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New partnerships were actively sought and developed during the life of projects in response to identified need or emerging issues and opportunities.</td>
<td>Working in partnership increased awareness of issues and the range of available services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnerships enabled projects to lever additional resources, and partnerships need resourcing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barriers to working in partnership identified by projects were:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• differences in perceptions and expectations of projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• perceived duplication or competition between projects and existing services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• different perspectives of community priorities and how to address them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• different levels of commitment or capacity for collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Principle 2: Encouraging a preventative and early intervention approach and |
| Principle 3: Supporting people through life’s transitions |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>How enacted in SFF</strong></th>
<th><strong>Learning / Issues</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating systems to support the early identification of risk factors for individuals and families, eg screening young children for delays in their physical or social development</td>
<td>Need to appropriately balance crisis responses with preventative approaches. Responding to families and individuals in crisis can support engagement however, only responding at times of crisis may encourage dependency rather than building capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development to increase awareness of early intervention and preventative approaches in a range of sectors</td>
<td>Project workers may need to support to manage demand for crisis responses, particularly in areas where there are inadequate services available to refer families on to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted engagement strategies to reach people who do not usually access services</td>
<td>This is a new way of working for some services and some services need support to change their way of working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using strengths based approaches in work with individuals and families</td>
<td>Different engagement strategies are needed to overcome barriers to participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community education campaigns and resources developed to raise awareness in targeted groups and the broader community.</td>
<td>In the short term at least, early intervention can generate greater demand for services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects targeted at groups and individuals at critical points in their development including:</td>
<td>Strengths based approaches supported the engagement of vulnerable individuals and families and were important in developing resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children 0 to 5 years</td>
<td>The extent and sophistication of the practice of strengths based approaches varied between projects – for some agencies and workers this was a new way of working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children making the transition to school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adolescents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Young parents and parents to be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Principle 4: Developing better integrated and coordinated services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How enacted in SFF</th>
<th>Learnings / Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased collaboration between services - working in partnership helped to develop trust between service providers</td>
<td>Working in partnership supported improved service coordination as a result of agency staff learning more about each other’s practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of the range of available service – eg directories</td>
<td>Improved coordination could occur within and/or between agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed new referral pathways</td>
<td>New referral pathways developed by projects are expected to be sustainable; attention should be paid to matching referral processes to client needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing new services to fill gaps</td>
<td>Improving the coordination of services is not relevant in areas where there are no other services, which was the case in some remote communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary consultation can be useful where there are gaps in available services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Principle 5: Developing local solutions to local problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How enacted in SFF</th>
<th>Learnings / Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participatory planning at the local level to agree on priorities and develop solutions</td>
<td>Important not to exclude or overlook key stakeholders as this may create difficulties during implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local identification of issues and aspirations</td>
<td>Participatory planning takes time and attention to developing processes suited to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing interventions ‘from the ground up’</td>
<td>Characteristics of the auspice organisation could help or hinder community engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying ‘packaged’ interventions to suit local conditions</td>
<td>Flexibility in project planning and implementation supported the development of local solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>Action research approaches assisted in tailoring interventions in the light of local conditions and experience of what works.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Principle 6: Building community capacity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How enacted in SFF</th>
<th>Learnings / Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upstream capacity building where required – e.g. employing and training local people, rather than employing skilled staff from other locations, so that skills are developed in communities. Developing different types of capacity; human, economic, social and organisational Developing different types of social capital; bonding, bridging and linking. Strengths based approaches</td>
<td>Upstream capacity building may need to be built into the project establishment phase, or addressed if needs become apparent during implementation Communities may need to build human, social and institutional capacity simultaneously – it takes longer to achieve sustainable outcomes in communities with low levels of capacity Informal community networks were important to strengthening families and communities Strengths based practices helped to engage ‘at risk’ participants in early intervention and preventative approaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Principle 7: Using evidence to look towards the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How enacted in SFF</th>
<th>Learnings / Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support provided to projects to use evidence based practices Employing action research approaches and flexibility during project implementation to incorporate lessons learnt through action research Some projects had a specific research focus</td>
<td>SFF projects did draw on existing knowledge Longer timeframes are needed to assess outcomes of early intervention Learnings generated during SFF projects could have been documented and disseminated in a more timely way Support to adopt action research was valued, particularly by projects learning about how to implement a new way of working</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Principle 8: Making the investment count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How enacted in SFF</th>
<th>Learnings / Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Indicators and milestones informed the management of projects Targeting disadvantaged communities Targeting individuals and families that will benefit most from increased resilience Achieving sustainable outcomes</td>
<td>The proposal development process, and support provided by FaCS enabled communities with relatively low levels of pre-existing capacity to participate in the Strategy Tailored engagement strategies are needed to engage specific, often ‘hard to reach’ groups in the community Childcare and transport are common barriers to participation, location and quality of childcare matters Projects with a significant service delivery project require ongoing funding to continue providing services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Working together in partnership

Strategy projects were strongly encouraged to establish partnerships or work through existing partnerships at the time of applying for funds and implementing their projects. Establishing and maintaining partnerships, while it has many benefits, also consumes resources and needs to be done well. Partnerships need to be well matched to purposes.

Partnerships were a feature of all SFF projects and took the form of formal and semi-formal agreements as well as informal working relationships. SFF projects that responded to the final questionnaire were more likely to have formal or semi-formal partnership agreements than projects funded under other initiatives of the Strategy. Over a third (36%) of SFF projects that responded to the questionnaire had formal, legally binding agreements with partners, 63% had semi-formal written agreements and almost all had informal working relationships with partners (96%). Table 27 in Appendix 3 provides further detail about the formality of partnership arrangements.

All SFF projects rated partnerships as either very important (96%) or important (4%) to the project. A higher proportion of SFF projects viewed partnerships as very important as compared to other Strategy projects.

All SFF projects that responded to the questionnaire had developed at least some partnerships during the project. Table 29 in Appendix 3 provides details of the proportion of partnerships developed through SFF projects.

The majority of SFF projects (73%) that responded to the final questionnaire anticipated that all or most partnerships developed during projects would continue after the current project funding ended. However, SFF projects were less likely than other Strategy projects to expect all new partnerships to continue once project funding ended and a higher proportion of SFF projects as compared to other Strategy projects did not expect any new partnerships to continue. Table 30 in Appendix 3 shows further detail of project responses to the questions of whether partnerships were likely to continue after the completion of the Strategy funding period.

Projects were asked about activities undertaken with partners, for all types of activities surveyed SFF projects were more likely to involve partners than other Strategy projects. All SFF projects that responded to the questionnaire were involved in networking with partners and referred participants between partners for services or activities. Table 31 in Appendix 3 lists the activities undertaken in partnership by SFF and other Strategy projects.

The types of partners involved in SFF projects include other agencies, all levels of government, local businesses, tertiary education institutions, primary and secondary schools, and others. Responses to the final questionnaire regarding types of partners are presented in the Table 32 in Appendix 3.

Within SFF projects there were different approaches taken to working in partnership. Some partnerships took on governance roles in projects; steering committees or project management groups set strategic directions and project workers were accountable to the groups.
Lessons learnt about working in partnership

It was important to engage key stakeholders in partnerships at an early stage of the development of project proposals, there is evidence from SFF projects that key stakeholders, when not included in the development of proposals could undermine the progress of the project during implementation.

On the other hand it was also important to be mindful of the capacity and competing demands on partners, some partnering agencies preferred to be consulted at key points rather than commit to regular meetings.

Working in partnership facilitated the development of a shared understanding of community strengths, weaknesses and priorities. Collaborative work between organisations increased awareness of the range of available services.

Differences in the aims, approaches, and values of agencies can impede the development of partnerships. Openly addressing these differences, developing trust, a shared sense of purpose and an appreciation of alternative perspectives supported collaboration.

Working in partnership mediated risks associated with the type of auspice organisation (discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). Partnerships supported the development of relationships between service providers that underpin improved coordination of services.

Working in partnership brought new perspectives and ideas and assisted projects to lever additional resources. Collaborative work also requires resources. Brokerage funding (even very small amounts) supported partnerships in one project by enabling partnering agencies to develop and implement joint activities.

5.3 Encouraging a preventative and early intervention approach and Supporting people through life transitions;

These two principles (early intervention and transitions) are discussed together because they are so closely related; supporting people through life transitions is one type of early intervention.

The term ‘Early Intervention’ is used in very different ways. While it always refers to catching problems early, there are four different ways in which the term is used: prevention, early remediation, intervening at critical transition points, and intervening in early childhood.

Some of the issues relating to early intervention and transitions have been outlined in the summary of the issues paper on ‘Early Intervention, especially in Early Childhood’ and the study of projects funded under the Early Intervention and Early Childhood initiatives. These issues are also relevant to SFF projects.
Need to appropriately balance prevention/early intervention and responding to crises.

In addition to a focus on early intervention, in terms of prevention, there was also a need to be able to assist with crises before they escalated. In many cases, projects found that they needed to be able to assist participants to deal with the everyday priorities such as housing, employment, welfare and so on before they have enough ‘mental space’, time and interest to focus on less tangible issues such as better parenting.

However, in some communities the level of need for crisis responses, and limited availability of appropriate services, meant that projects could easily have devoted all of their resources to responding to crises as they arose. These projects were acutely aware of the need for preventative work and sometimes had to make difficult decisions to limit the extent of crisis response work undertaken in order to start ‘building fences at the top of the cliff rather than simply being the ambulance at the bottom’.

Increased demand for services

In the longer term projects with a preventative or early intervention approach are expected to diminish demand for services. However, in the short term an increased awareness of services is likely to lead to increased demand on crisis services.

Many SFF projects actively worked to increase awareness of other services amongst community members and service providers, and also to improve the accessibility of services. For example, a project working with young parents organized monthly information sessions that provided opportunities for the young people to meet a range of service providers. These sessions also provided feedback to the service providers about what helped young parents to access services and perceived barriers.

In some communities the focus on prevention and early intervention created a degree of tension between agencies. Other community workers trying to respond to an overwhelming level of demand for crisis responses were sometimes resentful of the level of resources of SFF projects in contrast to their own.

Organisational and professional development

Comments made in some project reports and evaluation questionnaires indicate that early intervention and prevention were new approaches for some project workers and some auspice agencies. The Strategy processes and support of FaCS officers, as well as support provided by SFLEx were valuable in building skills where needed.

Many SFF projects offered professional development to both project staff and to workers in other agencies. Some staff members were trained in applying strengths based approaches that support early intervention and preventative approaches.
Universal and targeted services

Several SFF projects were universal, for example, targeting all families with young children or all families living on a particular housing estate. Others specifically targeted families and individuals that were at risk, for example socially isolated parents. Many projects had a universal approach and also developed specific strategies to engage the most at risk sections of the community.

Universal services have the advantage of not being stigmatising, however some families may need support to access universal services. For example, a parent education program open to all families developed specific strategies to support the participation of families referred from child protection services and parents experiencing separation anxiety.

Lessons learnt about encouraging preventative and early intervention approaches

Projects seeking to build capacity in disadvantaged communities need to appropriately balance early intervention and prevention initiatives with crisis responses.

The impacts of preventative and early intervention projects in terms of demand on other services should be monitored and strategies developed to manage increases in workload if needed.

Early intervention is a new approach for some project workers and agencies, support for professional and organisational development is important.

There is potential for conflict between agencies if there are perceived disparities between community needs and resource allocation – if early intervention is not valued in comparison to crisis response services.

5.4 Developing better integrated and coordinated services;

Some SFF projects explicitly set out to improve the coordination of services, for other projects improved coordination was an unintended consequence of working in partnership with other service providers to identify and respond to gaps in the availability of services. Projects that had a universal orientation focussed on increasing awareness of services in the community, and amongst service providers.

Integrated and coordinated services can refer to services provided by either one or several organisations. Some projects offered access to a suite of integrated services that were provided by one organisation. For example, a family support service based at Centrelink, offered assessment, information and referral, access to parent education and other groups, and intensive home-based support where needed.
Other projects improved the coordination of services by developing or improving referral pathways. This involved developing the skills of workers in universal services so that they were better equipped to identify issues and offer a supported referral to an appropriate service. Increasing awareness of specific issues and improving referral processes supports the early identification of issues allowing earlier intervention and reduces the chances of people falling through the gaps in the service system.

In other cases projects identified gaps in the continuum of available services and sought to fill them. Many SFF projects developed new services to meet gaps such as playgroups, systematic assessment of child development or a volunteer program. Brokerage funding assisted some projects to purchase services to meet these gaps.

Some projects working with particular target groups, for example families where a parent has a mental illness, provided secondary consultations to other service providers to assist them in better meeting the needs of these families and in identifying appropriate services to refer on to, or to work in partnership with in meeting the family’s specific needs.

**Lessons learnt about improving the coordination of services**

Working in partnership supported improved coordination by developing relationships amongst service providers and increasing awareness of the range of available services.

New referral pathways and an increased awareness of the needs of specific groups, including barriers to accessing services have been developed by projects and are expected to have sustained benefits beyond the life of the projects.

In areas where there was a lack of services, improved coordination and integration was an unrealistic aim. Very remote and disadvantaged communities with high needs for specialised services were often least able to access them. Developing secondary consultation processes with trusted experts who understand local conditions may help to fill gaps in available services.

Services providers need to be aware of the limits of their expertise, how to access specialised advice and how to support the referral process – some families may need assistance to engage with another service.

**5.5 Developing local solutions to local problems;**

The application of this principle enabled communities to develop solutions that took into account the level and types of pre-existing capacity (human, social, organisational, environmental and economic) available in the community.

The Strategy’s focus on engaging communities in developing local solutions, combined with the use of action research and the focus on prevention and early intervention has built the capacity of agencies that previously had limited relationships with the broader community. Communities, and the agencies and governments that serve them have increasingly developed a shared understanding of community needs and strengths. As a result of SFF projects some agencies are better equipped to support the involvement of volunteers, community driven ‘self-help’ initiatives and community participation in the management of projects.
Engaging communities in proposal development and implementation

The extent of community (as distinct from community agencies) involvement in the development of proposals varied. The auspice agency’s reputation and connections with the community supported, or was a barrier to the proposal development process.

Involving the community in the development of a proposal can be time-consuming and costly, particularly in areas with lower levels of pre-existing social capital where there are low social and economic participation rates and a lack of networks and structures to support participation. The level of community involvement in the management of community agencies varied – some agencies effectively include members of the community in management and/or advisory structures while others have limited opportunities for community input.

Some project proposals were driven by community agencies with engagement with the community and detailed project planning built into the establishment phase of the project. Other projects were clear about their objectives and processes before they started.

Projects that didn’t have strong connections to the community often reported that the engagement and establishment phase took longer than expected.

Example 23: Examples of processes used by projects to provide local solutions to local problems

All relevant stakeholders, including participants have assisted in the evaluation of the project using an action research framework. A reference group was formed to direct the project and enhance the participation of clients in the planning and implementation of the project, and participation in project activities. This has encouraged clients to develop their own skills further, so they can assist others in the community to develop and apply leadership skills. The skills acquired through the project process have increased young parents’ understanding of local needs and potential solutions, including initiating further action in the community.

Project is addressing an agreed need, either by working directly with the community or by resourcing agencies that provide direct services through professional development, developing systems (eg common assessment), and / or providing secondary consultations. (When asked to identify important factors in achieving project outcomes)

Lessons learnt about developing local solutions to local problems

Projects should systematically consider who they need to develop relationships with, and to pay particular attention to key stakeholders where their support will be needed to successfully implement the project.

Characteristics of the auspice agency, including its history, values and links to other services and the community can help or hinder community engagement. In some cases organisations may need to develop skills to facilitate higher levels of community involvement at project planning and management levels.

Community participation in identifying strengths and issues, developing responses, and implementing projects contributed to a shared vision and ‘can-do’ attitude.
Participatory planning processes need to be suited to participants, whether organisations or members of the community, taking into account the capacity of participants and the possible need for upstream capacity building as well as time and resources available.

Sometimes community members need support to develop and apply skills that enable higher levels of participation. Similarly, organisations may need to develop their capacity to adopt participatory planning and project management processes.

Projects often reported that supporting participation took longer than anticipated, particularly when building new relationships from scratch.

Particular attention needs to be paid to developing strategies to encourage participation where there are divisions in the community.

Action research methods assisted in tailoring solutions to local conditions and experience of what works.

Flexibility in project planning and implementation supported the development of local solutions.

5.6 Building community capacity

As discussed in Chapter 3 the process of building community capacity can be summarised as:

- Identifying the issue
- Identifying what capacity already exists
- Identifying who needs to develop what capacity to take up opportunities
- Identifying how to develop capacity
- Identifying how the community can apply capacity
- Identifying how to sustain and enhance capacity

Building capacity refers to both upstream and downstream capacity building.

The principle of building community capacity was reflected in the Strategy processes. All SFF projects started with an issue identified with the participation of the community. Some projects had not gone far past this stage in building community capacity when projects commenced. As discussed in the following chapter flexibility shown by FaCS supported projects to further develop project plans, as they became aware of opportunities to utilise existing capacity and the need to address gaps in capacity.
Various methods were used to identify existing capacity, strengths and needs. Projects are using a wide variety of approaches to identify the aspects of community capacity that will be the focus for development in a given community. Approaches used by the projects included:

- skills audits and inventories;
- asset mapping;
- identification of community issues and ‘needs’ assessments – what the community wants and/or wants improved.

Different data collection methods and consultative processes were used to undertake these assessments including:

- surveys, checklists and ‘strengths cards’,
- focus groups,
- community meetings,
- interviews,
- review of asset registers,
- comparisons with ‘best practice’, and
- collection of data about the community (e.g. demographic, social and economic indicators).

Some of the assessments were general assessments of available assets. Other asset assessments were tied to particular projects i.e. what assets are available that are relevant to the project in question and what further development is needed.

**Strengths based approach**

Strength based approaches to working with families and communities apply at both project planning and management level as well as at the level of working with individuals and families.

At project planning and management level SFF projects commonly identified community strengths and assets and sought to build on these. However, most projects also identified deficits in community capacity or gaps in services, or barriers to the accessibility of services that they sought to address.

At the level of working with individuals and families some projects demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of strengths based approaches and it was evident that project staff had attitudes and skills that supported the application of strengths based approaches creating.
One project described the application of a strengths based approach in their work with families. During the initial interview with a family, as they told their story of what had brought them to the service, the worker identified, named and reflected back the strengths that the family had demonstrated in managing challenging circumstances. This was often a new and empowering experience for the family, whose previous experience of contact with services (often at times of crisis) had focused on difficulties and deficits rather than strengths.

Other projects referred to strengths based approaches but there was insufficient detail provided in project documentation to judge the extent to which this approach was applied. Some projects identified the need for project staff to develop skills in practicing strengths based approaches, as this was a new way of working with families.

Strengths based approaches, while acknowledging the sometimes extreme difficulties that families experience, shifts the focus to skills and positive attitudes (eg wanting things to be better for their children) of families that can be built on. This approach engenders hope, helps to build self confidence seems to support the engagement of vulnerable or ‘at risk’ families and individuals in activities with an early intervention or preventative focus.

**Lessons learnt about building community capacity**

Attention should be paid to the need to develop upstream capacity prior to implementing projects, and also during the implementation of projects. It should not be assumed that this capacity already exists.

As different types of capital interact, multi strategic approaches that identify and address the need to develop different types of capital simultaneously may amplify and increase the sustainability of increases in capacity.

Adopting strengths based approaches has assisted projects to engage ‘at risk’ families and individuals in preventative and early intervention focused activities.

Developing informal community networks (bonding and /or linking social capital) was an important and sometimes unintended outcome that strengthened families. Relationships developed through informal community networks seem likely to be sustained beyond the life of the projects and they have increased the level of social participation of some previously socially isolated families.

Some SFF projects successfully developed partnerships with private businesses - creating bridging social capital that may create sustainable opportunities for communities and project participants to apply newly developed capacity.
5.7 Using evidence to look towards the future

Focus on evidence based policy and practice

SFF projects were supported by SFLEx to draw on the evidence base, and to use action research in implementing projects. An additional objective was to add to the evidence base about what works to strengthen families and communities.

The action research process itself was a method for monitoring the impact of project interventions that developed local, project specific evidence about what was working well and how projects could be improved. The impact of action research on project outcomes is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Some SFF projects included a research component, in addition to action research, that intended to generate specific evidence to contribute to the development of polices and practices to support the development of family and community strengths. For example, one project piloted the systematic use of an evidence-based tool to support structured discussions between parents and professionals in order to improve the early detection of concerns about the health, development and behaviour of children aged 0 to 8 years.

One SFF project has built a longitudinal follow up of project participants into the design of the project, however for the majority of SFF projects long-term outcome information is not being collected.

Several projects utilised ‘pre-packaged’ programs such as “Families and Schools Together” and “Triple P” parent education in their projects. These programs are evidence based and may include a level of training and on-going support to ensure fidelity in the delivery of the program in new locations.

Lessons learnt about using evidence to look to the future

Action research generated evidence during the life of SFF projects about what was working well, or not so well, and how projects could be improved.

The tailored and flexible support provided to individual projects, by both SFLEx researchers and FaCS Officers was valued and assisted projects to identify and utilise existing knowledge and to apply action research.

More timely synthesis and dissemination of learnings from SFF projects, during implementation, would have been valuable.

Longer term follow up of project participants is needed to assess the impact of early intervention and community capacity building.
5.8 Making the investment count

‘Making the investment count’, in terms of making a lasting difference, can be considered in terms of a range of critical issues and competing imperatives:

1. Informing management of projects and of the Strategy through benchmarks and performance indicators

2. Investing in projects that are most likely to achieve long-term outcomes (which involves issues such as pre-existing capacity, likely sustainability)

3. Investing in communities (targeted funding) and families (engagement strategies used by projects) where family and community strengthening is most needed.

4. Investing in order to learn about innovative approaches or how to adapt existing approaches to new environments, including learning from both success and failure

1. Informing management through benchmarks and performance indicators

The performance of short-term SFF projects that were seeking to make a difference to communities in the long-term, needed to be assessed in the short-term. The Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy enabled intermediate or process outcomes that can be reasonably expected to lead to long-term change to be identified and specified for different types of projects.

There are however, inherent difficulties in attempting to develop benchmarks and performance indicators that can be meaningfully and consistently applied across the diverse range of SFF projects that were implemented in such differing communities.

The type of results that constitute a ‘lasting difference’ will vary for each community and depend on the pre-existing capacities (human, social, institutional, economic and environmental) of communities and the issues that projects are seeking to address.

In communities grappling with entrenched disadvantage and low levels of capacity, projects that aim for outcomes at lower levels of the outcomes hierarchy may do more to make the investment count than projects that have ambitious aims. Small successes along the way provide encouragement and motivate continued participation. Conversely, overly ambitious projects that have a higher likelihood of failing risk demoralizing already fragile communities. Therefore in some cases, engaging a small number of participants and focusing resources on building their capacity, as a first step in strengthening families and communities, may do more to achieve lasting results than initially aiming for high levels of participation.

There are difficulties in gathering data of sufficient quality about intermediate outcomes of strengthening families and communities without the data collection process intruding on the process of engagement and trust building. Quantitative performance indicators and benchmarks need to be interpreted with care and in the context of the specific project; for example, it is not valid to expect that a universal project and a project offering intensive support will involve the same number of participants.
2. **Investing where there is most likelihood of long-term outcomes**

The likely sustainability of project activities, or the maintenance and usage of capacity built during the project, was an important consideration. Some projects had pre-existing commitments from partners to follow through on project outcomes; others garnered this commitment during the life of the project. For example, local governments in some areas took on or expanded their role in strengthening communities on an on-going basis.

Given the short-term nature of Strategy funding, one of the ways to make the investment count was to invest where a project was building on existing capacity in a way that was likely to make a lasting difference. Some projects capitalised on existing community resources, in some cases acting on the findings or building on the outcomes of previous work.

Appropriate roles for Strategy projects, particularly in situations where there were ongoing service needs included:

- research and policy development;
- capacity development of existing services;
- short intervention projects to engage families and then link them to ongoing services;
- demonstration or replication projects that will then be supported by other agencies, including universal services; and
- seed funding for a service that will then become self-sufficient.

As the following table shows the vast majority of SFF and other Strategy projects expected further changes for participants or others in the community after the completion of Strategy funded projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you expect any further changes for participants or others in the community, after the current Strategy funding agreement is complete?</th>
<th>SFF Projects</th>
<th>Other Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of SFF projects with a high likelihood of continuing or further developing past the funding period was not as high as other Strategy projects. A slightly higher proportion of SFF projects considered it very unlikely that activities would continue or develop past the life of the project.
Table 11: Likelihood of SFF projects continuing beyond the Strategy funding period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How likely is it that the project will continue or further develop after the current Strategy funding agreement is completed?</th>
<th>SFF Projects</th>
<th>Other Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unlikely</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SFF projects were more likely than other Strategy projects to want to continue the project with the current target group or to build on previous work with the target group and run a similar project with new activities. SFF projects were less likely to suggest running a similar project with new target groups. These responses may reflect the high level of need amongst the chosen target groups and/or the long-term time frame of community building processes. The specialist early childhood focus of many SFF projects as well as the emphasis on creating local solutions may have contributed to the low proportion of projects that would run a similar project with a different target group.

Table 12: Potential for further development of SFF projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the project was to continue to develop further what form would it take?</th>
<th>SFF Projects</th>
<th>Other Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue the project with the current target groups</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run a similar project with new target groups</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run a similar project at a different location or in a different community</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run a similar project with new activities and the same target groups, building on the previous work</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relatively high levels of support and resources identified by SFF projects as being needed to continue or build on the achievements of the project may reflect the complexity of the projects. These responses may also reflect success in building capacity and indicate a community that sees opportunities if resources were available.
Table 13: Support and resources needed to continue or build on SFF project achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will any of the following support and resources be needed to continue or build on the achievements of the project?</th>
<th>SFF Projects</th>
<th>Other Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community support</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific expertise and skills including professional services</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of existing networks, linkages and referrals</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer time</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and training programs</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In kind support</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous community organisation or corporation</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The capacity of SFF projects to achieve sustainable outcomes varied widely. Factors influencing the sustainability of SFF project outcomes included the availability of alternative funding sources, the capacity of the auspice agency or other organisations to incorporate project activities into ongoing programs, the capacity available in the community at the beginning and end of the project. The type of project activities also impacted on the sustainability of activities and outcomes; projects with a direct service focus required resources to continue to provide services.

Some resources developed by projects will lose value over time if not maintained. For example, service directories become out of date as services and staff change. Similarly websites need to be maintained and community infrastructure, such as community centres and sporting facilities need ongoing maintenance.

3. Investing where there is most need

A contradictory component of making the investment count is investing in the areas of greatest need, where there is most scope to make a significant difference to the lives of families and communities. There are two aspects of investing where there is greatest need: funding projects in high need areas, and targeting within projects to those in the community with highest need.

Funding projects in communities with high levels of need

Targeting areas with high levels of need and providing support to develop partnerships and proposals resulted in projects in communities that in some cases would not otherwise have applied for funds or been able to successfully implement them. The processes undertaken by FaCS to ensure that Strategy projects were targeted to communities with identified needs in terms of strengthening families and communities are discussed in the next chapter.
As different types of capacity interact to amplify positive or negative consequences it was not surprising that targeted communities with little pre-existing capacity needed to develop human, social and institutional capacity to achieve their aims. For example, one project made a significant investment in training local project staff as a strategy for increasing the human and institutional capital in remote communities, before undertaking work with communities.

Sometimes the imperative to target funds was at odds with the imperative to invest in areas where short-term funding was most likely to have long-term outcomes, as there was more need for subsequent funding and activity. As one project commented:

*Without ongoing funds to sustain the project and follow up on the last three years, we believe the families in this community will look at the last 3 years as just a band aid approach to ongoing problems in the area. We believe we need a ten year plan to achieve more trust and reconciliation in the [suburb] area.*

**Targeting within projects**

As well as the Strategy targeting communities with high levels of need, individual projects targeted individuals and families likely to benefit most from early intervention and prevention.

SFF projects developed a range of mechanisms for reaching ‘at risk’ families and reducing barriers to access. Strategies used to engage families and individuals included:

- **Working with children initially as a way of reaching families that would not normally access services.**

- **Locating projects in settings such as schools or Centrelink offices helped to reach some families, although project settings needed to match the target group. One project based in a primary school that targeted pre-school children found that they were not successfully reaching families that did not have older, school age children.**

- **Developing referral pathways in partnership with specialised or universal service providers. This often involved developing the skills of other providers in identifying and supporting the referral of at risk families and individuals. Examples of this approach include systems for referrals from schools, Centrelink, Maternal and Child Health services and Child Protection agencies.**

- **Employing staff from specific communities or sections of the community supported participation of specific groups. Recruiting and training local volunteers or acknowledged community leaders supported some families, who are normally reluctant to approach formal services and professionals, to engage with projects.**

- **However, for some projects working in divided communities employing an ‘outsider’ who was perceived as neutral was a deliberate strategy.**

- **Opportunities to participate in enjoyable activities such as family fun days, outings, camps and cultural trips were a feature of several projects.**
Barriers to participation that were identified and addressed by projects included transport and childcare. The quality and location of childcare were important factors. One project established a mobile health van that went from street to street in a disadvantaged community. Other projects improved access to services by establishing community centres offering a range of activities and services, often provided on an outreach basis by agencies located elsewhere.

Models of service delivery were developed by projects to meet the needs of specific groups. An initial focus on developing a one-on-one relationship, often through home visiting was important in engaging isolated families. This intense level of support enabled isolated families, often facing complex issues, to develop a trusting relationship that enhanced skills and confidence and laid the groundwork for enhanced social participation and a higher level of engagement with the local community.

The geographic area covered by projects influenced engagement strategies, in smaller communities it was sometimes possible for project workers to ‘door knock’ all homes and personally invite participation.

4. Investing in order to learn more about innovative approaches

Finally, making the investment count includes investing in the documentation of innovation so that it can add to the evidence-base, as discussed in the previous section. This can require significant investment to document the details of implementation and to identify the elements that are critical to its success.

Lessons learnt about making the investment count

As with investment in international development (Davies, 2004), a balanced portfolio approach may be the best way to address the competing imperatives for making the investment count – making some investments on the basis of need, and some on the basis of greatest chance of success. This approach, taken both at the level of investment across projects and within projects, can provide some ‘early wins’ which can encourage support for the more difficult and longer-term challenges.

In a discussion of evaluating innovation, it was suggested that this needs to be done in a way that recognizes the differences to evaluating known processes:

Many traditional evaluation methods, including most performance measurement approaches, inhibit rather than support actual innovation. …Most attempts at innovation, by definition, are risky and should ‘fail’ – otherwise they are using safe, rather than unknown or truly innovative approaches. Evaluation of innovation should identify the minority of situations where real impact has occurred and the reasons for this. This is in keeping with the approach venture capitalists typically take where they expect most of their investments to ‘fail’, but to be compensated by major gains on just a few. (Perrin, 2002:13)
However, in the area of strengthening families and communities, this needs to be done in a way that recognizes that having projects fail can further demoralize already fragile communities and even harm vulnerable families.

This requires active management to identify early warnings of difficulties and provide additional support to address them.

It also requires projects to have modest and achievable stated objectives. Many projects, when asked what advice they would give to others undertaking a similar project referred to the need to be realistic in their ambitions:

*DO NOT underestimate the client time needed. DO NOT take on too much - look for quality rather than volume outcomes*
6 What were the particular features of the Strategy that made a difference? – What difference did Strategy support for the development and implementation of SFF projects make?

The processes undertaken by FaCS for implementing all of the community-based initiatives, including SFF involved:

1. The development of a targeting framework for each State and Territory;
2. A communications strategy to provide information about the Strategy to potential applicants in a variety of ways;
3. Development and submission of proposals;
4. Proposal review, recommendation and approval or rejection;
5. Post-selection work with both successful and unsuccessful applicants;
6. Project implementation.

Each of these steps is described in more detail below. The impacts of these processes are then discussed.

6.1 Description of Strategy processes

1. Targeting

Each FaCS State and Territory Office developed a Targeting Plan that identified geographic communities and communities of interest that were a priority.

Each State and Territory had an allocation of funding that was available under each funding initiative in each calendar year. Projects could be funded from a single initiative or from a combination of initiatives.

2. Providing information about the Strategy to potential applicants

Information about the Strategy was disseminated through advertisements, public meetings, through inter-agency meetings and announcements at conferences. An information kit was produced with information about each of the funding initiatives and early announcement projects.

Most organisations (of those who provided feedback about how they found out about the Strategy) indicated that this was directly from FaCS or word-of-mouth.
3. Assisting organisations with the development of proposals for funding

There were no formal funding rounds or closing dates. Proposals could be submitted at any time. Organisations were encouraged to submit an initial brief outline of their proposed project. FaCS officers in State and Territory Offices and the National Office were available to assist organisations to develop and revise a detailed proposal.

FaCS provided a high level of support to communities and agencies to develop project proposals in some targeted areas. Examples of the type of support are documented in the Case Study of the Peel Targeted Area. In Mandurah, before any significant project funding occurred, FaCS engaged an external community development facilitator as a consultant to do some pre-planning with some local groups. This provided an opportunity for several organisations and key individuals to temporarily step out of their daily work pre-occupations and come together to engage in some strategic regional thinking. This would not have happened without FaCS support. The idea was to assist those groups lacking the capacity to successfully apply for Strategy funds without such support. This approach grew out of the recognition that some in the community have considerable capacity and just need a little help to build upon it, while others need intensive support requiring considerable consultation and advice. There was recognition that under normal circumstances some groups in the community would not be able to put in a submission and access the Strategy.

In areas where interest had been expressed by a number of agencies FaCS facilitated collaboration between potentially competing agencies. For example, on the Gold Coast FaCS facilitated a Community Forum and consultations with organizations and other government departments to identify problems in ten highly disadvantaged areas. The Community Forum involved all players and was held to ascertain support for a ‘whole of coast’ approach and to confirm the key issues. Following the forum a number of agencies developing similar proposals withdrew their individual project proposals and contributed to a combined project proposal. Families contributed by attending advisory groups meetings and having input into projects.

4. Proposal review and selection

The approval process was a three-stage process. Proposals were initially reviewed by an Internal Reference Group (IRG) consisting of FaCS Officers in the State or Territory, or the National Office for national projects.

A summary of the proposal and their advice was then referred to a meeting of a State and Territory Advisory Group (STAG) or the National Partnership for National projects. The STAGs and the National Partnership comprised a group of unpaid community representatives from community organisations, local government and other government organisations and also including researchers. They brought in a range of expertise in areas relevant to the Strategy and provided intensive consideration of the proposals and advice referred to them by the IRG, and would then recommend the further development of the proposal or forward it for Ministerial consideration.
Criteria for selection included an assessment of the likely outcomes of the project, its location in terms of targeting and previous allocation of funding, its likely sustainability, and whether it was within the scope of the Strategy. The following headings from a STAG summary from Queensland illustrate the core criteria used to inform the selection of all Strategy project as well as the selection criteria that were specific to the assessment of SFF project proposals.

**Core Selection Criteria that applied to all SFCS projects**

- Community Support
- Long Term Benefit
- Capacity Building
- Partnerships

**Additional Selection Criteria applied to SFF projects**

- Does the proposal show how the project will coordinate and create linkages between local services?
- Is there information about how the project will assist families in times of transition?
- Does the target group include families with young children?
- Is there information about how the project identifies and addresses priority issues affecting family wellbeing?
- Does the proposal show how prevention and early intervention and capacity building are integrated into the project design?
- Does the proposal indicate a willingness to participate in action learning?

**5. Post-seletion work with successful and unsuccessful applicants**

In some cases, FaCS staff and advisory committees (including some STAGS) assisted organisations that were not successful in obtaining Strategy funding to seek out alternative sources of funding.

Once projects had been approved, a funding agreement was developed between the auspice organisation and FaCS.

Sometimes the approval of funding generated further negotiations. One SFF project had applied for funding under both the Strategy and a State government program intending to combine the funds. Once Strategy funding was approved, the State government department, in consultation with FaCS, withdrew their offer of funding on the grounds that the combined level of funding could not be justified on the basis of relative need.
6. Project implementation

Regular reporting was required in terms of performance indicators (based on a common framework but customised for each project), achievement of milestones, and submission of progress reports and a final report. SFF projects had a specific budget allocation for action research and some projects also had a specific budget allocation for an evaluation.

Some SFF projects received additional support from FaCS during implementation. The level of additional support varied between states and between projects according to the capacity of FaCS Officers and the capacity building needs of projects and auspice agencies. In some cases FaCS Officers provided a high level of support, visiting projects and giving advice on addressing project management issues, assisting in the development of work plans, supporting community engagement and partnership development.

FaCS Officers played an active role in responding to difficulties that arose during implementation, for example, negotiating a new auspice so that a project could continue when the original auspice went into receivership, or negotiating new timelines in response to a longer than expected project establishment phase or staff changes during projects.

FaCS provided a high level of support to communities and agencies to develop project proposals in some targeted areas. The Case Study of the Mandurah Targeted Region documented the support provided by FaCS in the areas of: targeting the strategy; information dissemination; guidance to local projects (both pre or post project); facilitation of community building processes; and funding of Strategy projects. Comments from projects who had received this help show how this support has been valued.

Example 24: Feedback from projects about the support provided by FaCS during project implementation

It was helpful to have FaCS staff in the [State] office who were extremely supportive and always available to discuss problems and strategies with us. When unexpected situations came up they were always the first people we talked to.

In the first year of the project we didn’t meet any of the FaCS officers. Each month we heard that a different worker had been assigned to our project. Since [FaCS Officer] has involved with our project the support has been invaluable. She spent considerable time with understanding our project and working on strategic plans.

The role of the FaCS project worker in the ongoing support and via providing advice to the project initiative team was seen to be valuable. However, this valuable role seems to be all but lost under the new SFCS.

FaCS Officers were able to clarify implementation issues and challenges.

Provided very positive feedback about our outcomes/processes; provided links to other project facing similar barriers.

Speaking regularly with our FaCS officer was very helpful, especially when doing reports.

A representative from local FaCS is a member of the Steering Committee. The input, ideas, suggestions and encouragement from the rep has been significant and valuable. FaCS Project Officer [State Office] was very helpful.
Example 24 cont: Feedback from projects about the support provided by FaCS during project implementation

| Service visits and approachability of project workers was also helpful. |
| [FaCS Officer] has been a great support with the project, giving ideas and assistance with action research. |
| Help received when planning the project and establishing partnerships |
| The area targeted was too large and negotiation with FaCS allowed us to reduce and concentrate our involvement with a slightly smaller target group |
| Having someone from FACS who offered a great deal of support as we worked through our disaster was extremely helpful |

6.2 Impact of Strategy processes on the outcomes of SFF projects

The impact of Strategy processes on the outcomes of SFF projects has been that:

1. Projects were targeted to communities with high levels of need reducing the risk of increasing disparities between communities

2. Projects were assisted to identify and build relationships with new partners or other relevant projects

3. A coordinated, cross government approach to project funding was facilitated

4. The capacity of auspice agencies and project staff has been developed

5. Flexibility demonstrated by FaCS, including brokerage funding, supported working in partnership, the development of local solutions and the implementation of findings from action research

6. Extended delays in the project approval process damaged trust, goodwill and the momentum developed during the project development phase. The duration of some projects was reduced as a consequence of the long project approval process limited project achievements, particularly when upstream capacity needed to be developed in order to implement the project.

7. A lack of clarity about the possibility of future funding resulted in unrealistic project expectations and a severe loss of trust and goodwill if projects that had demonstrated success and continuing need were not re-funded.

1. Targeting projects to communities with high levels of need

The Strategy targeting framework, and the capacity building support given to auspice agencies new to community strengthening work helped to mediate the risk of increasing disparities between communities that could have occurred if only communities, or agencies with a track record in building capacity had been funded.
2. Supporting partnership development

The active involvement of FaCS during the project development phase encouraged organisations with similar aims to work collaboratively to develop joint project proposals. This helped to reduce competition for funding within some local areas. Assisting projects to identify and form relationships with key stakeholders at an early stage in the development of proposals helped to reduce risks associated with later resistance from any important stakeholders who had not been invited to participate.

3. Coordination across governments

Several SFF projects were coordinated with funding from either a different Australian Government department or program, a State or Territory Government and/or a Local Government. In some cases these links were made by projects, in other cases FaCS identified synergies and additional funding opportunities.

The delay in approving project proposals however, sometimes hindered the capacity to coordinate more than one funding source. In at least one case coordination between FaCS and the State Government resulted in the withdrawal of an offer of State funding as a consequence of the project receiving Strategy funding.

Involving other levels of Government assisted some projects to achieve sustainable outcomes, for example one Local Government adopted a new and ongoing role in community capacity building and another Local Government set up a family day care service in a new area. In other cases projects demonstrated successful solutions to community issues but were unsuccessful in attracting ongoing funds from other levels of Government.

The Strategy has provided projects with opportunities to generate solutions to issues that are often the responsibility of other levels of Government; however the solutions generated don’t always match State or Local government funding priorities. There is scope for Governments to do more work in partnership to systematically identify, early on in the implementation of programs like the Strategy, opportunities for the continued support and development of models with demonstrated success. The current practice of one level of Government funding a demonstration project and the project then touting their wares to another level of Government in an attempt to continue or further develop is risky. There is a danger that valuable experience and lessons learnt as well as enthusiasm, a ‘can do’ attitude and newly acquired capacity will be lost and squashed.
4. Organisational Capacity building

Feedback from projects and information gathered during case studies clearly demonstrated that FaCS had assisted organisations and project staff to develop skills and knowledge in strengths based approaches, preventative and early interventions, community capacity building, action research and working in partnership. For some organisations the scale of the project as well as the approaches utilised were new and FaCS provided practical support in setting up project management and monitoring processes.

The support provided by FaCS to organisations and project staff was an essential component of targeting and reduced the risk of projects failing because of a lack of expertise in large scale project management.

5. Flexibility

Flexibility was important in terms of:

- Developing and supporting meaningful partnerships with other agencies and the community

- Providing opportunities for communities to build capacity to utilize identified strengths, grasp opportunities to address issues.

- Making full use of the project level evidence and learnings generated by action research

- Supporting developing partnerships to take action, eg using brokerage funds for small projects that emerge as a result of new partnerships.

Flexibility during proposal development and implementation was important in helping projects to meet their objectives. A few SFF proposals came from areas where there were established partnerships, a high level of community participation, a clear and shared understanding of aims and objectives of the proposal and a detailed implementation plan. This was usually where there had been a preceding project. In other cases partnerships were established or expanded for the purpose of developing a proposal to apply for Strategy funding, community participation was limited and there was a lot still to be learnt about community strengths and issues. In these situations building flexibility into proposals to allow projects to engage communities more fully in planning processes, to clarify strategies and to develop detailed implementation plans during the project’s establishment phase was important.

Where partnerships needed to be developed, having a degree of flexibility during implementation meant that partners could influence the direction of projects. Similarly, increased community engagement resulted in the identification of other priorities and generated new ideas and opportunities. Flexibility to respond to these emerging issues was important in maintaining community involvement.
Flexibility during implementation was reflected in the high number of contract variations that responded to changes in timelines, staffing issues, auspice arrangements or anticipated activities and outcomes. It should be noted that while most projects were satisfied with the degree of flexibility possible during implementation, one project commented that a lack of flexibility by FaCS was an impediment to achieving project outcomes.

**Brokerage Funding**

The provision of brokerage funding to a number of SFF projects enabled flexible and creative responses to local situations. Brokerage funding was used to fill gaps in the availability of local services, to purchase specialised services and to support partnerships by funding small projects.

The capacity to purchase specialised services when required increased the flexibility of responses and expanded the suite of responses available. However, in remote areas where services and professionals in private practice are not available, providing funding to purchase services may be insufficient to increase access.

6. **Damaged trust and goodwill and reduced project duration as a consequence of delays in approving funding**

The impacts of delays in assessing project proposals, and of the shortened duration of SFF projects, have been discussed in Chapter 4 as unintended negative outcomes.

Briefly, these delays risked undermining the engagement of key staff, volunteers, partner organisations, co-funders and the community. The delays in project approval meant that momentum developed during the proposal development phase was at risk of being dissipated. Additional work was generated for projects as they tried to keep partners engaged during extended periods without knowing whether or not the project would proceed.

A consequence of the delays in assessing project proposals was the reduced duration available for some SFF projects. In some cases the reduction in anticipated time was significant and resulted in project plans needing to be substantially reviewed and reduced.

7. **Lack of clarity about future funding**

The lack of detailed guidelines was identified as a difficulty by some projects, particularly when they received contradictory advice, or had to revise their proposal several times.

Some SFF projects had mixed messages about the likelihood of additional funding being available past the initial term of the project. This misunderstanding magnified the risks of damaging the sometimes fragile community trust and hope generated by projects when short term funding meant that projects ended while identified needs and priorities remained outstanding. Complexity and Scale of SFF projects
The complexity and scale of SFF projects relates to the multifaceted strategies employed by projects, the range of partners and other stakeholders involved in developing stronger families and communities, and also to the longer duration and higher funding levels of SFF projects compared to other Strategy Initiatives.

The complexity and scale of SFF projects reflected the complexity and magnitude of the issues being addressed by projects. Turning around entrenched problems in a community where generations of families have experienced social and economic disadvantage is a large undertaking.

Using action research to routinely monitor and develop SFF projects helped to mediate risks associated with funding large, complex, developmental projects. As discussed in the following section action research provided projects with structures and processes to identify and respond to barriers and to build on successes during the implementation of projects.

Time was often needed to develop upstream capacity. In some cases projects needed to repair relationships and develop trust before communities could start planning and developing a shared vision. At the time of this evaluation some projects have clearly developed much needed upstream capacity and need a longer time frame to fully demonstrate outcomes for participants. Examples include projects that trained local staff in community building, action research and strengths based approaches. Some projects are concerned that the project time frame won’t allow gains to be consolidated.

Communities that need a long lead-in time to develop upstream capacity before they can implement family and community-strengthening activities run the greatest risk of ending before being able to fully realise the benefits of their newly developed capacity. Developing capacity creates expectations, however newly developed social capital is fragile and can be damaged if communities again experience a withdrawal of resources or services that are still needed.

Disadvantaged communities clearly need family and community strengthening projects. However, in communities that need more upstream capacity building (no prior project, extreme disadvantage) a longer time is needed for family and community strengthening projects to achieve outcomes. Projects need to make a commitment that is long enough to both develop capacity and to support the application of emerging human, community and organisational capacity.

The following comments from SFF projects illustrate concerns about the expectation of achieving sustainable changes as an outcome of a short term project.

**Example 25: Comments from projects about the need for a longer time frame.**

*Probably the most significant aspect of the project that has not been achieved is sustainability. It was an unrealistic expectation that the project can build capacity within the 3 years funding period to a degree when it can stand on its own, without further ongoing support for years. It takes a long term commitment to achieve positive change regarding the behaviour and priorities of community members whose lives have been following a dependency paradigm for generations.*

*More time needed to develop this level of trust and engagement - greatly impeded by intense on going conflict within the community that breaks down trust and limits community’s capacity to work together constructively and there is certainly potential to achieve a lot more.*
Example 27 cont.: Comments from projects about the need for a longer time frame.

Continuing mentoring and assistance with impediments are required. This is a major ‘change’ process in hearts and minds. Early termination of the program will ruin all the work of two years of trial. We need to get 1/3 of the communities committed and strong to act as models and demonstrate success.

We are just at the foundational stage of this project and it is hard to change entrenched ideas and develop trust.

Without ongoing funds to sustain the project and follow up on the last three years we believe the families in this area will look at the last 3 years as just a band aid approach to ongoing problems in the area. We believe we need a ten year plan to achieve more trust and reconciliation in the [project] area.

Impacts of short-term funding

Within the fields of early intervention and community building there has long been discussion about the value of short-term funding and one-off interventions that are not sustained. The risk is that expectations are built and then projects fold because no source of on-going funding is identified. The Western Australian government’s Gordon Inquiry (2002) was most critical in this regard.

Does such funding do more harm than good? Scott (2002), in a presentation to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, suggested there were serious risks from short-term funding:

Programs may be effective but unsuccessful in gaining ongoing funding and so can damage communities. We have seen too many examples of programs which draw heavily upon the social capital in a community - that precious reservoir of hope and goodwill, and where people invest energy and hope only to have the program collapse after a year or two for lack of funds. These programs drain the social capital from vulnerable communities. Thus it is essential that before the program begins there is a viable strategy for its sustainability in place. (Scott, 2002: 6)

All SFF projects funded under the Strategy 2000-2004 could be considered to be ‘short term’. In the course of this evaluation it was observed that short term funding can have a range of negative impacts. Research undertaken as part of the evaluation identified that the failure to obtain on-going funding has an impact on project staff as well as community members. Some project staff members, particularly when there had been an expectation of continued funding, have interpreted a lack of on-going funding as a judgment on their professional capacity, despite the substantial achievements of projects.

The policy implication of all this is that further consideration does need to be given to clearly identifying those circumstances where ‘short-term’ seed funding’ is likely to be an effective catalyst for strengthening families and communities and those circumstances where it is not. This form of funding does appear to be suited to ‘one off’ instances where a particular obstacle needs to be overcome, such as the lack of partnerships, a need for planning or the absence of a particular set of knowledge, skills and experience.
Arguably short-term 'seed' funding is an inappropriate model to where the primary purpose is to establish an on-going community service, such as a playgroup, in situations where there is little likelihood of securing ongoing resourcing from other sources. Indeed there is a need for reflection on the question of "How much value is provided by short-term project funding for essentially long term projects?"
7 Stronger Families Learning Exchange (SLFEx)

7.1 Summary

The Stronger Families Learning Exchange (SLFEx) project established as part of the Strategy and hosted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, was integral to the Stronger Families Fund. It aimed to “contribute to the formation of an evidence base from which to inform policy, practice and research in strengthening families and communities”.

This chapter discusses how SLFEx worked with projects to draw on and add to the evidence base. The first section of the chapter considers issues in evidence based policy and practice and provides background information on:

- The types of information that contribute to the evidence base.
- Processes involved in applying and developing evidence based policy and practice.
- Different approaches to developing and applying evidence based policy and practice.

In the second section the support provided by SLFEx to SFF projects is described and discussed with reference to the different approaches, processes and types of evidence. Examples of feedback from projects about the value of the support received from SLFEx and the impact of action research are presented.

Findings from the paper Lessons Learnt about Strengthening Indigenous Families and Communities: What’s Working and What’s Not prepared as part of the evaluation about the value of action research for Indigenous projects are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of action research processes as interventions and feedback from projects about the value and impact of support to implement action research provided by SLFEx.

7.2 Issues in Evidence-Based Policy and Practice

This section sets out three key ideas discussed in the Issues Paper Evidence Based Policy and Practice (Rogers and Williams, 2005), prepared as part of the National Evaluation:

1. What constitutes the evidence-base?
2. What are the processes involved in evidence-based policy and practice?
3. What are the different approaches to evidence-based policy and practice?
1. Types of information that contribute to the evidence base

While some approaches to evidence-based policy and practice have a restricted view of what constitutes evidence, the issues paper on *Evidence Based Policy and Practice*, prepared as part of the national evaluation includes various types of evidence as shown in Figure 2. Evidence extends beyond published or even unpublished reports to the implicit knowledge that practitioners have developed over time about what works, for who, in what circumstances. The validity and applicability of different forms of evidence can vary considerably.

![Figure 2: Conceptualising the evidence base as a combination of information sources](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE EVIDENCE BASE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research and evaluation reports (published and unpublished)</td>
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</table>

2. Processes involved in evidence based policy and practice

Drawing on the research and policy literature on evidence-based policy and practice, the issue paper on *Evidence Based Policy and Practice* produced as part of the national evaluation, identified six different processes involved in the cycle of evidence-based policy and practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14: Processes involved in evidence based policy and practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrieving and generating evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synthesising evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating, accessing evidence to users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to the evidence base</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Successful evidence-based policy and practice requires attention to the different components involved, including making the link back to further contributions to the evidence-base. It is important to think of these components not as a linear process, where evidence is developed centrally and used by projects but as a cycle, where the evidence-base is both drawn from and contributed to by projects and policies.

Capacity building is often needed in each of these processes in terms of skills development, support for practice, and development of material, resources and processes.

3. Approaches to developing and applying evidence based policy and practice

Four broad approaches that differ in their application of these processes have been identified in the issues paper. The characteristics of these different approaches are summarized in Table 15 below.

While some versions of evidence-based policy and practice use only one of these approaches, the paper advocates combining them. An adaptive practitioner draws on elements of all approaches in accessing, creating and using evidence to guide policy and practice.

Table 15: Different approaches to evidence based policy and practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Key features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Synthesis</td>
<td>Statistically summaries results from studies which have produced effect sizes (experimental or quasi-experimental research designs) to produce an answer to the question “What works”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Meta-analysis</td>
<td>Summaries results from a range of credible evidence to provide an answer to the question “What works”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Best evidence</td>
<td>Summaries results from a range of credible evidence to provide an answer to the question “What works for whom, in what circumstances, and how”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Realist synthesis</td>
<td>Summaries current knowledge by conceptually organising, classifying and evaluating relevant literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proven practice</td>
<td>Identifies a successful project and documents it sufficiently so it can be replicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Corporate or community memory</td>
<td>Draws on previous experience (successful and unsuccessful) in the organisation or community, which may be in written or oral form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Local project information</td>
<td>Draws on current or recent local information about project performance and local needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3 Components of the Stronger Families Learning Exchange

SFLEEx had two major components: an action research support team providing action research support to projects and a clearing house service.

Action research and support team

Action research was the core approach of the SFLEEx. It was acknowledged that the projects would need specialist advice on how to use this approach successfully. An action research support team was established to support projects to utilise existing evidence, analyse the information coming from the projects as they developed, draw out themes and promote the results. Activities included:

- Providing information to inform planning and practice in early intervention, prevention and action research. Disseminating learnings about the projects and about ‘Good Practice Projects’.
- Working individually with projects on site visits and via telephone and email contact to implement action research and to draw from, and contribute to, the evidence base.
- Supporting projects with access to the Australian Institute for Family Studies Library, via the SFLEEx Website, though six monthly bulletins, help desk and an email discussion group.

Clearing house

The stronger families and communities clearing house supported the work of the action research and support team. The roles of the clearing house were to:

1. Collect and analyse data from the SFF projects.
2. Provide special information services to project workers and other stakeholders, using databases containing information about Australian early intervention and prevention projects and the use of action research methodology.
3. Sponsor an email based discussion group and provide a help desk for queries.
4. Disseminate learning about the projects back to the projects and other stakeholders (including the wider community) through six monthly bulletins and a website containing all relevant SFLEEx information.

SFLEEx tailored support to individual projects to both draw on the existing evidence base and to contribute to the evidence base. SFLEEx supported individual projects through site visits, telephone and email contact to build capacity for action research. The types of support provided to projects varied and was responsive to the needs and context of each project.

SFLEEx support was particularly valuable to projects and agencies that didn’t have prior experience of applying participatory action research.
7.4 SFLEEx activities to support the processes involved in evidence based policy and practice: description and analysis

SFLEEx demonstrated an eclectic approach in working with projects to support the processes involved in the cycle of evidence based policy and practice. This section discusses the support provided by SFLEEx, for each process in the cycle that assisted projects to act as adaptive practitioners.

1. Retrieving and generating evidence

Evidence was retrieved from a diverse range of sources with a focus on “what works and what doesn’t work”. The sources were both internal and external to the program. Internal evidence included descriptions of SFCS projects (drawn from standardised questionnaires sent to projects), “good practice” projects, and a range of other material drawn from the projects and the overall Strategy. External evidence included academic journals, conference reports, lists of resource materials and research reports. SFLEEx was auspiced by the Institute of Family Studies and benefited from a comprehensive research library in identifying existing research relevant to SFF projects.

Good Practice Projects were Australian projects which adopt a primary prevention or early intervention approach in their work with families or communities. Particular emphasis was given to those projects working with families with young children and that use action research methodology.

The one on one support provided to projects assisted them to articulate, document and share implicit knowledge within communities about what works, or doesn’t work to strengthen the community.

SFLEEx demonstrated characteristics of all approaches – meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies; Best evidence, Realist synthesis, Proven practice, Corporate/Community Memory, Local Performance Information and therefore acted supported projects to act as adaptive practitioners. Essentially SFLEEx drew on whatever evidence was available with a broad concept of what constituted “evidence”.

2. Validating evidence

There appears to be no specific description of how individual evidence was validated. It’s probably correct to conclude that validation depended on the professional judgment of those running the Exchange and the status or reputation of the source (eg government reports, refereed journals).

The bulletins and newsletters produced by the Exchange frequently highlight the importance of participant experience, and the action research orientation of the Exchange further emphasises this element of validation.

To be regarded as a “Good Practice Project”, evaluation was required to be part of the project methodology.
SFLEEx demonstrated an eclectic approach to validation. It did not reject experimental or non-experimentally based research on principle – although clearly respected the validation processes that underpinned these. The action research approach to validation – personal experience and observation reflected upon – also fits within the “adaptive practitioner” approach. It accepted the data drawn from projects that were franchises, and acknowledged the face validity implicit in the corporate and community memory approach.

3. Synthesising evidence

SFLEEx synthesised evidence related to action research theory and processes to inform projects. They also synthesised evidence related to specific themes generated by projects.

The synthesising of evidence showed mixtures of the ad hoc style of the Corporate Memory approach (eg posting data on the net that other people found useful), the expert analysis of the realist approach (eg SFLEEx staff producing articles that summarised knowledge on a thematic base) and the implicit personal sense making of the Adaptive Practitioner approach (ie putting up the raw information and inviting people to make their own synthesis based on their own situation).

4. Communicating evidence and making it accessible to intended users

SFLEEx organised a national workshop brought projects from around the country together in Melbourne for 3 days. The workshop included presentations that presented evidence on early intervention, prevention, strengths based approaches, community capacity building and action research.

SFLEEx also prepared a range of papers on specific issues that drew on existing evidence and were published in the Bulletin providing accessible information to projects and other interested stakeholders. Table 33 in Appendix 4 shows the titles of the papers published in Bulletins.

Feedback from projects indicated that while the information provided in the Bulletin was valued, earlier dissemination of information from other projects would have increased the utility of the information provided. A more streamlined process for finalising Bulletins would have facilitated an earlier and timelier dissemination of information.

In addition to the listed articles each edition of the Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin included a section on literature highlights that summarised recent publications available through the Australian Institute of Family Studies library.

SFLEEx researchers presented findings from their work with projects to broader audiences at Australian Institute of Family Studies Conferences (2003 and 2004), and The Victorian Council of Social Services Congress (2004). Several articles were also published in the Journal of the Home Economics Institute of Australia.
The communication strategy reflected three approaches. It reflected the meta-analysis tradition of clearing houses of “approved” knowledge, although without the hierarchy of status (ie this evidence is better than that evidence) or a conclusion/judgment where there was contradictory evidence. The hands on work with projects strongly reflected the interpersonal and “informal” means of communication implicit in the Corporate/Community Memory and Local Project Information approaches.

5. Applying evidence

The Exchange promoted an action research orientation to translating evidence into practice, emphasising the importance of reflection processes including the exploration of contextual issues (why did it work there and is that appropriate here) and encouraged people to consider exceptions as a valuable source of information.

Although at times expert guided, the Local Project Information approach was the philosophical underpinning of the SFLEX action research support team’s work with projects to support them to apply evidence. There was a strong focus on sense making through reflective inquiry and discussion.

6. Contributing to the evidence base

SFLEX supported the process of adding learnings from projects to the evidence base by assisting projects to document their processes and findings. The documentation of project learnings took the form of written reports, photographic essays, scrapbooks and other creative products.

SFLEX worked with projects to prepare articles and updates for the bulletin and project websites. Some projects prepared papers and presentations that were delivered at conferences and workshops.

The Local Project Information approach has been demonstrated in the work undertaken by SFLEX to support projects to contribute to the evidence base.

Table 34 in Appendix 4 shows articles published in the Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin that added evidence from projects to the publicly available evidence base.

Capacity building

Action research based methodologies, plus the transfer of knowledge from Exchange staff to projects built the capacity and capability of projects to use evidence as a basis for their practice. The Action Research Support Team assisted in helping to develop the capacity and capability of participants in all stages of the action research cycle, including documentation and dissemination of project experiences.
The Exchange itself acknowledged how important this was in one of their reports:

The SFLEX team underestimated the importance of the specialised research skills and expertise that [the SFLEX team] had as practitioners .... The truth is that the planning of research, analysis of data and the writing up of findings are quite specialised and, although anyone can develop them, developing these skills can be a slow process for people busily engaged in other aspects of community work.”

7.5 Action Research Processes as interventions

The processes as well as the findings of action research were important. Processes used by many projects quarantined space for reflection and learning and had the following outcomes:

• provided participants with a safe and supportive environment to reflect on and discuss personal and community issues (eg listening circles),

• provided service providers and project staff opportunities to reflect on their practices

• modeled resilience in learning to ‘learn from failure’ and helped to build relationships between participants.

• allowed barriers to participation or progress to be quickly identified and addressed and successes to be celebrated and consolidated.

It is likely that these processes, in and of themselves had positive effects. For example, for participants the experience of being respectfully listened to and having their opinions sought and valued is likely to boost confidence and encourage continued participation.

Example 26: Comments from projects illustrating the impact of action research approaches.

The documents produced through the action research model have become a community asset; The Action research outcomes are documented in various forms including scrapbooks, photo albums, stories, and reports. These have all been made available to other service providers and community members and have been used for funding submissions etc.

Focus group discussions were held with parents regarding enhancements to the previous parent education program. Parents who had attended previous courses provided feedback that additional support was required to apply strategies learnt in the course. Some at risk parents were reluctant to use, and struggled with organised group training – identified that follow-up support, particularly in the home was essential to help translate learning into practice.

New learnings through action research process documented – eg not only important to have child care on site but also important for parents to have confidence in the quality of child care staff
7.6 Feedback from SFF projects

The paper *Lessons Learnt about Strengthening Indigenous Families and Communities: What’s Working and What’s Not* (Scougall, 2005) discussed a project that received support from SFLEx reporting that most of the learning about what works and what doesn’t in this project had been derived from ‘learning by doing’.

AIFS assisted this project with:

- the introduction of an appropriate participatory action research framework for the project;
- the development of appropriate performance indicators;
- the formulation of a strategic plan;
- practical approaches to providing family support;
- advice on how meeting processes might be improved;
- the provision of one-on-one counsel to project staff;
- staff professional development;
- the identification of lessons learnt.

Arguably the biggest contribution of AIFS to Indigenous projects has been to simply encourage staff and committee members to think critically about how their project is going. One project found this to be particularly valuable:

“We have found that investing time and energy in creating a learning environment early on in a project, lays good foundations for strong relationships and resilient projects … We have also found that training is not enough. Projects sometimes need intensive support to develop and maintain a learning culture. They also need support to quarantine time for reflection as part of their core work which is not always easy. (Project Evaluation Report)

Feedback from staff from the sample projects visited as part of the evaluation indicated that the SFLEx team had been a valued sounding board, providing a mechanism whereby issues can be talked through in a non-directive way. A strong evaluation ethos developed and SFLEx helped to foster this. Those involved in the project are required to provide a rationale for what they are doing. This requires reasoned justification for any proposed course of action, the presentation of their supporting evidence and critical reflection upon it. This helps to create an environment of collective responsibility”.

Feedback from SFF projects on the support provided by SFLEx was favourable. Action research was mentioned by many projects as having been critical to their success. For many the action research approach seems to have been a new and enlightening one. Several wished they had allocated more time (and budget) to reflect and adapt. Others wished they had been more systematic, forward thinking and outcomes focused about their evaluation processes. Some projects reported that the benefits of action research extended beyond the SFF project with action research processes being embraced by the auspice agency and applied in other program areas.
Example 27: Feedback from SFF projects about support provided for action research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The help and availability of a project worker at the Australian Institute of Family Studies was very helpful both as a sounding board, how to put action research into practice, how to keep a learning journal, ideas and how to in relation to working in the community and administrative tasks like reporting.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access and support from the SFLEX team was excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts and networking with Institute of Family Studies and with FACS helped us a lot to stay on track, provide guidance and advice and be flexible when we faced challenges and barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIFS assisted with addressing performance indicators and the design/proofing of reports. AIFS answered any questions the workers had on action research. The AIFs was particularly helpful in the early stages of the funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The help and availability of a project worker at the Australian Institute of Family Studies was very helpful both as a sounding board, how to put action research into practice, how to keep a learning journey, ideas and how to in relation to working in the community and administrative tasks like reporting. Service visits and approachability of project workers was also helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Support from FaCS and the SFLEX has been of great assistance in providing research back-up, a sounding board for project development and guidance in the development of the action research approach.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 How did these projects contribute to the achievement of outcomes in conjunction with other initiatives, programs or services in an area?

This chapter considers the influence of previous or concurrent work in communities on the outcomes achieved by SFF projects.

A majority of SFF projects reported that previous projects were helpful and important in achieving project outcomes. They often enabled projects to commence at a higher level of the Strategy Outcomes Hierarchy. For communities that had already identified and/or developed various forms of capital, Strategy funding provided opportunities to apply capacity. However, not all previous projects had a positive legacy and in some cases projects were limited by, or had to put time and energy into addressing negative perceptions based on previous projects.

SFF projects were sometimes one of many changes or initiatives taking place in a community. Concurrent projects often added value to SFF projects where they shared similar aims. The flexibility of Strategy funding and the focus on developing local solutions supported SFF projects to integrate with, and add value to other initiatives.

The contributions and barriers to achieving project goals made by previous or concurrent projects need to be considered when attributing outcomes to SFF project interventions. In communities where there were many programs and changes occurring that could impact on the strength of families and communities it is difficult to tease out the impact of one project in isolation. This has implications for the generalisability of findings.

8.1 Building on previous work

84% of SFF projects responding to the final questionnaire reported that activities carried out by the auspice organisation before the project began had been either very helpful and important or helpful and important to the success of the project. Activities carried out by other organisations before the project began were considered either very helpful and important or helpful and important in 92% of SFF projects.

There were different ways that previous work contributed to the achievement of project outcomes, depending on the nature of the preceding project. In some cases previous projects developed:

- Partnerships with service providers
- Partnerships with community members, or established processes for community participation
- Agreed issues and priorities
- Agreed action plans for addressing identified needs
Feasibility studies or other projects that clearly laid out the background to and rationale for the proposal informed some Stronger Families Fund proposals. Some of the preceding work undertook extensive community consultation and developed detailed plans for strategies to strengthen families and communities. For these projects the challenge was maintaining momentum during the funding approval process.

Some preceding projects had implemented activities to address community priorities and built on their experience during the implementation of SFF projects.

The impact of previous work meant that some projects started at higher levels of the Strategy hierarchy of outcomes. Projects may have already engaged communities (level 1), developed a greater awareness of community strengths and needs (level 2) or developed organisational capacity that assisted in the implementation of the project (level 3).

Previous projects did not always have a positive legacy - one project found that the community was not prepared to support solutions generated by young people because of prior experience.

Example 28: Examples of the impact of previous projects on the implementation of SFF projects.

The 'Connecting Families in Wagga Wagga' project was informed by outcomes of the Wagga Wagga City Council 1998 Social Plan, following up one of the recommendations from the plan. The Social Plan identified a lack of effective coordination between existing services in meeting family's needs.

The Strengthening Families project in Queensland built on a previous project that offered the Toddler Tactics course in response to identified need. Funding levels limited the number of courses run and a major barrier to participation was the lack of child care facilities. Follow-up with participating families found that although the courses were valued many parents felt a need for support after the end of the education course to assist them in applying their new knowledge. Learnings from the previous project were incorporated into the design of the SFF project which offered a greater number of courses in different local communities, provided on-site child care to overcome this barrier to participation and importantly, supported families in each course to develop ongoing structures, such as informal playgroups to support each other in applying their parenting skills. This approach resulted in the formation of informal social networks that reduced the social isolation of participating families.

Examples of previous work identified as helping projects to achieve their goals:

The research that was undertaken prior to the project by the auspice body set up initial networks and gave a platform from which the project could be built. Other projects carried out by the auspice body also fed into this project and provided important data and trends and contacts. Work that other organisations prior to the project gave the team an understanding of work that had been done prior and the outcomes of this work that helped us in reinventing the wheel.

Community consultation preceding the project; very strong support of the auspice organisation throughout the project; access to the learning of previous project work and the experience of participants with previous project work.

Past experiences can stop or hinder things going forward because motives are suspect. We came up with a few issues through the Youth Forum - certain youth workers acted on these issues and members of the community stopped them from happening. This is a very frustrating aspect that I didn't expect.
8.2 Concurrent projects

SFF projects were sometimes coordinated with other concurrent projects managed by the same auspice organisations. In other cases communities tried to coordinate funding for complementary projects from different sources however uncertainties and delays associated with project starting dates and durations (as a result of the length of the project approval process) impeded the coordination of projects on the ground.

Some concurrent projects were independently managed projects that worked in partnership where appropriate. For example, the Connecting Families in Wagga Wagga project developed a strategic partnership with a concurrent Families First project to identify gaps in services and develop networks and partnerships between service providers.

One project was based in remote Indigenous communities in far north Queensland where there were many other projects, programs and changes occurring simultaneously. These included crime prevention programs, women’s and men’s health projects, the introduction of Alcohol Management Plans and changes in community governance arrangements. In this context a significant role of the SFF project was to coordinate and make links between the different projects.

Where there are multiple interventions occurring in a community it is often difficult to tease out the impact of the SFF project which has implications for the generalisability of findings.

In one case an auspice organisation had applied for funding from both the Strategy and a State government department intending, if both applications were successful, to combine the complementary projects on the ground. The SFF project proposal was approved however liaison between the two levels of Government resulted in the offer of State government funding being withdrawn. The rationale for the withdrawal of State funding was that the overall level of funding to the community if both projects were approved, could not be justified.

Lessons learnt about interactions between SFF projects and other activities undertaken prior to or concurrently:

- Projects building on previous work started at a higher level of the hierarchy of outcomes than projects starting from scratch, and were therefore able to make more progress towards building stronger families and communities.
- The legacy of negative experiences of similar activities can be a barrier.
- Concurrent projects have potential to add value to SFF projects where they share strategic aims (and vice versa).
- It is important to be aware of the overall context in which agencies are working, and any implications for the capacity of organisations to participate in multiple projects.
- Concurrent projects may generate additional work for SFF projects in terms of coordination of activities.
• The flexibility of SFF projects facilitated effective integration with concurrent projects.

• Concurrent projects or other changes in local communities confound the impact of project interventions making it more difficult to attribute changes in families and communities to the interventions of SFF projects.
9 What else helped or hindered these projects to achieve their objectives or outcomes?

This chapter considers other factors that helped or hindered projects to achieve outcomes; however it is only possible at this stage, given the available data on project activities and outcomes, to draw tentative conclusions in regard to what worked best for whom, why and when. In the following section of the report the role of the following factors in achieving projects outcomes are considered:

- Auspice organisation
- The people involved
- Other factors that helped projects to achieve their goals
- Barriers to the achievement of project goals

9.1 Influence of the auspice organisation

The support provided by auspice organisation was an important factor helping or hindering many SFF projects.

SFF projects were auspiced by organisations that varied widely in terms of their size, structure, expertise available, connections with the community and other agencies and reputation in the community. The types of auspice organisations included community based incorporated associations managed by a local committee of management, medium to large sized non government organisations, schools, local governments, hospitals, universities, Australian Government agencies, Aboriginal organisations such as Land or Health Councils, religious organisations and research institutes. The characteristics of auspice organisations either supported or hindered projects.

Auspice organisations varied in terms of their level of involvement with projects, in some cases the role of the auspice was primarily that of a funds holder and projects were effectively governed and managed by a community partnership. (In some projects the distinction between community members and community agencies wasn’t clear, for example community reference groups or steering committees were sometimes made up of only community agency representatives, in other cases they were predominately project participants or other community members.)

The following table summarises the advantageous and disadvantageous characteristics of different sized auspice organisations and implications for managing SFF projects.
Table 16: Characteristics of Auspice organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auspice Organisations</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smaller auspice organisations</td>
<td>Closer links with the local community</td>
<td>Limited resources available to offer in-kind support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High capacity for flexibility and adaptability</td>
<td>Less capacity to support project workers (due to a lack of expertise and experience in managing staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater opportunities to build organisational capacity</td>
<td>Greater risk of professional isolation for project workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater opportunities for community members to be involved in the governance of the organisation</td>
<td>May be a disadvantage if there is discord in the community and the organisation is perceived as being 'captured' by one part of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced and skilled project workers may have more autonomy and flexibility</td>
<td>Tend to be more reliant on the skills and commitment of individuals and therefore more at risk if key people leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>Facilitated community engagement and participation</td>
<td>Need experienced and skilled project staff with external networks for peer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large auspice organisations</td>
<td>Access to greater resources, both in-kind and external</td>
<td>More bureaucratic and less flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater capacity to support project staff</td>
<td>Internal communication more complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project workers may have opportunities to work as a team</td>
<td>May make links with in house services rather than forming new relationships with external partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Projects goals may not match organisational priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>Greater capacity to support and develop skills of less experienced project staff</td>
<td>Need to ensure that there is executive support for the project and that effective and efficient internal communication mechanisms are established</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that while the issues identified in the table above are based on actual examples from projects there are variations within categories of auspice organisations. In some cases larger organisations demonstrated a high level of flexibility and some smaller organisations had sophisticated skills and experience in levering additional resources.

SSF projects were more likely than other types of Strategy projects to consider the support provided by the auspice agency as important and helpful in achieving project outcomes. Auspice agencies varied in the extent to which they could provide these types of support.
The support provided by auspice agencies included:

- Existing trust, good will and links with the community,
- Existing relationships with agencies, government departments, tertiary education institutions and businesses
- Direct financial contributions, In kind resources and ‘in house’ expertise
- Support to meet accountability requirements
- Supporting the implementation of Strategy principles: reflective practice, strengths based approaches etc.
- Support for project workers, and a level of continuity when project staff changed
- Maintaining partnerships while awaiting approval of project proposals

Example 29: Comments from projects about the importance of support from the auspice agency

The project was auspiced by an existing service that had already established a history of delivering services for children and families, as well as working in partnership with the community and other service providers. These activities continued throughout the project.

When asked what had helped in achieving outcomes many projects referred to characteristics of the auspice organisation:

Strong, supportive auspice organisation.
Infrastructure for the project both prior and on-going provided by auspice agency
Infrastructure, training, supervision, administrative and financial support have been very important
Referrals, networking and support between auspice agency and other organizations is vital.

The research that was undertaken prior to the project by the auspice body set up initial networks and gave a platform from which the project could be built. Other projects carried out by the auspice body also fed into this project and provided important data and trends and contacts.

Being based at the medical service has been very important accessing the target group. Medical staff are very supportive and did a lot of important monitoring and the prevention work prior to the project beginning.

In other cases the auspice agency could present barriers to achieving project outcomes

Initial problems between staff and the sponsor organisation held up the employment of staff.

Lessons learnt about the importance of the auspice agency:

- There are advantages, and disadvantages associated with both large and small auspice organisations.
- Working in partnership helped to mediate the risks associated with both large and small organisations. Small agencies could draw on the resources and capacity of other partners and partnerships could assist larger organisations to engage local communities.
9.2 The people Involved

Having the right people involved helped projects to achieve their objectives. The ‘right people’ refers to community members, volunteers and paid project staff.

Community members

The active involvement of respected community members who championed projects was important in terms of engaging the community and guiding projects based on prior experience.

Example 30: Comments from projects illustrating the importance of community members

The thing that has helped the project the most is that when it first started a petition was signed by 11,000 people in [the town] addressing the youth crime. The Aboriginal community is very protective and caring of their young people and it gave the working party a focus which had media coverage and a high profile. That is why our Youth Forum was such a success with so many community members involved. It is also why so much funding is being put into [the town]. This may or may not be a good thing - it would be better to teach people how not burn down their houses then buy a fire truck.

The key element was the standing of the principals in the local community. They are senior Aboriginal people and the project was successful because they were able to use their influence within the local kinship system. In effect, they operated the project by developing it along the lines of their extended family relationships which ultimately includes most Aboriginal people in the town.

Volunteers

Volunteers undertook a variety of roles and were important to the achievements of many SFF projects. Volunteers were involved directly in providing services to families, for example as friendly visitors and home tutors. Other volunteers assisted agencies to provide services by providing childcare and transport and in administrative roles. In some communities volunteers took on responsibility for managing community organisations or acted in an advisory capacity for auspice agencies and projects.

Some SFF projects included leadership training that led to participants taking on new volunteer roles in the community. For example, one project working with young mothers completing their education provided leadership training and supported some of the young women to speak to school students about the reality of being a teenage parent.

Volunteers added value to SFF projects and also required an investment of resources. SFF projects supported volunteers by:

- developing and monitoring the implementation of policies and procedures,
- recruiting and screening potential volunteers,
- providing initial and ongoing training; providing regular supervision and crisis support and debriefing when needed,
- covering administrative costs including costs of police checks, occupational health and safety training, maintaining databases and reimbursing expenses.
Volunteers generally benefited from their participation in projects. As well as benefiting from greater social participation and sense of connectedness with the community, many benefited from training and in some cases found employment or went on to further education or training.

In some cases where a few volunteers carried a heavy load their involvement with projects increased stress. Some volunteer work was challenging as people worked to change attitudes in their own communities, it was important that volunteers were well supported. A few projects experienced problems when volunteers were under-utilised. This occurred in one project that matched volunteers with families when the training and recruitment of volunteers outstripped the pace at which families were engaging with the project.

Volunteers were often from similar backgrounds to project participants and their involvement with projects helped to build trust and engage the target participants. For example, one project strategically recruited a member of the target community as a bus driver for the project. In other projects volunteers helped to create connections between different generations and cultures.

Some projects reported difficulties recruiting or maintaining a sufficient number of volunteers. For example, one project reported difficulties in getting people to serve on the management committee of a local organisation. Small communities in particular had a limited pool of actual and potential volunteers. One SFF project resulted in several agencies in one area pooling their volunteer resources to more effectively deploy and support this important community asset.

A high turn over of volunteers was costly to projects in terms of the potential for damaging the trust and goodwill of participants and also the costs associated with recruiting and training new volunteers.

**Paid Staff**

Many projects identified the expertise and attitudes of project staff as essential in achieving outcomes. Difficulties recruiting appropriately skilled and experienced staff caused substantial delays for several projects and the skills and experience of SFF project workers varied widely.

Projects that experienced staff turnover were also often set back by the time taken to recruit new staff, and for new staff to develop trusting relationships with the community. The short term nature of project funding meant that it was often difficult to recruit suitable staff to replace staff that left towards the end of the project.
Example 31: Comments from projects about the importance of involving the right people

**Strengths and skills of workers facilitating Homework Club include the consistency of the Co-ordinator that has supported building of trust with families. The inclusion of a Youth worker has also assisted in the engagement of the children in the program and the variety of activities facilitated for children. Regular presence of male staff person has provided a positive role model for the boys.**

Where there is a high demand for a service, it is important to have full time, highly skilled staff. It is important to have a positive working relationship with clients. Although we had a highly experienced staff, we were only funded for these on a part time basis.

**Problem with the recruitment of suitable staff for the Centre**

**Difficulty in retaining a project worker due to the isolation of the role**

The project manager has recently had to leave the project due to personal reasons. This has meant that the project has stalled somewhat.

Sometimes it was an advantage for project staff to be local, sometimes the reverse, for example if the project was in a divided community. Employing and training local staff was a deliberate upstream capacity building strategy in some remote communities.

Some projects seemed to under-budget for salary expenses given the high level of skills required. For example, one project sought staff with expertise that would enable them to:

- Manage the day to day operations of a community centre;
- Establish and maintain relationships with other service providers;
- Provide an information and referral service and coordinate the delivery of services by a range of service providers
- Assist the community to develop opportunities for social and economic participation
- Supervise and support an Indigenous trainee

The part-time position, located in a remote rural area attracted a salary of around $30,000 pro-rata which seems very low given the high level of skills expected.

Auspice agencies varied in their capacity to support project staff. In some cases where community capacity building was a new way of working for communities and auspice organisations, project workers were effectively managing both upstream and downstream capacity building. Staff had to be flexible as their roles often evolved over the life of the project. They had to manage competing demands and in some cases were working in difficult physical environments. They needed to be able to support the community to maintain their vision in the face of unforeseen challenges. There was often a high expectation placed on project staff by community members and for the project staff who lived and worked in the communities where projects were located their work was a lot more than just a job.
The following comment by a FaCS Officer illustrates what a skilled project worker looks like.

The project worker has an amazing capacity to work with people and develop responses to their needs and the needs of the community. [Project Worker] said that the skills she uses in every contact with people is her counselling skills. The project model and the skills of the project worker align with the latest research in what works with reaching families… In addition - the project benefits from the worker’s capacity to manage very well the competing priorities of the different project partners and to undertake research and evaluation as part of her daily work. In doing all of this – [the Project Worker] has empowered the Community Advisory Group to learn skills and confidence to get heavily involved.

FACS Officer’s comment

There is evidence that inexperienced staff may hinder the engagement of participants and have difficulties managing the sometimes complex dynamics involved in the many relationships that need to be developed, maintained or strengthened by project staff.

Example 32: Comments illustrating the consequences of inexperienced staff

New presenters of the …course had some difficulties in facilitating parent groups due to inexperience. In that course there was a high level of drop-outs. This is being rectified with additional support and mentoring being provided to the presenters and a follow-up with those parents who dropped out. During this course the group dynamics were difficult to manage with inexperienced facilitators. Two distinct groups formed which stopped cohesion and caused tension. Later reflections with the project coordinator identified best practice for these situations.

Project report

Capacity to purchase expertise through brokerage funding enabled a few projects to supplement the skill base of project staff when needed.

Cultural appropriateness

The cultural appropriateness of staff and volunteers was another dimension of the importance of the people involved. In some projects gender was considered important and the cultural background and languages spoken by staff mattered in projects that aimed to work with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The paper Lessons Learnt about Strengthening Indigenous Families and Communities: What’s Working and What’s Not, prepared as part of the national evaluation discusses in detail the relevance of cultural factors for projects based in Indigenous communities.

Findings regarding the importance of the right people

Project workers who are inexperienced in community capacity building processes often need training and ongoing mentoring or support, and may take longer, or take a few false turns, before achieving substantial results. However, training and developing the skills of suitable local workers has the advantage of building local capacity.

Difficulties recruiting skilled and experienced staff delayed many projects. The time taken to recruit and/or train the right project staff seems to have been under-estimated in many project plans.
The delays in approving proposals sometimes resulted in either community members or potential staff members who contributed to developing the proposal, no longer being available to be involved in the project.

Short-term funding added to the difficulties of recruiting and maintaining staff, particularly when staff had to be replaced towards the end of a project.

The short-term funding of much community strengthening work, including projects funded from sources other than the Strategy, means that workforce development and employment opportunities are inconsistent and not planned for the long-term. This increases the risk that skills developed through initiatives such as the Strategy will not be retained in communities, either because skilled people leave, or because, over time they become de-skilled and demoralised when employment opportunities dry up.

Unskilled staff had the potential to impede the progress of projects and sometimes resulted in participants not continuing their involvement.

It cannot be assumed that all communities have a ready pool of volunteers.

It may be more effective and efficient for agencies to collaborate to recruit, train and support volunteers than to run independent volunteer programs.

Staff often needed very diverse skills ranging from the capacity to work with distressed individuals and families to report writing, conflict resolution, managing significant organisational change, research skills, marketing and diplomacy. The work was more complex and potentially emotionally draining for some individuals working within the communities where they lived.

Cultural relevance helped to engage participants.

People, whether paid staff or volunteers with the skills and experience to drive community strengthening processes represent important human capital that communities can draw on. These people need to be valued and supported.

9.3 Other Factors that influenced achievements

Projects responding to the final evaluation questionnaire were asked whether a number of factors had been helpful or important in achieving project outcomes. Projects were also asked whether there were any other significant factors that were helpful or unhelpful to the project achieving its goals. Many of these factors have already been discussed in terms of the implementation of Strategy principles and Strategy processes and the impact of previous or concurrent projects. This table is presented to show the relative importance of the factors that influenced achievements.
### Table 17: Factors that influenced achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors that influenced achievements of the project</th>
<th>Very helpful/Important plus</th>
<th>Very helpful/Important plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helpful or important SFF</td>
<td>Helpful or important Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and responding to community issues</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much help was other support sought or received through the strategy?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local partnerships and networks</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people involved</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and adaptability of the Strategy and FaCS</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities carried out by other organisations during the project</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from your auspice organisation</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much help was funding from the strategy in achieving those outcomes?</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities carried out by other organisations before the project began</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services or activities within your community</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community support</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities carried out by the auspice organisation before the project began?</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities carried out by the auspice organisation during the project – other than the project itself?</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local conditions</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience with similar projects</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Factors that helped

The factors identified by projects as helpful in achieving project goals validated the importance of the principles underlying the Strategy. Working in partnership, strengths based approaches and community participation in developing solutions were all identified as helpful. Previous projects and other activities undertaken prior to the commencement of projects were also identified by many projects as essential factors in helping projects to achieve their goals.

In addition to the auspice agency and the people involved, factors that helped projects were access to additional resources and overcoming barriers to participation. Barriers to the achievement of project goals are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The following examples of comments from projects in response to a question about what helped them to achieve their goals illustrate the importance of these factors.
**Example 33: Factors identified by projects as helping to achieve goals**

| Auspicing before and during – {other programs} were important for establishing reputation, networks, contacts and trust building. Other agencies - ran projects and projects that we could partner up with …and projects that complimented what we were doing. |
| Community consultation with the client group and with community organizations |
| The following were all strong contributors to the success of the program: The use of brokerage money; Strong community partnerships; Location of the program within Centrelink; Flexible service delivery. The option of both group and individualised assistance. |
| … collaborative partnerships; events and activities outside the project boundaries that built trust and relationships between project staff and participants. |
| The services have welcomed the idea of a specific specialist service to work with parents with a mental illness, as they are often overloaded and do not have the specialist knowledge required to work with this specific target group. |
| Also, additional financial resources were required and provided by local government. Otherwise, would not have been possible to plan and implement the project. The background research into need and the strong partnerships formed during planning were very important. |
| Shifting the balance to enable community to lead the program, agencies expectations can override |
| The balance of informal networking and structured programs to facilitate the building of relationships and community - obviously both are needed and both have worked well to achieve the objectives within the program. |

The following quote from a project, in response to a question about what was important in achieving project outcomes, succinctly summarised the importance of goodwill in achieving positive results, and in persevering through challenges:

*Everyone involved has a good heart of wanting meaningful change*

### 9.4 Barriers to the achievement of project goals

In response to the question about what factors were unhelpful in achieving project goals, a range of barriers were identified:

1. Limited pre-existing capacity
2. Unforeseen changes in the context in which projects were operating
3. Barriers to participation
4. Barriers to collaboration
5. Inadequate resources compared to demand – in the broader service system, and within the project.
6. Project settings – projects in remote settings faced particular issues
1. Limited pre-existing capacity

Several projects identified the limited pre-existing capacity of communities as important in limiting the project’s achievements. The additional time required to build upstream capacity in some communities was discussed in Chapter 3.

2. Unforeseen changes in the context in which projects were operating

One project found that a change in location of the services offered had an adverse effect on the visibility and accessibility of services. Other projects were operating in environments undergoing significant change. For example, one project was based on a public housing estate while residents were being relocated. Another project based in a remote Indigenous community reported:

There has been upheaval in the Aboriginal community with major repairs on houses which meant that the families were moved out of their homes and off the missions to other accommodation. This created a huge problem for us to begin working with a community that temporarily didn't exist. The works have taken over 12 months to complete.

3. Barriers to participation

Frequently cited barriers to participation in project activities were trust, childcare, and transport. The engagement strategies discussed in Chapter 5, such as developing an initial one on one relationship and flexible models of service delivery such as home visiting and telephone contact, helped to address the lack of trust and confidence that impedes participation of some isolated members of the community.

Childcare was essential to the success of many projects and feedback from projects is that on-site child care is preferred and that the quality of the child care is important. Some parents had never used child care before and it was important that their first experience of childcare was positive. One project developed specific strategies to support mothers experiencing separation anxiety, which can be a barrier to participating in any activities in the community. Time was arranged for women to meet the child care staff before leaving children in care. During parent education sessions volunteers were on hand to reassure mothers that their children were happy. The volunteers checked the children and reported back to the mother, which stopped the mother from needing to leave the parent education course because of anxiety about the child’s welfare.

Many projects were based in regional or rural areas where transport can be a very real barrier to participation. Projects addressed the lack of transport using different strategies. In some cases projects brought services to local communities or offered home visits or telephone follow up rather than office based appointments. In other cases projects organised transport utilising volunteers or community resources such as a minibus. At least one project used brokerage funds to reimburse transport costs.

Several projects reported challenges in engaging project participants as an unexpected negative outcome. However limited participation was usually an unexpected barrier to achieving planned project outcomes rather than a negative outcome.
Several of the following comments illustrate how projects addressed unexpected barriers. They also reinforce the point that developing relationships takes time.

**Example 34: Comments from projects about challenges engaging participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Also was evident that to be able to work with the whole community the agency could not get drawn into community conflict about the land claim - very difficult as local staff and volunteers had strong views and vested interests in the conflict. Intensification of conflict over land claim - not due to this project but certainly a significant factor in affecting outcomes of project.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only group meetings. These were hard to have as only a couple of parents could attend, but this is not unusual for our parents not to attend meetings. We are reviewing this for new strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying a need in the community does not necessarily guarantee participation. For ex, we did a survey and after collating the results it clearly showed that giving up smoking was a concern for most people. We took a lead role in developing a quit smoking program working in partnership with our Community health centre. We also personally targeted individuals who showed interest. And the result was that no one turned up. On reflection I guess that we find that most people in their community live day to day and they deal with the situation at the time as it presents itself and unfortunately for us, that particular project was not a priority on the day. We will definitely try again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Centre’s image as some community members are calling it the Centre for Aboriginal people; (Not an Indigenous specific project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again taking into account that this project had been auspiced by another organisation, we were unaware of how difficult it would be to develop strong networks within the community, which we were not expecting. However, we have overcome this and have a strong network.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A specific barrier to participation identified by a few projects was the expectation that projects would focus on families with younger children.

**Example 35: Comments from projects about targeting only families with young children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging with the initial target group. It ended up targeting children older than first expected.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restriction of the service to primarily focus on families with children under 5 was seen as a barrier to effective early intervention in families in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the outset became that to build trust and credibility it was really important to do something for the whole community (not just families with children 0-8 as per project specification).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. Barriers to collaboration**

Barriers to collaboration included varied and conflicting perceptions of projects, differing levels of commitment, differing agency needs and expectations and a lack of understanding about the new approach of Strategy projects as illustrated in the following comments.
Example 36: Comments from projects about barriers to working in partnership

Local community centre has a sense of duplication and is reluctant to promote service, this is a lack of understanding and a need to be clear about what Pathways is about and how it is different to current service delivery.

...differences in perspectives, and taking time to work these through.

The relationship between schools and project has taken a great deal of time and effort. Schools have systems of working that are not always conducive to evolving community development projects.

Gatekeeping - we have encountered some service providers who were not willing to be involved in partnerships and share resources.

Challenges with working collaboratively - conflict with agency perceptions, meanings and values along the way has resulted in changes in original membership. Membership has also increased with new agencies coming on board.

Limited time to make partnerships and connections with Indigenous community.

Not appreciating the time and effort needed to build and attend to relationships

As the last two comments above make explicit developing the trusting relationships that underpin productive partnerships takes time. Once the initial ground work of clarifying values, perceptions and priorities has been done (the ‘upstream’ capacity building component of working collaboratively) it takes less time to maintain partnerships. The time taken to get to a productive partnership is influenced by the pre-existing relationship. Where a history of conflict or tension needs to be addressed this work will take longer. Damaged relationships that occur, as a consequence of the challenges of working in partnership, is a negative outcome that could limit future opportunities.

5. Inadequate resources compared to demand

Projects identified inadequate resources at project level and in the broader service system as factors limiting the achievements of projects.

At project level additional resources were needed to respond to the unexpected level of demand experienced by some projects, and to address barriers to participation such as transport and child care.

Inadequate resources in the service system to respond to community needs (brokerage funds helped to address this) and changes in funding levels for other services that impacted on the project were also identified as limiting factors.

Example 37: Comment from a project about the impact of inadequate resources compared to demand

Limited funding - only part time staff, which meant that client to staff ratios were high. This fact made it difficult to provide intensive, detailed work with very many clients, due to time constraints. It meant that, on occasions, work was reactionary, rather than pro-active. We received many referrals but could not offer as much support as we would have liked.
6. Project setting – remote locations

Projects based in remote locations faced particular challenges. In some cases there was no accommodation available for the project worker and/or project activities. Staff recruitment was more difficult given a limited pool of local applicants and the need for highly skilled staff and the isolation of the role. Basic infrastructure taken for granted in other parts of the country such as telephone and internet access were not always available or reliable. Other services were often not available and social problems are entrenched.

Example 38: Comments from projects regarding the challenges facing projects working in remote locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The remote location/isolation of [the project] has severely hindered the construction and establishment of the new family centre, due to lack of tradespersons; cost is very high to freight items needed. Problems with the contracted building company have been numerous. Ability to get basic utilities connected has been a huge issue. Isolated location was difficult - no other services nearby.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn't work as well as hoped: recruitment of people with the right skill sets in remote communities or willing to live in remote communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 Learnings from projects

10.1 Summary of Learnings

This chapter presents feedback from projects about what advice they would give others undertaking a similar project. Feedback from projects confirmed the importance of the following factors:

- Connections with the community
- The right people
- The influence of the auspice agency
- Working in partnership
- A staged approach
- Supporting participation by identifying and addressing potential barriers
- Good administrative systems
- Action research
- Flexibility and openness to change
- Balancing flexibility and consistency
- Taking a comprehensive and holistic approach
- Long term approach needed
- Maintaining the integrity of tested programs

The findings of this study of the Stronger Families Fund are summarised in the following section of the chapter. The lessons learnt are discussed with reference to implications for:

1. the selection of projects,
2. the management of initiatives or clusters of programs; and
3. the management and implementation of projects.
10.2 Advice from the projects

In the final evaluation questionnaire SFF projects were asked what advice they would give others undertaking a similar project. Feedback from projects is presented in this section under the headings of: Connections with the community, the right people, the influence of the auspice agency, working in partnership, a staged approach, flexibility and adaptability, supporting participation, good administrative systems, action research, clarity and openness to change, a comprehensive and holistic approach, maintaining the integrity of packaged programs and long-term time frame

Connections with the community

Community members were involved in project planning, implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of projects to varying degrees. The following comments from projects clearly show that this participation was valued and considered essential to achieving outcomes by many projects.

Example 39: Feedback from projects about community consultation and participation

Consult extensively with the community.

Join community committees. Participate yourself. Open to suggestions from within the community. Do not impose on them from without.

Be aware of your target group and their needs.

Network and be active in the community

We have learnt more about what the community needs/wants and in taking this approach we have made the program successful by providing them with a service that they want rather than what they think they want.

You can’t survive without volunteers and community participation - build on it

Example 40: Feedback from projects about community participation in project management

The program should be client focused and client directed, through a steering committee or similar group, made up of clients. It should build community capacity and create collaborative partnerships.

Resident participation, consultation and initiative is crucial to success. Workers, volunteers, students may have great ideas which won't work unless they are understood and embraced by residents themselves. The key role of workers is to support the residents to drive their own initiatives in order to achieve the key objectives of this program.

Establish a strong advisory committee with a broad range of skills

Active Steering Committee.
Example 41: Feedback from projects about volunteers

The support of community and local services is vital to success.
Document your stories to share with the community through various mediums. Engage volunteers.

Working in partnership

Working in partnership with other agencies, and the community, resulted in more inclusive projects that benefited from the collective knowledge, experience and resources of all partners. Projects provided the following feedback about working in partnership.

Example 42: Feedback from projects about working in partnership

Target organisations that are going to benefit from what you want to achieve so as the partnerships are of equal value.

Written service agreements with partnering agencies from its commencement.

Collaboration at all levels expands the possibilities. Workers particularly have found the potential for greater things when working closely with others on joint initiatives. This has positive ‘spin-offs’ in a number of directions including: a diverse range of input and ideas into projects, the sharing of specific roles and tasks, the greater possibility for sustainability of the project, acknowledgment and use of particular expertise, residents' exposure to a range of resources and potential support.

Strong networks.

Attend interagency type gatherings.

Influence of the auspice agency

Auspice agencies contributed significant financial and in kind resources to SFF projects.

Example 43: Feedback from a project about the auspice agency

Strong, supportive auspice organisation

The right people

 Appropriately skilled project workers were crucial to the success of projects. Difficulties recruiting and / or retaining skilled staff were common reasons for delays in project implementation.

Example 44: Feedback from projects about ‘the right people’

Where there is a high demand for a service, it is important to have full time, highly skilled staff. It is important to have a positive working relationship with clients. Although we had a highly experienced staff, we were only funded for these on a part time basis.

Recruit and train better - We need long lasting durable employees who can persuade families to understand their own situations and be empowered through new understanding to make changes. Get a good staff base.
Example 44 cont.: Feedback from projects about ‘the right people’

Employ Aboriginal staff

Staff - the selection process is a high priority in order to have a supportive united team. The Program's effectiveness is the product of the passion and commitment of the staff involved their ability to work cooperatively as a team in conjunction with the strategies employed.

It is important to have clear policies and handover time planned when staff leave the workplace.

A staged approach

SFF projects were complex and multifaceted and family and community strengthening work is often challenging. The experience of projects on the ground was that it was important to take small steps and to do things well.

Example 45: Feedback from projects about taking a staged approach

Having a strategic plan with clear goals and objectives is extremely important. Don’t start too big. Small steps, giving enough time to complete tasks properly is better than trying to spread too thin by achieving everything at once!

Time, take your time, don’t rush it, take the time to talk with the community. Celebrate/recognise the small achievements and keep expectations realistic.

Create achievable objectives and goals- you can’t save the world. Allow time for the community to build trust. It takes time to build a repour with community and for them to develop a sense of ownership of the project - once this happens you will start to see results.

Clear target group and objectives

Supporting participation – identifying and addressing potential barriers

Projects used a variety of strategies to encourage participation and to address barriers to participation. Targeted engagement strategies were important for reaching isolated families and individuals. Increasing social participation was an important early step in building stronger families and communities.

Example 46: Feedback from projects about identifying and addressing barriers to participation

Go to the community members, don’t expect them to come to you. Provide free activities. Provide free childcare so as not to further disadvantage disadvantaged families

Food to share!

Social connection becomes a springboard for change. Once families experience feeling safe, connected and have a sense of belonging to a community it does have a ripple effect in their lives. Some of these noted changes are: an increase in self-confidence, ability to take up leadership & initiative in personal endeavours as well as program participation, emerging friendships & networks outside of program time, a greater bonding of family members, support & energy to initiate major change in their lives.
**Good administrative systems**

SFF projects provided quarterly reports to FaCS outlining progress against a set of standard performance indicators that were used for all Strategy projects. In addition SFF projects developed individually tailored action research benchmarks and performance indicators. Good data management systems helped to reduce the workload associated with project monitoring and accountability.

**Example 47: Feedback from projects about administrative systems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set up systems better. Establish a better data base</td>
<td>Identify a better accounting/banking/credit union relationship. Ensure systems are durable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to streamline documentation and admin tasks like reporting and filing.</td>
<td>It is important to have reporting requirements standardised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action research**

Participatory action research was a feature of SFF projects. As commented on in the following quotes, action research enabled projects to broaden their understanding of what works and why, and to look for a new approach when needed.

**Example 48: Feedback from projects about action research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Action research</td>
<td>Plan, act and review Plan, act and review. This constantly needs to happen to lessen the possibility of only doing more of the same, not getting stuck and finding out what works and what doesn't.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need to work within an action research framework</td>
<td>where we continually evaluate the processes employed and the Program's effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Flexibility and openness to change**

A degree of flexibility and openness to change supported projects to apply lessons learnt through action research and meant that participants had genuine opportunities to influence the implementation of projects.

**Example 49: Feedback from projects about flexibility and openness to change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness to trying innovative and creative ideas and approaches in order to improve the program.</td>
<td>Flexible approach to working with young people. The Program's strategies need to be flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the young people in the Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The freedom to explore different options and go with the community has been much appreciated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Balancing consistency and adaptability

One project commented on the value of consistency, as well as adaptability. Too much change, too fast can be counterproductive.

Example 50: Feedback from a project about balancing consistency and transparency

Balancing consistency with new strategies and a variety of approaches. Consistency in some things (such as continuing the Homework Club, encouraging resident participation) provides trust, safety and a sense of movement forward. The 'flip-side' of this consistency is also the ability to ask the hard questions when things aren’t working as well as we would like, when the same concerns are raised, when residents don’t turn up etc. This may require us to risk doing something else or something different.

Taking a comprehensive and holistic approach

A comprehensive and holistic approach could be considered contradictory to the advice about having clear and contained project objectives. However, other information from project reports supports the observation that projects needed to support engagement by addressing the issues that were priorities for participants prior to focusing on prevention and early intervention.

Example 51: Feedback from projects about taking a comprehensive and holistic approach

An holistic approach to young people

The Program needs to be able to address the many issues or crisis situations that occur in the young person’s life. Young people are more likely to remain focused on their education and motivated when they have a clear career goal. Change happens in the context of relationships and this often requires a long term commitment to the youth in the Program - recognise the need to stay connected to the young person even during difficult episodes of their lives that may temporarily distract them from their schooling. High support needs of the disconnected youth involved - recognise that there are a number of issues that impact on the young person’s ability to stay connected or engaged.

Long term approach needed

One project identified the need for a long term approach to working with young people. Other SFF projects, and other studies done as part of the national evaluation, have also stressed the need for a long term approach to building family and community strength in disadvantaged communities with complex social and economic issues.

Example 52: Feedback from a project about the need for a long term approach

Long term funding. - To be effective, any intervention in a young person’s life needs to be a long term commitment on our part.
Maintaining the integrity of tested programs

The project that adopted this pre-packaged program commented on the importance of maintaining the integrity of the program.

Example 53: Feedback from a project about maintaining the integrity of tested programs

[The program] is a very worthwhile project with excellent outcomes, proven in many countries all over the world. [The program] has many components (evaluation, implementation, training, follow-up and others) and program integrity must be maintained. When [the program] is run as [the program] should be run another group or community that would undertake a project something like this one will get positive, consistent & evaluated results.

10.3 Lessons Learnt

Lessons learnt are presented in terms of implications for:

1. The selection of projects
2. The management of clusters of projects
3. The management and implementation of projects

1. Implications for project selection

Proposal approval process

To maintain relationships and momentum developed during the development of project proposals a timely project approval process is important.

Community participation

Participatory planning processes need to be suited to participants, whether organisations or members of the community, taking into account the capacity of participants and the possible need for upstream capacity building as well as time and resources available.

Sometimes community members need support to develop and apply skills that enable higher levels of participation. Similarly, organisations may need to develop their capacity to adopt participatory planning and project management processes.

Strategy support

Support provided by FaCS during the development of proposals assisted the coordination of proposal development in an area and supported projects to develop partnerships. This support enabled communities in need to develop and submit proposals and reduced the risk of Strategy funding increasing disparities between communities.
**Influence of the auspice agency**

Characteristics of the auspice agency, including its history, values and links to other services and the community could help or hinder community engagement. Auspice agencies often provided significant financial and/or non-financial support to projects.

There are advantages, and disadvantages associated with both large and small auspice organisations. Working in partnership helped to mediate the risks associated with both large and small organisations. Small agencies could draw on the resources and capacity of other partners and partnerships could assist larger organisations to engage local communities.

**2. Implications for managing clusters of projects**

**Clarity about future funding**

Clear and consistent messages about future funding are essential.

**Strategy support**

The tailored and flexible support provided to individual projects, by both SFLEx researchers and FaCS Officers was valued and assisted projects to identify and utilise existing knowledge and to apply action research.

More timely synthesis and dissemination of learnings from SFF projects, during implementation, would have been valuable.

Longer term follow up of project participants is needed to assess the impact of early intervention and community capacity building. Further follow-up and an analysis of the outcomes of SFF projects once they have all been completed is required. An analysis along the lines of the analysis undertaken for the Early Intervention initiative projects to draw out the characteristics of more successful projects needs to be done to fully realise the potential to learn from the experience of SFF projects.

**Project duration**

Time mattered – when the length of a project was reduced (generally because of the time taken to approve projects) it was often not possible to condense project activities into a shorter timeframe because of the time needed to develop trusting relationships.

**Flexibility**

Flexibility, to expand or reduce the target group, and to change activities in response to changing circumstances, was important in both making the most of opportunities (for example, interest from fathers) and in building trust by responding to identified community needs (for example, including all children not just younger children).

Flexibility in project planning and implementation supported the development of local solutions.
**Community capacity – use it or lose it**

To realise the longer-term benefits of increases in capacity, organisations and communities need opportunities to apply and continue developing capacity. Early intervention does not preclude the need for additional supports at times of crisis or transition.

**Managing risks associated with innovation, uncertainty and vulnerability**

In a discussion of evaluating innovation, it was suggested that this needs to be done in a way that recognizes the differences to evaluating known processes.

However, in the area of strengthening families and communities, this needs to be done in a way that recognizes that having projects fail can further demoralize already fragile communities and even harm vulnerable families.

This requires active management to identify early warnings of difficulties and provide additional support to address them.

It also requires projects to have modest and achievable stated objectives. Many projects, when asked what advice they would give to others undertaking a similar project referred to the need to be realistic in their ambitions.

**3. Implications for the management and implementation of projects**

**Community participation**

Projects often reported that supporting participation took longer than anticipated, particularly when building new relationships from scratch.

Particular attention needs to be paid to developing strategies to encourage participation where there are divisions in the community.

Upstream capacity building may be required to support community participation in the management of projects.

**Developing partnerships**

Projects should systematically consider who they need to develop relationships with, and to pay particular attention to key stakeholders where their support will be needed to successfully implement the project.

It was also important to engage key stakeholders in partnerships at an early stage of the development of project proposals, there is evidence from SFF projects that key stakeholders, when not included in the development of proposals could undermine the progress of the project during implementation.

On the other hand it was also important to be mindful of the capacity and competing demands on partners, some partnering agencies preferred to be consulted at key points rather than commit to regular meetings.
Working in partnership facilitated the development of a shared understanding of community strengths, weaknesses and priorities. Differences in the aims, approaches, and values of agencies can impede the development of partnerships. Openly addressing these differences, developing trust, a shared sense of purpose and an appreciation of alternative perspectives supported collaboration.

Working in partnership brought new perspectives and ideas and assisted projects to leverage additional resources. Collaborative work also requires resources. Brokerage funding (even very small amounts) supported partnerships in one project by enabling partnering agencies to develop and implement joint activities.

**The right people**

Skilled staff was important in achieving project outcomes and difficulties recruiting staff delayed many projects. Recruitment strategies are needed to ensure that projects attract appropriately skilled staff in a timely way.

Project workers new to community building and the strengths based approach of the Strategy will need training and additional support.

It was important that projects don’t become too dependent on an individual – some projects experienced significant delays and setbacks when there were changes in project staff.

**Addressing barriers to achieving planned outcomes**

Transport and childcare were important potential barriers to participation. Childcare needs to be quality care preferably provided on-site.

**Balance resources for crisis responses and prevention and early intervention**

Need to appropriately balance early intervention and prevention with crisis responses. There is potential for conflict between agencies if there are perceived disparities between community needs and resource allocation – if early intervention is not valued in comparison to crisis response services.

**Building community capacity**

Attention should be paid during project planning, to the need to develop upstream capacity prior to implementing projects, and also during the implementation of projects. It should not be assumed that this capacity already exists.

Professional and organisational development was important where early intervention and prevention, strengths based approaches, or capacity building was a new approach for project workers and/or agencies.

As different types of capital interact, multi strategic approaches that identify and address the need to develop different types of capital simultaneously may amplify and increase the sustainability of increases in capacity.
Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004

Some communities need to develop services

In areas where there was a lack of services, improved coordination and integration was an unrealistic aim. Very remote and disadvantaged communities with high needs for specialised services were often least able to access them. Developing secondary consultation processes with trusted experts who understand local conditions may help to fill gaps in available services.

In other communities the complementary roles of different services and referral processes need to be coordinated and integrated as far as possible

Service providers need to be aware of the limits of their expertise, how to access specialised advice and how to support the referral process – some families may need assistance to engage with another service.

Projects should consider strategies to actively monitor and if needed to manage demand, both within the project activities and demand generated for other services.

Interactions between SFF projects and other activities undertaken prior to or concurrently:

It is important to be aware of the overall context in which agencies are working, and any implications for the capacity of organisations to participate in multiple projects.

The flexibility of SFF projects facilitated effective integration with concurrent projects. Concurrent projects may add value to SFF projects where they share strategic aims and also generate additional work in terms of coordination of activities for SFF projects.

10.4 Conclusion

The Strategy was an innovative approach to strengthening families and communities that had a strong emphasis on processes and principles, rather than prescribed activities or specific pre-defined outcomes. The Stronger Families Fund projects provided communities with opportunities and resources to build human, organisational, social and economic capacity where it was needed and to apply forms of capital available in the community to make the most of opportunities and address challenges.
11 References


SuccessWorks (in collaboration with the Centre for Health Equity, Training, Research and Evaluation (CHETRE) at the University of New South Wales and the Centre for Health Outcomes and Innovations Research (CHOIR) at the University of Western Sydney). (2001). *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: Supporting Material for the Evaluation Framework*. Canberra: Department of Family and Community Services.

Appendix 1 – Information about the Stronger Families Fund

STRONGER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGY - STRONGER FAMILIES FUND INITIATIVE

Implementation 1 January 2001

What's New

A Stronger Families Fund will be established, to encourage communities to develop new and better ways to strengthen families with an emphasis on early childhood and parenting. Projects will be established in a significant number of communities across Australia. These projects will help build knowledge about how communities can develop early intervention and prevention approaches to ensure they work to best effect.

Background

In many communities, services are fragmented. They may be provided in a way that does not meet families' needs, or they may not exist. The provision of funds to coordinate effort in local communities across community services, education, health and other sectors and across various government initiatives will strengthen both families and communities. Funds could be used for salaries of local workers, research and administrative support, and small local projects.

Neighbourhoods and communities will identify pressing issues for families in their local area and develop local solutions that might cross a range of areas, for example, parenting, family relationships, education, health, crime, problem gambling and suicide prevention. Projects will focus on prevention and early intervention with a particular emphasis on early childhood and parenting.

Community, government and business partners will work together at the local level to more effectively support and assist families. They will primarily focus on making better use of existing infrastructure and networks and be able to draw on the Stronger Families Fund to identify and fill gaps in support to families.

Projects will build on existing infrastructure such as health and childcare centres, schools, playgroups, workplaces, churches, sporting and recreational clubs. Supporting partnerships between local residents, volunteers and paid professionals from business, government and non-government organisations will be an integral part of this approach.

All projects supported by the Fund will be evaluated so as to develop a robust body of knowledge on the effectiveness of early intervention and prevention in the families arena. There has been little of this research undertaken in Australia to date. To assist in the evaluations and in the dissemination of their findings, the Fund will establish a National Clearing House.

Funding: $40 million over four years

(Downloaded from FaCS website 16.5.05)
## Appendix 2 - Details of SFF projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State / Territory</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>Auspice Agency:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>$1,447,987</td>
<td>Cape York Family Income Management Trials</td>
<td>Aurukun Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>$264,408</td>
<td>Community Development working in Families</td>
<td>Ngarkte Mikwenhe Community Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>Ngepan Patha Centre</td>
<td>Ngepan Patha Women's Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>$157,141</td>
<td>Southside Good Beginnings Project</td>
<td>Southside Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>$136,695</td>
<td>West Belconnen Good Beginnings Project</td>
<td>Belconnen Community Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$579,000</td>
<td>Illawarra Family and Community Development Partnership</td>
<td>Barnados South Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$393,000</td>
<td>Minto Under 12's Proposal</td>
<td>Uniting Care Burnside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$555,000</td>
<td>Red Ochre Link</td>
<td>Dubbo Aboriginal Land Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
<td>Koori Link</td>
<td>Mission Australia – (changed auspice from Boree Aboriginal Cooperation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$342,150</td>
<td>Ashmont Community Resource Centre</td>
<td>Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$276,300</td>
<td>Indigenous HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Pre-school Youngsters)</td>
<td>The Aboriginal Education Program, UNSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$262,000</td>
<td>Bowraville Growing Community</td>
<td>Mimi Mothers Aboriginal Corporation Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$253,000</td>
<td>Moree Family Support Stronger Families Fund Project</td>
<td>Moree Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$228,750</td>
<td>Tilligerry Family Network</td>
<td>Port Stephens Family Support Service Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$224,645</td>
<td>Connecting Families, Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>Wagga Wagga City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$188,000</td>
<td>Boggabilla and Toomelah Community Link Information and Access Centre Coordinator</td>
<td>Moree Plains Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$161,400</td>
<td>Gwabegar &amp; Pilliga Community Link Coordinator</td>
<td>Gwabegar &amp; District Team Leaders Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
<td>Wellington Community Net-Workers.</td>
<td>Barnardos Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$110,150</td>
<td>D.A.L.E Young Mothers Project</td>
<td>Dale Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>$470,140</td>
<td>Building Stronger Families and Communities in the Daly/Cox – Finniss Region</td>
<td>Northern Territory Christian Schools Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>$332,000</td>
<td>Parents with a Mental Illness</td>
<td>T.E.A.M Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>$95,728</td>
<td>Parent Infant Connection Service Project</td>
<td>Palmerston YMCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$937,132</td>
<td>Wide Bay-Burnett Indigenous Stronger Families Project</td>
<td>Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$727,500</td>
<td>Integrated Approach to Family Capacity Building</td>
<td>Apunipima Cape York Health Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$634,912</td>
<td>Family Outreach Project (FACET)</td>
<td>Inala Community House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State / Territory</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Auspice Agency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 524,320</td>
<td>Young Family Support Project</td>
<td>Area Central &amp; Northern Queensland Centrelink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 483,120</td>
<td>The Gold Coast School and Communities Families Project</td>
<td>Lifeline Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 420,650</td>
<td>Beenleigh Families’ Information Centre</td>
<td>Lutheran Community Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 172,761</td>
<td>The Strengthening Families Project</td>
<td>Redland Community Centre Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 566,251</td>
<td>Pathways for Families</td>
<td>City of Onkaparinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 500,816</td>
<td>Connecting Parents</td>
<td>City of Marion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$ 312,845</td>
<td>Enfield Early Learning Service (EELS)</td>
<td>Enfield Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>$ 764,721</td>
<td>Bright Start</td>
<td>UnitingCare Wesley Port Pirie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>$ 345,764</td>
<td>Connecting the Community</td>
<td>Kingston City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>$ 318,000</td>
<td>The Platforms Strategy</td>
<td>Murdoch Children's Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>$ 286,576</td>
<td>Creating Capable Communities</td>
<td>Southern Family Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>$ 145,616</td>
<td>Young children and families meet the service system</td>
<td>City of Wodonga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$1,041,250</td>
<td>Strengthening Families across the Ngaanyatjarra Lands</td>
<td>Ngaanyatjarra Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 564,610</td>
<td>Building Strong and Healthy Families in Derby</td>
<td>Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 407,845</td>
<td>Quality Relationships Alliance</td>
<td>City of Mandurah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 391,850</td>
<td>Supporting children and Families where one or both parents have a mental illness</td>
<td>Daughters of Charity Services WA (Ltd) - Ruah Inreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 306,443</td>
<td>Building Community in Mandurah</td>
<td>City of Mandurah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 301,830</td>
<td>Smart Start</td>
<td>Shire of Tambellup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 202,400</td>
<td>Strengthening Families in Wiluna and the Western Desert</td>
<td>Nganganganwili Aboriginal Community Controlled Health and Medical Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 200,460</td>
<td>Strengthening Mining Families in the Eastern Goldfields</td>
<td>Eastern Goldfields Medical Division of General Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 81,159</td>
<td>Mid West Parent Support Project (Phase 2) (Phase 1 funded under early Intervention)</td>
<td>Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$ 45,165</td>
<td>Young Mum’s Support Project (Phase 2) (Phase 1 funded under early Intervention)</td>
<td>Anglicare WA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 – Tables summarising descriptive data and evaluation questionnaire responses

Table 18: Summary of SFF funding levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total SFF project funding</th>
<th>Number of projects</th>
<th>Minimum project funding</th>
<th>Maximum project funding</th>
<th>Average. funding per project</th>
<th>Median funding per project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$18,157,874</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>$45,165</td>
<td>$1,447,987</td>
<td>$370,569</td>
<td>$306,443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Number of SFF projects by funding range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding range ($)</th>
<th>Less than 100,000</th>
<th>100,000 – 200,000</th>
<th>200,000 – 300,000</th>
<th>300,000 - 400,000</th>
<th>400,000 - 500,000</th>
<th>500,000 - 600,000</th>
<th>600,000 - 1,000,000</th>
<th>More than 1,000,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Projects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Projects</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Sources of additional funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of additional funding</th>
<th>SFF projects</th>
<th>Other projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State or Territory Government</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Government</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-Government organisation or community group</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government or Shire Council</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self funding</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Land Council or other Indigenous community organisations</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last column in the table refers to the funding distributed under the seven linked community-based initiatives of the Strategy.

Table 21: Distribution of SFF projects and funding by State and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State or Territory</th>
<th>Number of SFF projects</th>
<th>Mean $ per project</th>
<th>% of all SFF projects</th>
<th>SFF Funding</th>
<th>% of SFF funding</th>
<th>% of Strategy funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$654,132</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$1,962,395</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$146,918</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$293,836</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$276,171</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>$3,866,395</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$299,289</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$897,868</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$557,199</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>$3,900,395</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$536,158</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$2,144,633</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$226,680</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$453,359</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$273,989</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$1,095,956</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$354,304</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$3,543,037</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>$370,569</td>
<td></td>
<td>$18,157,874</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Table 22: Anticipated completion dates of SFF projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Jan 04 to June 04</th>
<th>July 04 to Dec 04</th>
<th>Jan 05 to June 05</th>
<th>July 05 to Dec 05</th>
<th>Jan 06 to June 06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Projects</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Projects</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 23: Activities that provided services directly to participating families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities that provided services directly to participating families</th>
<th>Major activity SFF</th>
<th>Major activity Other</th>
<th>Major or Minor activity SFF</th>
<th>Major or Minor Activity Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly supporting families to develop healthy relationships – for example, supported playgroups</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring or role modelling</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing assistance to allow people to participate in other activities – e.g. providing transport or childcare</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing group parenting programs</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling and other practical assistance, eg youth bush camps, life skills courses</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case management</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 24: Activities that supported communities and facilitated community capacity building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities that supported communities and facilitated community capacity building</th>
<th>Major activity SFF</th>
<th>Major activity Other</th>
<th>Major or Minor activity SFF</th>
<th>Major or Minor Activity Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community consultation</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing community members together – e.g. women’s centres</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating or running a significant community or cultural event</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills development training for members of the community</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 25: Activities that developed relationships amongst service providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities that developed relationships amongst service providers</th>
<th>Major activity SFF</th>
<th>Major activity Other</th>
<th>Major or Minor activity SFF</th>
<th>Major or Minor Activity Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing and enhancing networks and linkages, for example, partnerships between services or organisations, referring or linking clients to other services.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaking systematic action research</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/training of service providers outside the project</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 26: Projects developing resources to support families, communities and agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources developed to support families, communities and agencies</th>
<th>SFF</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>SFF</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing and distributing facilities or resources – e.g. playground equipment, refurbishing a community centre, fliers, posters, newsletters, a Web site, toolkits and manuals.</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 27: Types of agreements with partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of arrangements with partners</th>
<th>SFF Projects</th>
<th>Other Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal, legally binding agreements</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-formal written agreements</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal working relationships with partners</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 28: Importance of partnerships to SFF projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of partners to the project</th>
<th>SFF projects</th>
<th>Other projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 29: Proportion of partnerships developed or expanded through SFF project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were any of the partnerships formed before the project started?</th>
<th>SFF projects</th>
<th>Other projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All were formed before</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most were formed before</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some were formed before</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None were formed before</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30: Likelihood of new partnerships continuing after the Strategy funding period is complete

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will any of the new partnerships continue after the current Strategy funding period is completed?</th>
<th>SFF projects</th>
<th>Other projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All are likely to continue</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most are likely to continue</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some are likely to continue</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None are likely to continue</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Activities with partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities with Partners</th>
<th>SFF</th>
<th>Other projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking, exchanging or providing staff, knowledge, experience or expertise to each other</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaking project activities together (either as a part of the project or in conjunction with the project)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring participants between the partners for services or activities</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying needs and opportunities within the local community</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying local community strengths or advantages that could be used</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory decision making</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing funding submissions</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 32: Partnerships – types of partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Partners</th>
<th>SFF</th>
<th>Other projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community group</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State government</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous organisation</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government or shire council</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth government</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4 – Articles published in the SFLEx Bulletin

Table 33: Articles published in the Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action research / evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Why use action research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing an action research evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action research and better outcomes for community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But how can you prove it? Issues of rigour in action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing participatory action research in community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The elephant and action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action research, families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How many ways to evaluate a workshop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gathering information to inform action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scrap booking: creative documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using photography as a tool in action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An ocean of stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing participatory evaluation with community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being an insider and/or outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early intervention</strong></td>
<td>The benefits of early intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Including children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nice noise – parent education and playgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early intervention, early childhood intervention and service delivery - exploring the connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family-centred practice: An evaluation of an early childhood intervention service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Families</strong></td>
<td>Working with families to empower families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community capacity building</strong></td>
<td>Community capacity building explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on being a community representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Towards building capacity and sustainable communities: Bonding, bridging and linking with social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learnings from the Shared Action Project: How to build sustainability into community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building stronger communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building community participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The challenge of working collaboratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A ‘natural’ affiliation in community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The influence of location on community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learnings from the Shared Action project: How to build sustainability into community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability of community practice with early years projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 34 cont.: Articles published in the Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence based policy and practice</th>
<th>Evidence-based practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early intervention and prevention: The evidence base underpinning family and community policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Working in and with Indigenous communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enough talking – more walking – achieving deadly outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34: Articles making available evidence from projects published in the Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy and Project updates</th>
<th>The Stronger Families Fund: from vision to methodology to practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: The second phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: Communities for Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet the Stronger Families Fund projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introducing new Stronger families Fund projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stronger Families Fund projects revisited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five bags thumping: impressions of first project visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stronger Families Fund Projects – The use of action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stronger Families Fund Projects – A second look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stronger Families Fund Projects – Old hands!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stronger Families Fund longest running projects reflect on their progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learnings from projects</th>
<th>One size doesn’t fit all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early intervention in Wiluna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This used to be my playground – The Minto Under 12’s project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating capable communities – A commitment to partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking a whole of community approach and keeping good things going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents and Kids Together: Supporting families early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking realities…young parenting: A peer education program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5 - Papers produced as part of the national evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004

Issues papers

Partnerships and Networks

Community Capacity Building

Early Intervention – particularly in Early Childhood

Sustainability and Legacy

Economic and Social Participation

Service Integration and Coordination

Evidence Based Policy and Practice

Case Studies

Mandurah Targeted Region

Gillies Plains Community Garden

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Initiatives

Stronger Families Fund Initiative

Sustainability of projects

Lessons Learnt about Strengthening Indigenous Families and Communities: What’s Working and What’s Not?

Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative

Qualitative Cost Benefit Analysis

Final Report

Evaluation of the SFCS 2000-2004 Final Report