



Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership Evaluation

Paul Ramsay Foundation

*FINAL REPORT - Emerging evidence of sustainable
change*

November 2025



Acknowledgements



We also acknowledge the talent and artistry of Emma Walke, who designed the artwork for our acknowledgment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The design shows a story of connection to country and people, representing the breadth of work we do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. The colours represent the land, and the lines in between represent the water that connects us all.

This work was completed with the assistance of Kamila Davidson in the strategy and learning section of the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, as well as other members of the backbone team.

We would like to thank the many key informants from the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership Backbone team, and from across the system. We thank them for their time and insights and trust that their views are adequately represented in this report.

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Abbreviations, acronyms and common terms

AFWI	Alberta Family Wellness Initiative's
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EWOT	Enabling Workforces and Organisations Toolkit
IDAC	Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children
ISSR	Institute for Social Science Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCB	Organisational citizenship behaviour
PLACE	Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment
PRF	Paul Ramsay Foundation
PQKF	Putting Queensland Kids First plan
UQ's QBI	The University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute
QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
TQKP	Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership
TFFF	Tim Fairfax Family Foundation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UQ	The University of Queensland



Summary

A graphic snapshot of the project and the Executive Summary.



Key findings and implications snapshot

Leaders and change agents are more connected and are collaborating better



Partnership survey

86% (n=37) said TQKP helped foster new connections
88% (n=38) said TQKP had exposed them to new sectors



Speeding up trust building for faster collaboration



Boosting the speed, quality, scale and reach of work happening in the system

From training to practice: Evidence of system embedding



Strong uptake of Brain Builders training

Improved brain development knowledge and confidence to apply it

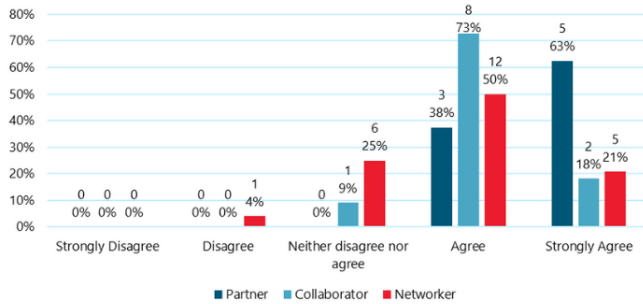


Brain Builders embedded in pre-service training & professional development



Frameworks, tools and approaches are being shared and used

People feel their engagement with TQKP is worth the time and effort



"I really love the idea that there is an organisation that's attempting to address children specifically in Qld because I think it's really needed." - decision maker

"It's a network. It's not just what I get out of it, it's what I'm able to give back to it and it's creating that shared ownership approach that I think they've done really, really well." – partner, interview

Key considerations for the future

- Work with partners to capture data on how aspects of TQKP's work reach and create outcomes for children, youth and families
- Support those working in a systems way to clearly and concisely communicate about systems ways of working and their value
- Continue collaborations to build more holistic datasets that help tell the story about Queensland's areas of need and support more informed decision making
- Strong strategy needed to get the required government engagement to drive shifts in policy and investment
- A strong rationale for how TQKP uses and directs funding is needed
- Continuous communication of progress towards TQKP's intended outcomes
- There's a need for considered and data driven decision making around balancing universal offerings with addressing targeted needs
- Continue to refine communications about the type of organisation TQKP is and its role in the system

Executive Summary

The Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership

The Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) is an intermediary and coalition of leaders, organisations, practitioners and academics from across Queensland who work with the shared purpose of improving the conditions for children and young people to thrive. TQKP exists to drive systems change, and to address key systemic barriers – political, structural, cultural and operational – to improving child wellbeing.

TQKP was established in 2020, auspiced by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People (ARACY). It is led and facilitated by a small Backbone team and governed by a Leadership Table (transitioning to an intergenerational Stewardship Table in Phase 3), with members from some of TQKP's funding bodies, academic experts and non-profit and service provision organisations from diverse sectors aligned with child and youth wellbeing. This work is funded by a group of philanthropies and also receives funding from Queensland collaborators.

TQKP is planned and implemented in phases, each with its own strategy and goals. **This evaluation focusses on Phase 2** but acknowledges the work that has already progressed in Phase 3.

TQKP's work in Phase 2 was oriented around 6 'systems levers' and 8 'threads', used as key frameworks to orient planning and co-design of TQKP's Initiatives and actions. Each Initiative is designed to 'pull' one or more of the levers, and to use the threads to 'weave' systems together¹. These are complemented by other key frameworks and models, including ARACY's Nest Framework², and the Palix/Alberta Family Wellness Initiative's (AFWI) 'Resilience Scale'.

¹ Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (2024) [Queensland Place Based Rivermap](#). TQKP [website]

² Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. [What's in The Nest?](#) ARACY [website]

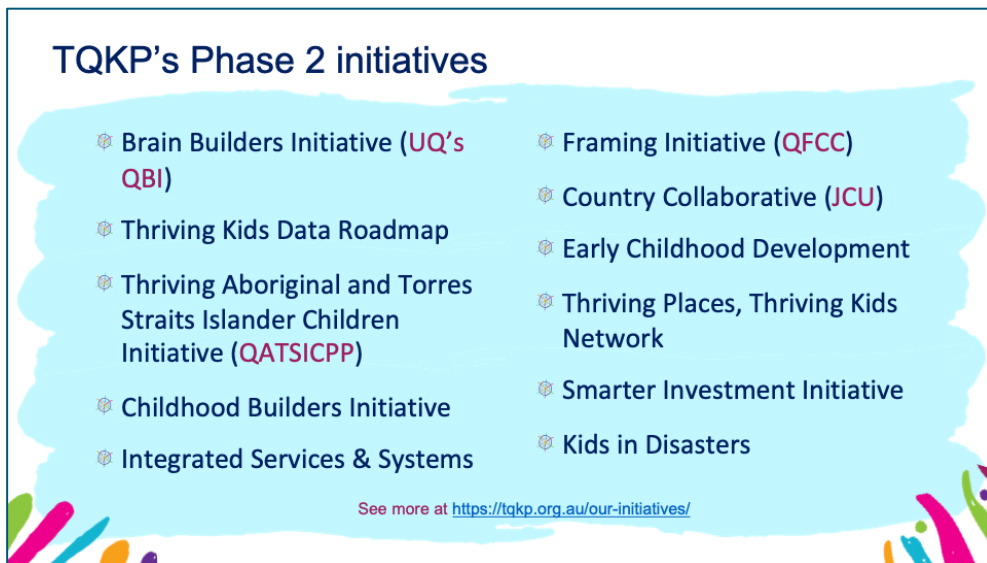
Figure 1 TQKP Systems Levers and threads



Source: TQKP Queensland Place-based Rivermap

There were 10 Initiatives identified early in Phase 2 of TQKP. Thriving Kids in Disasters Initiative was initiated in late 2023 (see Figure 2). The Thriving Kids Data Roadmap has since evolved into other work on data and evidence under other Initiatives and activities.

Figure 2 Phase 2 Initiatives



Source: TQKP. 2024. 'Partnering for childhood building.' Presentation to Queensland Family and Child Commission, Dec 2024.

What we did

ARTD was commissioned by the Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF) to evaluate TQKP Phase 2 between July 2022 and June 2025.

Phase 2 (July 2022 to June 2025) focussed on 'Activating the partnership'³, with key objectives focussed on:

- improving the connectivity and capabilities of leaders to steward systems
- improving the connectivity and capabilities of workforces, organisations, caregivers and communities to contribute to child and adolescent development
- improving systems strategies that contribute to child and adolescent development
- building maturity to enable TQKP to accelerate and augment efforts to impact population level outcomes from 2025 onwards.

[The first report](#) covered the period January 2024 to June 2024 and focussed on how TQKP was engaging the system and improving evidence.

The Stage 2 evaluation (this report) covers July 2024 to October 2025, and aims to answer the following key evaluation question and sub questions:

Key evaluation questions:

Overall, what evidence is emerging that organisations and parts of the system will be enabled to make sustainable changes for children, youth and families?

- What kinds of changes are the initiatives producing within which parts of the system?
- What are the barriers and facilitators for TQKP's program of work to achieving systems change?

The focus of this evaluation report is to answer the evaluation questions, and to do so concisely. TQKP's work is broad, at a systems-level and involves both formal Initiatives and informal relationship building and information sharing. The purpose of this evaluation is not to capture it all, but to identify the elements from TQKP's Phase 2 work that decision makers, partners and staff perceive to have the most visible and sustainable outcomes, and to identify the barriers and enablers that can help to guide the strategy and work in Phase 3.

We took a mixed methods approach, drawing on the methods in Figure 3.

³ Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership. 2025. [2025-2030 Impact Strategy](#). TKQP [website]

Figure 3 Evaluation methods

Interviews with decision makers	Interviews with partners	Backbone Team focus groups
N=8	N=19	N=12
Partnership survey	Backbone team survey	
N=53	N=4	
Review of key data and documents		
Incl. Emerging Minds' Brain Builders Module 24 Month report; Report to PRF 2025; EWOT Evaluation Report		
Sensemaking workshop		
N=11 (8 Backbone team members and 3 funder representatives)		



Alongside thematic analysis of qualitative data, synthesis was supported by a rubric developed by ARTD and TQKP to support an understanding of TQKP’s systems goals, and their degree of maturity. These were based around TQKP’s system levers (Figure 1), which are highlighted in the full rubric (Appendix 1), and in the findings throughout this report.

Given TQKP is a systems change initiative and that systems are complex and constantly changing, the purpose of the rubric (Table 2) is not to show a linear progression, but rather to provide a snapshot of where the system is at in terms of these goals at the present moment.

What we found

Phase 2 has successfully set the conditions to progress in Phase 3 to begin impacting outcomes for children, youth and families. This includes the communication channels, connections and platforms for collaboration, as well as the knowledge and capabilities and shared language around systems change and child development. This provides a strong base to progress from what the literature on intermediaries describes as ‘the Emerging Phase’ to the ‘Forming Phase’ in which *“impact happens more consistently as infrastructure,*



collaboration and coordination accelerate progress"⁴. This is in alignment with TQKP's Impact Strategy, which identifies Phase 2 (2022-2025) as the period of activation, and Phase 3 (2025 to 2030) as a period in which more of the system is mobilised and a movement of people is engaged and enabled (Figure 4).

Figure 4 TQKP intergenerational vision



Source: Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership. 2025. [2025-2030 Impact Strategy](#). TQKP [website]

The high-level summary of maturity ratings in the rubric provides a snapshot of the maturity of TQKP's goals for the system at this moment in time (Table 1). It shows that TQKP has **fully realised** its Phase 2 objectives in terms of connecting partners, driving productive investment into systems initiatives and keeping child and adolescent development high on the policy agenda, and that it is **making progress** on improving the capabilities of leaders and change agents to reshape the system and increase child development capabilities.

⁴ Farnham, L., Northmann, E., Tamaki, Z. and Daniels, C. 2020. [Field Building for Population Level Change: How funders and practitioners can increase the odds of success](#) The Bridgespan Group [website].

Table 1 Rubric score by dimension

Partners are connected and collaborating	Improved capabilities of leaders and change agents to reshape the system	Increased child development capabilities	TQKP's efforts are keeping child and adolescent development high on the policy agenda	Productive investment into systems initiatives
Fully realised	Making progress	Making progress	Fully realised	Fully realised

The more granular rubric illustrates that some elements of each dimension are further progressed than others. This does not necessarily mean more resourcing or effort is required but may mean more time is required to build the conditions for success or achieve sufficient scale, or that these are areas in which there are more barriers being experienced that may need further strategic work to overcome.

A more granular view illustrates that some elements of each dimension are further progressed than others, highlighting areas where it is likely more difficult or takes more time to build the conditions for maturity. This does not necessarily mean more resourcing or effort is required but may indicate further strategic thought can be given as to the approach.

Table 2 Rubric score summary by criteria

Dimension	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating
Partners are connected and collaborating		New connections are leading to more collaboration	Leaders and change agents are better connected New connections made through TQKP are creating value for leaders	
Improved capabilities of leaders and change agents to reshape the system	Capability to reshape the system Those engaged with TQKP frequently use a			Opportunity to use capability in reshaping the system Use of TQKP outputs/resources in their work



Dimension	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating
	system approach			Those engaged with TQKP use NEST
Increased child development capabilities		Neuro-capability training is being embedded in workforce training		
TQKP's efforts are keeping child and adolescent development high on the policy agenda		How highly leaders in the sector rank issues affecting children and young people on the QLD Government's policy agenda	Engagement of government stakeholders in TQKP	Decision makers are aware of TQKP
Productive investment into systems initiatives				Achievement of targets for co-investment into TQKP

The findings are explored in further detail in the section on strengths below. The full rubric with standards and rationale for each score is provided in Appendix 1.

TQKP's strengths

Leaders and change agents are better connected

Interviews and partnership survey data show that leaders and change agents are better connected as a result of engagement with TQKP, including with sectors they otherwise would not engage with. Eighty-six per cent of the survey respondents (n=37) said their engagement with TQKP had helped foster new connections or relationships to some degree, and 88% (n=38) said that TQKP had exposed them to sectors they'd otherwise had little involvement with to some degree.



New connections are leading to more collaboration

The partnership survey also showed that engagement with TQKP and the new connections fostered are leading to more collaborative activity, with just under half of respondents (46%, n=20) saying their engagement with TQKP had led to information, resource or shared

delivery of activity with new connections 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal'. Interviews with partners, decision makers and the Backbone team members provided numerous examples of new collaborations. There was a theme that connections facilitated by TQKP speed up the trust-building process, by acting as a trusted 'pre-vetting' agent, and because it is implicitly understood that those who engage with TQKP share a certain set of values. This enables people to move to the productive stage of a collaboration faster. Several partners we interviewed said the speed, quality, scale and reach of their work has been improved through engagement with TQKP and the connections fostered.

TQKP connects operators at the state and national level with those at a very local community level. By doing so, it is creating access to opportunities to collaborate, and to share views, experiences and perspectives that are otherwise not available, for example by providing administrative support and platforms for collaboration. It has also established communication channels to effectively feed information, knowledge and evidence up and down to the different scales of the system, from government and philanthropy to large not-for-profit service providers to community-based organisations and from the community level up to philanthropy and government.

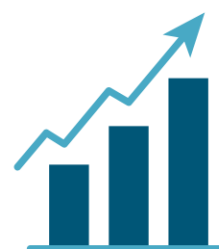
Decision makers are aware of TQKP, and government stakeholders are engaged in TQKP

Interviews and documents provided evidence that TQKP has been successful in engaging stakeholders from all levels of the Queensland Government. Partnership survey responses show government stakeholders have high trust that TQKP acts with competence and integrity, and in the best interests of children, families and community; and to drive productive investment into the wellbeing of children, youth and families. There is also a growing recognition among decision makers for the *"need for a structural shift to support more cross-sectoral collaboration and a shared purpose"* -decision maker, interview, and the need for centralised or strategic funding approaches or bodies to oversee this and support accountability.

These are necessary scaffolding upon which to build future work to influence things like policy and investment.

Targets for co-investment into TQKP have been exceeded for Phase 2 and TQKP has catalysed more collaborative philanthropic investment

It's clear that TQKP has catalysed more collaborative investment, exceeding its target for philanthropic and government funding for Phase 2 by \$8.5 million. TQKP have also brokered relationships between funders and organisations doing impactful work with children, youth and families but who are not well connected with philanthropic funding opportunities.



TQKP also provided the impetus for collaborative funding between the philanthropic bodies of TQKP, and this group has continued to build on this collaboration as the Queensland Kids

Funders Alliance (QKFA). It is also possible that TQKP (alongside broader shifts in valuing a systems approach to change in philanthropy and government), had some influence on the development of the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC), a 10-year collaboration between government and philanthropies to improve health and wellbeing for children, young people and families, by providing a 'test case' for the collaborative of funders involved in both QKFA and IDAC.

TQKP resources and neuroscience and brain development training are being utilised, are shifting knowledge and confidence, and are becoming more embedded in the system



It was evident from both interview and survey data that there's strong take-up and use of the resources that TQKP shares and develops (such as ARACY's The NEST Framework, Brain Builders modules, Framing principles and resources, and the Resilience Scale).

TQKP is having the strongest impact on leader and change agents' capabilities in Framing language to communicate about child development and wellbeing in a way that shifts mindsets, as well as in neuroscience and brain development. Surveys of people who have completed Brain Builders modules show positive shifts in knowledge. The greatest positive change was in their confidence to put knowledge about neuroplasticity and recovery from difficult experiences into practice.

Efforts to embed neuroscience and brain development knowledge into the system through pre-service training have also been successful, with numerous examples of Brain Builders modules being built into curricula and professional development, with further developments in the pipeline through a review of curricula at 3 Queensland universities and TAFE Qld.

Systems literacy and confidence is growing, and for those who feel capable of contributing to systems change, TQKP provides opportunities to participate

The partnership survey shows engagement with TQKP improves confidence around systems change but the data also suggests capability to contribute to systems change is slower to build.

The data shows that the use of systems perspectives, approaches and tools are beginning to be developed for some. Interview data showed that some within TQKP's network are lifting their awareness to the level of the system and replicating systems tools and approaches modelled by TQKP. Around a quarter (23%, n=9) of partnership survey respondents said they had used a systems approach. For the cohort whose capabilities to contribute to systems change are sufficiently mature, TQKP is providing opportunities to participate in systems change actions and efforts.

TQKP's opportunities

Work with partners to capture data on how aspects of TQKP's work reach and create outcomes for children, youth and families

There are elements of TQKP's work that are now beginning to reach children, youth and families, and some partners may be close to being able to measure outcomes from their use of TQKP tools and resources for children youth and families. There is the opportunity to capture this data by working with the partners who use TQKP resources directly in their work with children, youth and families (for example in case planning). This could be done by providing a standard survey or interview question relating to the most commonly used frameworks (The NEST and Resilience Scale), which organisations could add to their existing data collection with clients; as well as through TQKP's Ripple Survey.

Support those working in a systems way to clearly and concisely communicate about systems ways of working and their value

Having connection with and validation from others working in a similar way seems to help boost confidence and self-efficacy. There were several examples of this in interviews, and data from the partnership survey reiterated that people engaging with TQKP are experiencing increased confidence and capability to contribute to systems change as well as knowledge of how to contribute to systems change.

Self-efficacy is known to positively impact on organisational citizenship behaviours such as extra-role performance (on which TQKP as a systems intermediary is to some degree reliant for achievement of its goals), which then drives more connection with peers. This is likely a self-reinforcing positive loop in the system. Difficulty describing the work appears to have a negative impact on both self-efficacy and organisational citizenship behaviours.

Making it easier to clearly and concisely communicate systems change ways of working and their value is likely to boost the positive aspects of the loop. There is the opportunity to develop a working group or resources to support this. This can also help support the broader project of building systems literacy, engaging those who make decisions about investment and resources in understanding systems ways of working, and supporting people to understand how TQKP's ways of working more quickly

Continue collaborations to build more holistic datasets that help tell the story about Queensland's areas of need and support more informed decision making

The lack of a centralised database enabling a view of holistic aspects of the wellbeing of children, youth and families is one of the key system frustrations which TQKP was set up to help address. According to decision makers interviewed, this continues to act as a barrier to better resource allocation and decision making. TQKP has begun several collaborations with partners like UNICEF, ARACY and the Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas to explore the options for collating data across child and youth wellbeing domains that allows for more

nuanced needs analyses to inform investment and policy. Building these collaborations and addressing other data needs and gaps as they become salient will continue to be essential to support Phase 3 goals, especially around productive investment.

TQKP's risks and implications

Several potential future risks were flagged through interviews with partners and decision makers. This may be reflective of the desire to see TQKP succeed, understanding that it is up against complex and entrenched challenges, and to ensure the potential for risks that could develop in future are attended to now.

Strong strategy needed to get the required government engagement to drive shifts in policy and investment

There were concerns that if the philanthropic investment into TQKP is not also supported by government investment to *"follow through on the expectation that's being set through this work"* (partner, interview) that credibility and momentum will be lost. Several partners felt that to achieve its intended impact, TQKP will need to ensure it has the right skills and experience in the Backbone team to continue driving advocacy to government.

Continuing to build on strategies for driving more productive investment from government into child and youth wellbeing in Queensland will be essential in the next phase, to maintain momentum and enable achievement of TQKP's intergenerational change goals. This includes:

- as per the June 2024 evaluation report recommendation, developing a strategy for how TQKP will engage with Queensland Government with key goals and responsibilities as well as a plan for monitoring how different engagement strategies work
- providing targeted, clear and consistent messaging to government stakeholders on what role they should play, in what, when and how
- tracking and sharing TQKP's work to engage and influence government with the network regularly.

A strong rationale for how TQKP uses and directs funding is needed

There were several concerns expressed by partners interviewed about how TQKP 'directs' funding, which could become risks if not managed.

The first of these is that when TQKP makes statements about where investment should be directed to achieve the *"biggest bang for buck"*, there are always going to be winners and losers. Given TQKP is driving a particular funding agenda in Queensland, it also has the job of responding to disappointed stakeholders around this and bringing them along on the journey. These stakeholders will need a strong rationale for why directing funding to a particular area and not another is more likely to get better outcomes for Queensland's children, youth and families.

The second risk is that the processes by which investments are made into projects associated with TQKP but led by partners are not well understood by the network, and this can be perceived as a lack of transparency. Stronger positioning of TQKP's role as an intermediary and how and why it makes connections between philanthropies and organisations doing impactful work is necessary to avoid triggering concerns within a system in which competing for funding is the norm.

Through Phase 3 it will benefit TQKP to remain attentive to those areas – both geographic and sectoral – where interests do not align as closely with TQKP's agenda as others. This warrants continual efforts to transparently communicate about the data and evidence driving TQKP's work, how TQKP's funding is utilised, and the limits to TQKP's role in funding relationships. Continuous communication of progress towards TQKP's intended outcomes is warranted. Providing easy to interpret information on how funding into TQKP is utilised will also help to build trust and understanding around how TQKP's resources are used on behalf of the system.

The third risk is that there are limits to what can be achieved with a coalition of the willing in the absence of funding being made available to partners for implementation (where their efforts are significant). There were concerns that this, especially in combination with high turnover in some sectors, could lead to waning sector engagement.

Given how stretched workforces are within the system and the tight financial setting they operate within, there is a strong rationale to consider how to recognise and remunerate those who contribute significant time, resources and efforts into specific Initiatives or projects (where this is not feasible through their employed role), whether this be through TQKP's funds, by supporting people to make the case for involvement to their employer, or another way.

There's a need for considered and data driven decision making around balancing universal offerings with addressing targeted needs

Some partners felt that TQKP's focus on the universal or population level may come at the cost of having direct and deep impact where it's needed on the most disadvantaged children and young people and their families.

Some of this concern may be reflective of a lack of clarity on what TQKP is, and the role of an intermediary in the system, not as a service provider but as a facilitator of connection, collaboration, investment and learning. It is also likely reflective of fact that TQKP's largest group of stakeholders are from issue and mission driven sectors. There is a degree to which these concerns could be addressed through further communications about the type of organisation TQKP is, its role in the system, and how it supports those doing the more targeted service delivery.

However, TQKP does also make decisions about where to focus energy and resources, and the balance between broad or universal offerings (e.g. Brain Builders training) and offerings for demographics whose needs are not able to be addressed by the former (e.g. Yiliyapinya's

Deadly Brains training for First Nations workforce and families). TQKP also has influence around the issues and messages relayed from sectors and communities to government.

Given this, there is a responsibility to carefully consider the areas and demographics of greatest need (based on data where that is available), within the 'whole', and how to balance these with the more universal aspects of TQKP's work. As TQKP's work to address gaps in what's available in terms of holistic data progresses, particular cohorts or areas of need will likely become more obvious areas in which to focus more targeted investment and activity.





Report

Detailed analysis against the key evaluation questions.



1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

1.1.1 About systems intermediaries

Systems intermediaries play a role as catalysts that speed up change, shift relations between actor groups, resources, and in some contexts, the adoption and application of technologies.⁵ The core functions systems intermediaries play include:

- Linkage broker – creating connectivity and collaboration between stakeholders and developing and maintaining networks.
- Knowledge broker – identifying and supporting the sharing of relevant information and facilitating the co-creation of knowledge products and change processes.
- Building capacity in others – supporting the growth and development of system actors' skills and abilities.
- Facilitating collaborative sense-making and decision-making – supporting the collective use of evidence and participatory sense-making about data to capture multiple perspectives.⁶

Given their role in driving change, and the fact that they are intervening in complex and dynamic systems, intermediaries must remain adaptive in the way they carry out these functions to take advantage of opportunities and respond to emerging trends.⁷

Where the function of intermediaries is to bridge different institutions, actors and interests in complex systems, there are a number of tensions to be navigated.⁸ These include finding a balance between:

- taking too much credit versus not having their contribution recognised
- steering processes too much and acting as a champion with a strong normative interest versus leaving things to take their own course
- having sufficient expert knowledge to obtain a legitimate position in a network versus acting too much as an expert and overruling contributions of network partners

⁵ Kivimaa, P., Klerkx, L., Sampsa, H. 2018. [Towards a typology of intermediaries in sustainable transitions: a systematic review and a research agenda](#). Research Policy.

⁶ Branch S, Riley T., Krahe M, Klepac Pogrmilovic, B, Craike M. 2021. [System Intermediaries: a brief literature review. Findings snapshot](#). Pathways in Place: Co-Creating Community Capabilities (Griffith University, Queensland and Victoria University, Victoria)

⁷ Social Ventures Australia. 2022. [Insights on Australian field-building intermediaries and their funding journeys towards sustainable impact](#). SVA [website]

⁸ Van Lente, H., Boon, W., Klerkx., L. 2020. [Positioning of systemic intermediaries in sustainability transitions: Between storylines and speech acts](#). Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions. 2020.



- empowering non-powerful actors in the network versus starting to act as a spokesperson for them
- having too few ideas about how to deal with the issues at hand, versus taking a forceful position and being seen as an activist.⁹

There is the further dilemma that to be effective, intermediaries must be seen as legitimate and have a mandate from system actors to initiate change, which results in their being dependent at least in-part on existing structures, while they are at the same time tasked with disrupting the status quo¹⁰.

Systems consist of interconnected parts that work together to achieve a purpose.¹¹ There can also be systems nested within systems, and purposes nested within purposes – some of which can come into conflict with each other.

“...Policy resistance comes from the bounded rationalities of the actors in a system, each with [their] own goals. Each actor monitors the state of the system with regard to some important variable...and compares that state with [their] goal. If there is a discrepancy, each actor does something to correct the situation. Usually, the greater the discrepancy ...the more emphatic the action will be. Such resistance to change arises when goals of subsystems are different from and inconsistent with each other.”

– Donella Meadows. 2008. *Thinking in Systems*, p. 112-113.

One of the challenges faced by intermediaries focused systems change is the overlap of different problem-based fields within that system, and the need to advance all fields in order to progress the change goals¹². It is a difficult task to balance the needs and politics of these different problem-based fields while still disrupting the status quo, and this can create tensions in a system in which there is funding and resource scarcity.

“Intermediaries always operate in highly distributed systems, with a constellation of diverse – often competing and unequally powerful – actors deeply involved in the work. They are hardly in a position to “drive” and “organize” that system, even if they want to, and instead have to find ways to support, nudge, enhance – and in some cases, cajole – that constellation of actors”

– Cabaj, 2021, p.10.¹³

⁹ Van Lente et al. 2020

¹⁰ Ibid.

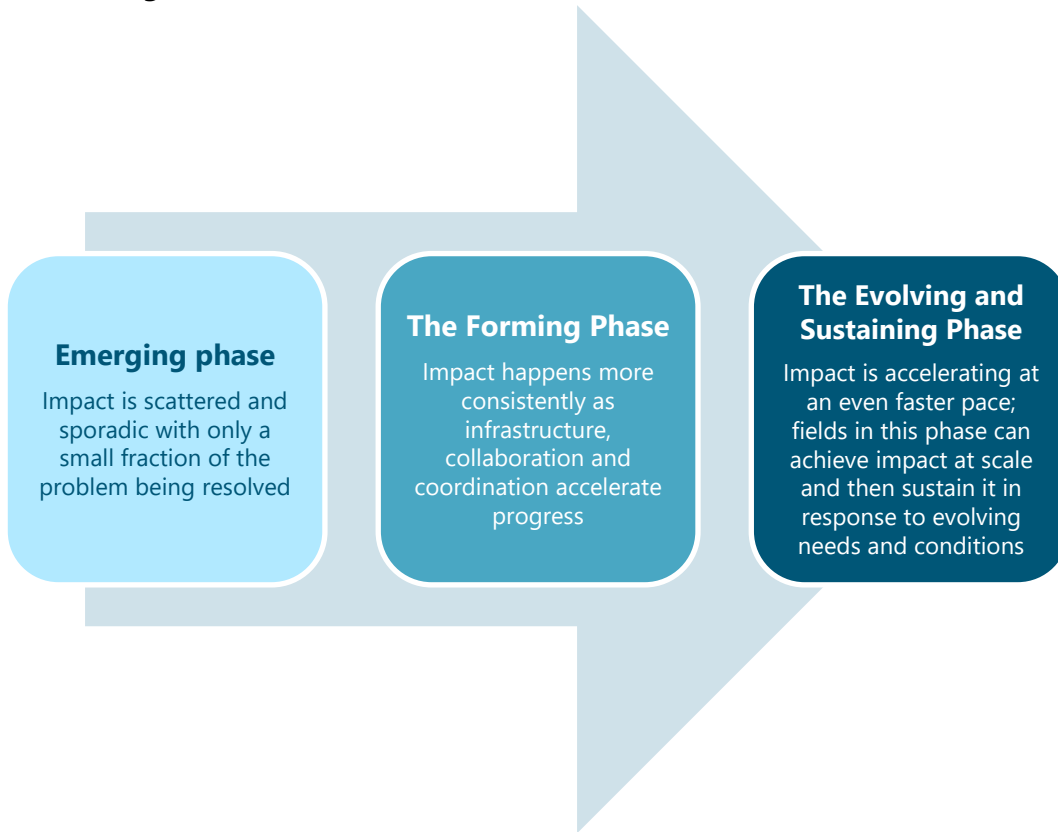
¹¹ Meadows, D. 2008. *Thinking in Systems: a primer* (Wright D ed). Chelsea Green Publishing.

¹² Farnham, L., Northmann, E., Tamaki, Z. and Daniels, C. 2020. [Field Building for Population Level Change: How funders and practitioners can increase the odds of success](#). The Bridgespan Group [website].

¹³ Cabaj, 2021. [Evaluating the Results of Intermediary Organisations](#). Paul Ramsay Foundation [website]

The Bridgespan Group's research suggests that intermediaries progress to population level change over three phases, and progress through these stages is to some extent reliant on the system conditions such as the sociopolitical environment¹⁴.

Figure 5 The Bridgespan Group's 3 phases of intermediaries on the path to population level change



Source: Image adapted from Farnham, L., Northmann, E., Tamaki, Z. and Daniels, C. 2020. [Field Building for Population Level Change: How funders and practitioners can increase the odds of success](#) The Bridgespan Group [website].

TQKP has developed a strategy with phases that align with the Bridgespan model to some extent (Figure 4).

1.1.2 About TQKP in the Emerging Phase and the next

Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) is an intermediary and coalition of leaders, organisations, practitioners and academics who work with the shared purpose of improving the conditions for children and young people to thrive. It was established in 2020, auspiced

¹⁴ Farnham, L., Northmann, E., Tamaki, Z. and Daniels, C. 2020. [Field Building for Population Level Change: How funders and practitioners can increase the odds of success](#). The Bridgespan Group [website].

by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and funded by a group of philanthropies, as well as other Queensland collaborators.

TQKP exists to drive systems change, and to address key systemic barriers – political, structural, cultural and operational – to improving child wellbeing. These key barriers were identified in the *Joint Project on Systems Leadership and Wellbeing: Stage 1 Synthesis Report*¹⁵.

The implementation of TQKP is planned and delivered in phases, each with its own strategy and goals. This evaluation focusses on Phase 2 but acknowledges the work that has already progressed in Phase 3.

Phase 1 (2020 to 2022)

Key partners were engaged in co-designing and developing a plan for TQKP, resulting in funding for Phase 2¹⁶. The Phase 3 Strategy¹⁷ describes this phase as 'Establishing the Partnership' (Figure 4).

Phase 2 (July 2022 to June 2025)

Activities designed to influence policy and advocacy systems to produce wider systems change. During Phase 2, TQKP has been in what's referred to in Figure 5 as the Emerging Phase, focussing on setting the preconditions for the Forming Phase. The Phase 3 Strategy describes this phase as 'Activating the partnership' (Figure 4). Phase 2 focussed on delivering 11 key initiatives and related projects, led and facilitated by the small TQKP Backbone team.

The key objectives for Phase 2 were:

- improving the connectivity and capabilities of leaders and change agents to steward systems and facilitate learning and adaptation
- improving the connectivity and capabilities of workforces and organisations to contribute to child and adolescent development, especially neuro-capability
- improving capabilities and capacities of caregivers and communities to contribute to healthy child and adolescent development
- improving systems strategies that contribute to child and adolescent development
- TQKP is sufficiently mature to accelerate and augment efforts to impact population level outcomes from 2025 onwards.

¹⁵ Hogan, M., Hatfield-Dodds, L., Barnes, L and Struthers, K (2021). *Joint Project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing: Stage 1 Synthesis Report*. Every Child and Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), Australia. www.everychild.co

¹⁶ Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership. 2022. *TQKP 2021-2022 Annual Report*.

¹⁷ Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership. 2025. *2025-2030 Impact Strategy*. TKQP [website]

Phase 3 (July 2025 to 2030)

This Phase is focussed on enabling and mobilising a movement of people and organisations engaged in systems change, fostering more collaborations and enabling stewardship and positive shifts in the systems and environments that shape the lives of children and young people. It also focusses on strengthening the infrastructure and the TQKP Backbone team. The Phase 3 Strategy describes this phase as 'Enabling a movement' (Figure 4).

1.2 This evaluation

The Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF), one of TQKP's funders, contracted ARTD and The University of Queensland (UQ) Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) to evaluate Phase 2 of TQKP.

It was a mixed method evaluation, undertaken in 2 stages:

Stage 1

- February 2023 to December 2023 - Scoping and planning the evaluation.
- January 2024 to June 2024 – Stage 1 Evaluation focussed on how TQKP was [engaging the system and improving evidence](#) with a [learning webinar](#) for those in the network.

Stage 2

- December 2024 to April 2025 – Synthesising evaluation lessons from the Stage 1 evaluation, planning for Stage 2 evaluation (including refining a rubric designed in the scoping and planning for Stage 1), and supporting TQKP Backbone team and partners to develop a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework, theory of change and indicators to support Phase 3 of TQKP.
- July 2024 to October 2025 (this report) – Stage 2 Evaluation focussed on emerging evidence of sustainable change.

This evaluation was conducted independently of, but in parallel with an internal evaluation of TQKP conducted by the Senior Partnership Officer – Learning. This evaluation draws on some of the work done for the internal evaluation, including the partnership survey, which ARTD and TQKP collaborated on to meet the purposes of both evaluations.

The purpose of the evaluation was for learning, as well as for accountability to funders. The overarching learning questions and purposes were:

- whether (and how) the partnership was able to influence the policy or advocacy systems to produce wider systemic change.
- what PRF can learn (and share) so that it can influence the policy or advocacy systems to produce wider systemic change.

1.2.1 Key Evaluation Questions

This report aims to answer the following key evaluation question and sub questions:

1. Overall, what evidence is emerging that organisations and parts of the system will be enabled to make sustainable changes for children, youth and families?
 - What kinds of changes are the Initiatives producing within which parts of the system¹⁸?
 - What are the barriers and facilitators for TQKP's program of work to achieving systems change?

1.2.2 Methodology and limitations

The evaluation takes a **mixed methods approach** drawing on elements of developmental evaluation approaches and a systems perspective to answer the key evaluation question and sub questions.

For this evaluation report, we utilised the methods described in Table 2, analysing each dataset and then reviewing findings across datasets, to draw out key themes.

To support synthesis and judgement, alongside thematic analysis of qualitative data, we utilised a **rubric** (Appendix 1) developed iteratively with TQKP in the scoping and planning for stage one, and revisited in preparation for this evaluation report. These were based around TQKP's system levers (Figure 1), which are highlighted in the full rubric (Appendix 1), and in the findings throughout this report.

The rubric provides a basis for rating where different dimensions of TQKP's efforts are sitting in terms of their maturity, based largely on quantitative data. Given TQKP is a systems change initiative and that systems are complex and constantly changing, the purpose of the rubric is not to show a linear progression from Beginning to Exceeding, but rather to provide a snapshot of where things are now. The rubric ratings have been checked against the qualitative data to ensure both the quantitative and qualitative data are telling the same story about what is more and less progressed in terms of TQKP's intended outcomes for the system.

The wording of some criteria of the rubric were tweaked following the final revision of TQKP's Partnership Survey. This was because the wording of some survey questions changed slightly to ensure data collected was of best value to TQKP in Phase 3.

¹⁸ System actors, leaders and organisations engaged as collaborators, partners and networkers

Table 2 Evaluation methods and how each was used

Method	How these were used
<p>Interviews with decision makers (n=8), using a Bellwether methodology, conducted by ISSR. This included 3 from Queensland Government, 2 from the academic sector, one from the First Nations sector, and 2 from peak bodies.</p>	<p>These were used to support understanding of how well TQKP is known and its work understood by key decision makers across the sectors it aims to engage, where child and youth policy is on the Queensland Government’s agenda, and what influences decision makers’ thinking about issues affecting children and young people. Data from these interviews was used to determine some ratings in the rubric.</p>
<p>Interviews with partners (n=19) Note: TQKP has specific definitions of partners and collaborators, based on frequency of engagement and formal partnership. Those interviewed fall into both categories; however, all are referred to throughout as partners.</p>	<p>Used to understand partner perceptions of TQKP’s value and what changes they have observed in the system that they think will continue. These were thematically analysed to find common themes within this dataset, and commonalities between partners and Bellwether interviewees.</p>
<p>TQKP Backbone team focus groups (4 groups with total n=12 participants)</p>	<p>The purpose of these was to reflect on patterns the team have observed, including barriers and enablers, shifting capabilities of those in the network, government engagement, and the legacy of Phase 2.</p>
<p>De-identified partnership survey data collected by TQKP in August-September 2025 as part of their monitoring, evaluation and learning processes. ARTD used a sample of responses (n=53) from the period 26 August to 26 September 2025.</p>	<p>We analysed descriptive statistics from the partnership survey against themes from the interviews with partners and decision maker and 4 focus groups.</p>

Method	How these were used
	<p>We looked at differences in responses between partners, collaborators and networkers¹⁹.</p> <p>Data from the survey was used to determine most ratings in the rubric.</p>
<p>TQKP Backbone team survey (n=4)</p>	<p>To determine the current (as at October 2025) number of Initiatives, projects or activities that are led by partners (people or organisations external to or seconded to the TQKP Backbone team from other organisations). (In this context, 'led' means partners are providing the majority of staff resourcing, setting the agenda and doing the majority of decision making, supported by TQKP).</p>
<p>Brief review of key documents and data (e.g. Emerging Minds' Brain Builders Module 24 Month report; Report to PRF 2025; EWOT Evaluation Report)</p>	<p>To test whether findings from interviews and partnership survey were warranted</p>
<p>Sense-making workshop with TQKP Backbone team members and funder representatives</p> <p>Held 24 September 2025 (n=11, 8 TQKP Backbone team members, and 3 funder representatives)</p>	<p>Findings were discussed in a sense-making workshop with the TQKP Backbone team and funder representatives to identify gaps, contextualise findings, and ensure findings are accurate. This included reviewing rubric scores to ensure these were representative of the degree of 'felt' maturity by the TQKP Backbone team and funders who attended.</p>

¹⁹ TQKP's definitions are:

- Partner: signed up to funding, service or collaboration agreements or MOUs/ is a member of the TQKP Leadership Table or Management Board
- Collaborator: regularly participate in working group/network meetings, communities of practice and/or specific Program Initiative/s or Project/s
- Networker: participate in TQKP's learning forums, subscribe to TQKP social media and/or e-bulletin and/or attend ad hoc events or meetings.



Limitations

Given TQKP is a systems-change initiative, there is a great deal of complexity and external forces which impact on the work and outcomes. We have tried to account for this context in our synthesis and framing of the findings.

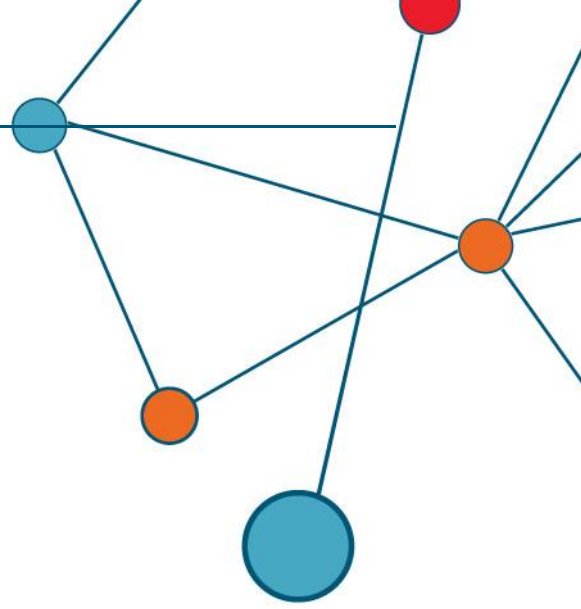
The focus of this evaluation report is to answer the evaluation questions, and to do so concisely. TQKP's work is broad, at a systems-level and involves both formal Initiatives and informal relationship building and information sharing. The purpose of this evaluation is not to capture it all, but to identify the elements from TQKP's Phase 2 work that decision makers, partners and staff perceive to have the most visible and sustainable outcomes, and to identify the barriers and enablers that can help to guide the strategy and work in Phase 3.

The report does not capture the entire breadth of TQKP's activities, Initiatives and work, nor its outcomes.

Timelines for this evaluation have meant that we have utilised a sample of partnership survey data provided by TQKP, however the survey has remained open, and as a result there will be discrepancies in the descriptive statistics in this report and TQKP's report on the survey.

We have analysed the partnership survey responses of different sub-groups for this evaluation. These are small numbers, and these charts and data should be treated with a degree of caution as to how indicative they are of broader patterns.

Key findings



2. Overall, what evidence is emerging that organisations and parts of the system will be enabled to make sustainable changes for children, youth and families?

Phase 2 has successfully set the conditions to progress in Phase 3 to the 'Forming Phase' and to begin impacting outcomes for children, youth and families. Communication channels, connections and platforms for collaboration, and the knowledge and capabilities and shared language around systems change and child development developed in Phase 2 provide a strong base for work in Phase 3 to progress to the 'Forming Phase' in which *"impact happens more consistently as infrastructure, collaboration and coordination accelerate progress"*²⁰.

Both the qualitative data and the quantitative data synthesised in the rubric (Table 3) show:

- improved connection, collaboration and capabilities of leaders in the system,
- that TQKP has been very successful in reaching and engaging people in the Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative, including the training modules (hosted by Emerging Minds, and Early Childhood Australia), and in promoting the use of the holistic and systems-focussed (rather than individual-focussed) wellbeing framework 'The Nest' and the 'Resilience Scale' tool
- that some within TQKP's network are lifting their awareness to the level of the system but there is more work to do to build systems change capabilities. Where leaders are confident and capable to contribute, TQKP has successfully built the platform to provide opportunities for people to put systems approaches into action.



²⁰ Farnham, L., Northmann, E., Tamaki, Z. and Daniels, C. 2020. [Field Building for Population Level Change: How funders and practitioners can increase the odds of success](#). The Bridgespan Group [website].

Table 3 Rubric scores by criteria for the dimensions of partners connecting and collaborating and improved capabilities to reshape the system

Dimension	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating
Partners are connected and collaborating		New connections are leading to more collaboration	Leaders and change agents are better connected New connections made through TQKP are creating value for leaders	
Improved capabilities of leaders and change agents to reshape the system	Capability to reshape the system Those engaged with TQKP frequently use a system approach			Opportunity to use capability in reshaping the system Use of TQKP outputs/resources in their work Those engaged with TQKP use NEST

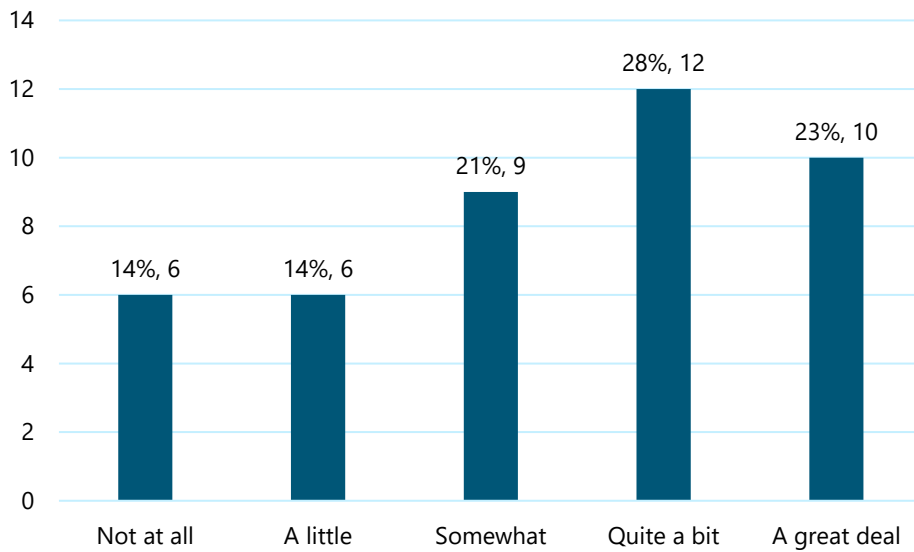
2.1 Leaders and change agents are better connected

Lever: Concerted leadership

Connections between TQKP and sector leaders are continuing to grow and facilitate connection between leaders and sectors. The partnership survey showed 25% (13) of respondents had learned about and become networkers (9) or collaborators (4) in the past 12 months. It also showed that TQKP is helping foster connections and relationships, with 51% (n=22) saying their engagement with TQKP had helped foster new connections or relationships quite a bit or a great deal (Figure 6).



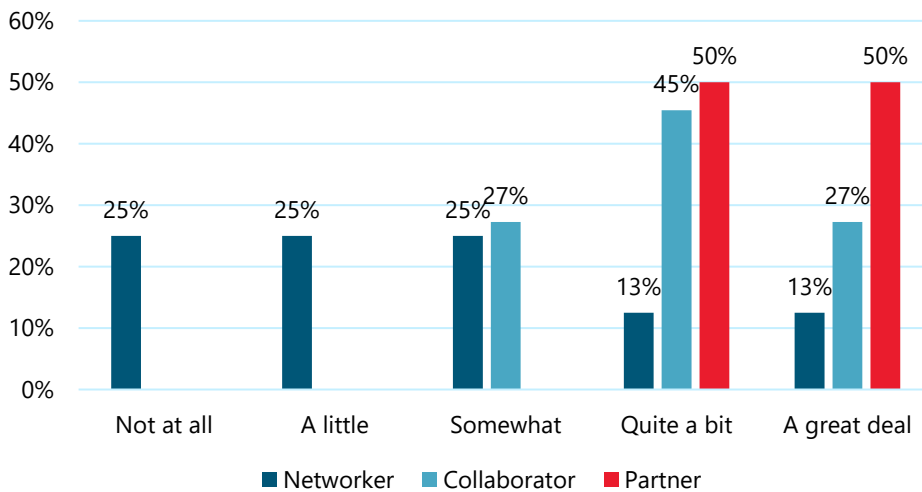
Figure 6 Fostered new connections/ relationships (n=43)



Source: Partnership survey (n=43)

This rating was higher, the more engaged the participant was in TQKP.

Figure 7 Fostered new connections/relationships by level of engagement (n=43)

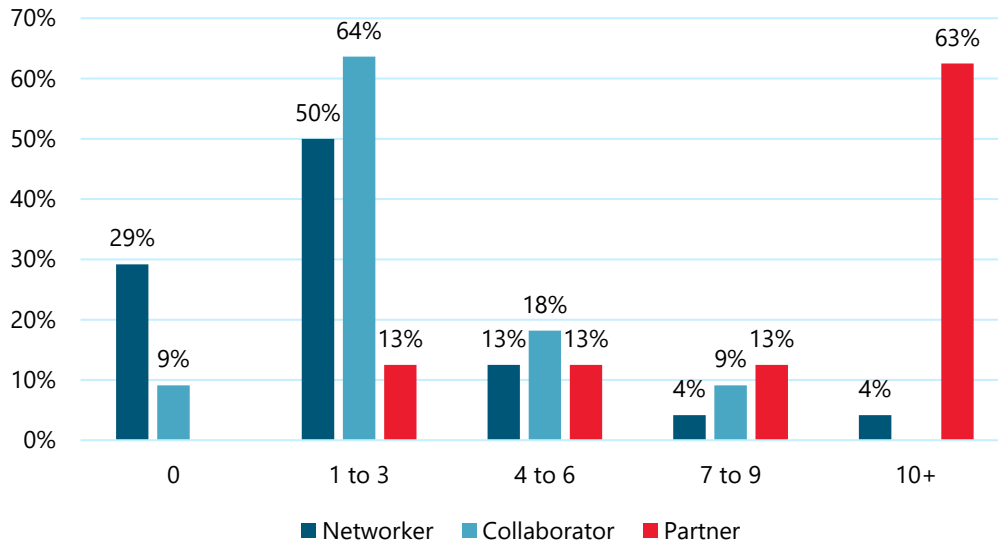


Source: Partnership survey (n=43)

Partners are making the most connections through TQKP, with 63% of those who responded to the partnership survey saying they made 10 or more connections. Partners, by TQKP’s definition, are those signed up to funding, service or collaboration agreements or MOUs or are members of the TQKP Leadership Table or Management Board. Most have been engaged since early in Phase 2 (if not earlier), and with TQKP as a whole, which is likely the reasons they have made the most connections of any of the groups.

It was most common for networkers/collaborators to make between 1 to 3 connections through engagement with TQKP.

Figure 8 Number of new connections and/or reconnections via engagement with TQKP



Source: Partnership survey data (n=43). Collaborators (n=11); Partners (n=8); Networkers (N=24)

Interview data identified several ways in which these connections occur:

- organically through involvement and conversations within collaboratives, working groups or at events
- facilitated by TQKP Backbone team members
- facilitated by TQKP partners.

“It was so interesting to be walking around...at the National Early Years Policy Summit which TQKP had a lot to do with getting together...and seeing people I knew and realising, ‘oh, you all know each other, or you don’t know this person yet’. And those kinds of things really do they do create opportunities for people to connect and do meaningful work.” – partner, interview

“It’s performing a very important function as a dating service between neuroscientists and child safety officers, and teachers and Education Department people... building out that ecosystem.” - decision maker

There were many examples of connections which, since being brought together or reinvigorated through TQKP activities, have been continued without TQKP’s facilitation, for example:

- members of project working groups regularly catching up after completing of projects, to discuss what’s happening in their sector

- people working in child protection and mental health connected through TQKP meeting to look at how to link and leverage each other's work
- people connecting between working group sessions to share information and resources
- connections continuing conversations to better inform program design and delivery.

One partner noted that since taking part in a working group, they have a stronger idea of who is doing what in the system, and who to call on for what as opportunities to collaborate arise. This points to another theme in partner interviews that TQKP is acting as a translator to help people to see the connection between what they are aiming to achieve in their role or sector, and what others in other sectors are working on and towards.

"There's a different lexicon depending on what service system you're in – what TQKP has been successful at is being the translator and breaking down things that we're all talking about – helping with appetite to move forward without taking a lead." – partner, interview

This was reiterated in survey data, with 63% of respondents saying their engagement with TQKP had influenced how often they consider opportunities for collaboration in their work quite a bit or a great deal.

Two people relatively new in their roles said that TQKP had sped up the process of them getting to know the landscape and build relationships to enable them in their work. Another noted that their engagement with Thriving Kids in Disasters work "helped me understand how many players there were in the space and what was going on."

Others noted that TQKP Backbone team were excellent at following up on making the introductions they had discussed with partners, and that this was appreciated. This function of connecting people in the system together was highlighted by many interviewees as something that would not be resourced or occur without TQKP and that they valued:

"Connecting and linking people up – not many other organisations or people are resourced to do that – that's their core remit to do linking and de-siloing." – partner, interview

Several of TQKP's partners we interviewed also noted that they share their own contacts with the TQKP Backbone team in order to support specific actions or goals, thereby continuing to grow the network of people connected with TQKP and whom the TQKP Backbone team can then facilitate connection with others in the network. This included introducing TQKP Backbone team to other existing collaboratives and communities of practice.

"It's a network. It's not just what I get out of it, it's what I'm able to give back to it and it's creating that shared ownership approach that I think they've done really, really well." – partner, interview

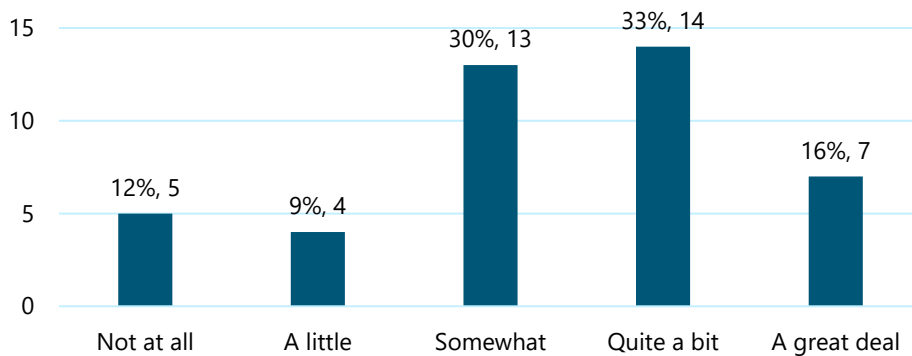


2.2 TQKP is facilitating connections between sectors, and these connections are creating value

Lever: Concerted leadership

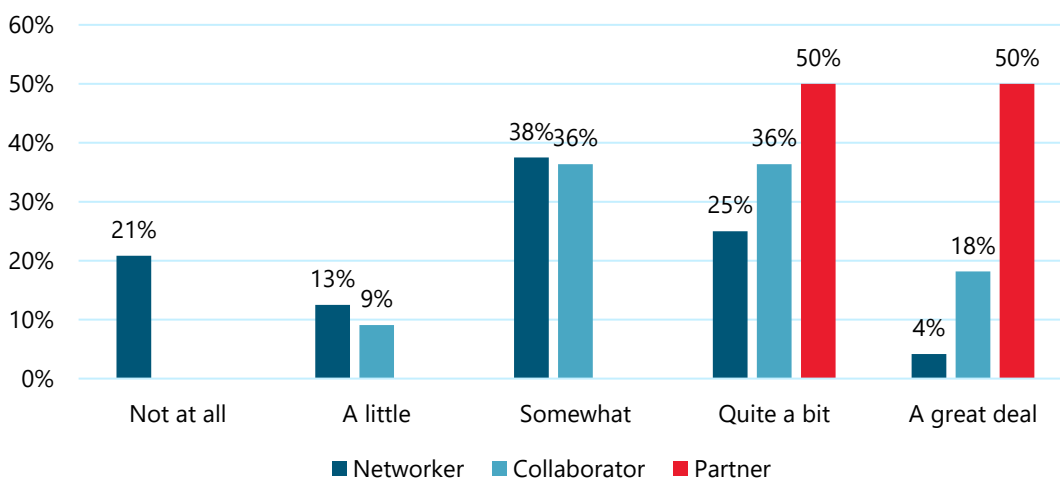
TQKP is exposing those who engage with it to new sectors, with 88% (38) of survey respondents having had some exposure to sectors they'd otherwise had little involvement with, and 49% saying they'd had quite a bit or a great deal of exposure to new sectors.

Figure 9 Degree to which engagement with TQKP exposed people to sectors they'd otherwise have little involvement with (all)



The survey responses to this question generally followed a trend that the more engaged the respondent was in TQKP, the more they had been exposed to new sectors (Figure 10)

Figure 10 Degree to which engagement with TQKP exposed people to sectors they'd otherwise have little involvement with (by level of engagement)



Source: Partnership survey (n=43)

A strong theme in interviews was that TQKP's work and ways of working are creating connection between sectors.

"Being a system intermediary allows them to bring people together who are associated but wouldn't always be brought together...I was brought together with the Brain Institute who I wouldn't generally work with or encounter. Connections you wouldn't ordinarily get." – partner, interview

Several people noted that through TQKP they had connected with organisations or people they otherwise wouldn't have. This was even true for one partner who said they were previously deeply entrenched in their 'silo'. Regarding the connections facilitated by TQKP Backbone team, one interviewee noted that these are always considered and purposeful:

"It isn't just about, hey, you and you do similar things. How about you have a conversation and meet? It's about, hey, you know, all 50 of you work in different pieces of the same system, but how can you better work together? To have a better outcome for that system and the community we're trying to serve...It's that system change and higher-level strategic network approach rather than just direct connecting, which I really liked." – partner, interview

Backbone team members provided the example of Thriving Kids in Disasters connecting the disaster management sector, which isn't a sector that's historically had much contact with the child and youth wellbeing sectors, with many organisations that do.

Another partner felt that having a connection facilitated by TQKP sped up the trust-building process required to establish a new collaboration or partnership by acting as a trusted 'pre-vetting' agent, and because it is implicitly understood that those who engage with TQKP share a certain set of values. This is an example of how TQKP acts as a 'catalyst' in the system.

"I often think what underpins collaboration and realistically it's trust. But trust can take a really, really long time to build. But I'm finding that because TQKP is doing a lot of the trust building between different sectors, it's almost like they've linked arms with other people. So, if you're a part of TQKP... you've got these terms of reference, or a lexicon or a set of values that are in common ... you're not having to do your own sort of intensive due diligence ... It's like 'oh, they've already been vetted'. What I've found is things happen very quickly because of those established relationships." – partner, interview

This view was validated by a funder in the sensemaking meeting:

"Meeting organisations through the Thriving Queensland network, you've got a lot of confidence in the people and the organisations in the network, there's a lot of shared knowledge and collaboration that's already gone before that you can kind of benefit from, because that trust and experience has been built so strongly with people that you're feeling very safe with. So, there's a lot of value in that." – funder, sensemaking meeting

Several partners felt that through TQKP connecting them with others doing aligned work, and through access to communities of practice, they were able to boost the speed, quality, scale, and reach of their work.

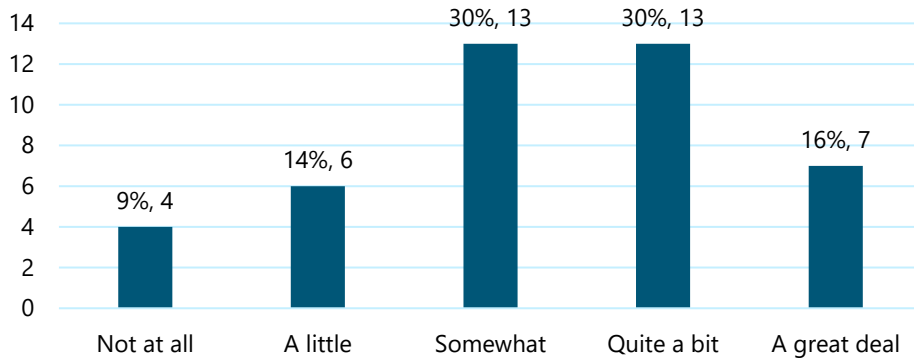
“Some opportunities may not be a direct link to the work with TQKP, but the work we have done with them created some of the sparks that then enhance what we already do.” – partner, interview

“They’ve been really instrumental for us in our ability to continue to move forward and develop local relationships – in a world where TQKP didn’t exist it would have progressed much slower for our community. Our relationships would be worse off for it. What they bring is people that are so willing to help and support your community and it’s not always that you can reach outside your own community and find that willingness to offer that support. That’s been really exciting and makes a big difference.” – partner, interview

“Through our connections, we have been able to share resources, ideas, and strategies that directly benefit children and families. For example, educators have exchanged practical tools for supporting children with developmental needs, while also learning trauma-informed approaches that can be used across settings. These relationships have also opened pathways for referrals and access to specialist services, ensuring families receive the right support at the right time. Looking ahead, our growing network with other health services will allow us to explore joint programs and initiatives, creating stronger, more coordinated responses that meet the needs of our community.” – partnership survey respondent

The partnership survey data shows that engagement with TQKP is leading to more collaborative activity in the system, with 91% (n=39) of respondents saying their engagement had led to some degree of information, resource or shared delivery of activity with new connections. For just under half of the respondents (46%, n=20) their engagement with TQKP had influenced this quite a bit or a great deal.

Figure 11 Extent to which engagement with TQKP has led to sharing information, resources or delivery of activities with new connections



Source: Partnership survey (n=43)

The TQKP Backbone team had also noticed more collaboration in the system.

"I'm certainly observing that there is a much greater emphasis [in the Queensland ecosystem] on collaboration, partnerships and cross-pollination, collectively incubating concepts to fruition is a really big jump forward." – TQKP Backbone team member, interview

An example the TQKP Backbone team highlighted was the SEEN documentary produced by Parent TV. The SEEN documentary focusses on parents understanding, and healing from childhood trauma in order to be more effective parents and better support child brain development themselves. TQKP made introductions between the SEEN documentary producer Sam Jockle and the QUT-based neuroscientist Selena Bartlett who features in the film. TQKP then hosted the Brisbane Premiere of the film and introduced the producer to the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation (TFFF) and Dads Group (an organisation and social program supporting fathers). This led to a screening event in Mt Isa, ahead of Father's Day, supported by TFFF and Dads Group, among others.

"There's now a session in Mt Isa we had nothing to do with funded by Tim Fairfax Family Foundation with Parent TV/SEEN Documentary and Dad's Group - without any TQKP involvement other than initial introduction." – TQKP Backbone team member

TQKP Backbone team members noted the documentary has now been viewed by over 30,000 people, including parents. While they noted that the film would have had significant reach on its own, the TQKP Backbone team members felt that the connections they initiated had helped to boost reach.

There was a theme common across TQKP Backbone team members, partners and decision maker interviews that many of the connections made between and across sectors are now, to some extent self-sustaining. However, they also noted the need for an intermediary to fulfill this connecting role is ongoing.

"Time, political climate, attrition - particularly attrition is a huge barrier in government. TQKP needs to continue to exist to relight the fire. I think like models like this are so good and so

powerful when they are forever. And forever doesn't mean that they've always got to play the most as hand on role as they're currently playing, but they do sort of always need to exist to continue to relight the fire.” – partner interview

Several partners and TQKP Backbone team members, as well as one decision maker interviewed felt that because if TQKP were to disappear tomorrow, something similar would likely be set up, because the system has now experienced the value of having an organisation dedicated to providing purposeful connections, supporting coordination and providing a systems-lens. Several partners noted that there is no other entity that has the resources or mandate to do this kind of work.

“... we would want to have something happening in terms of a plan for someone to sort of support or take the lead on that. It would be a shame to kind of lose that connection. People have certain priorities and focus areas...[so] I think it does take a dedicated effort to kind of bring people together and to be aligning advocacy.” – decision maker, interviewee

" We've had the experience [of having a systems intermediary], the connections and relationships...we've seen how this can actually work." – partner, interview

2.3 People and organisations are beginning to lift their gaze to the level of the system and use systems approaches

Levers: Concerted leadership; Putting Data and Learning to Work; Integrated Delivery

“The most important thing I have learned about systems and systems change through my engagement with TQKP is the importance of not working in silos. True change happens when services and supports are connected, with a shared vision and coordinated approach. I have also learned the value of a “no wrong door” philosophy—ensuring that every child and family who reaches out for support is welcomed, guided, and connected to the right services. This approach strengthens trust, reduces barriers, and ensures families receive the holistic care they need.” – partnership survey response

Data from interviews identified several ways in which people and organisations are taking up a systems approach, including raising their awareness of the system outside their role or community and using systems-thinking tools and approaches.



Several partners interviewed identified that for them, the value of having a systems intermediary like TQKP is that it helps them to raise their gaze beyond their immediate role responsibilities, understand who the other players are in the system and how their work intersects, and keeps them apprised of what others in the system are working on. It also provides a platform to share learnings across the system.

"I would hypothesise that the value they bring for a lot of people in my position is to always be thinking about that strategic and systems thinking...some of that bigger thinking around systems and being part of a bigger system." – partner, interview

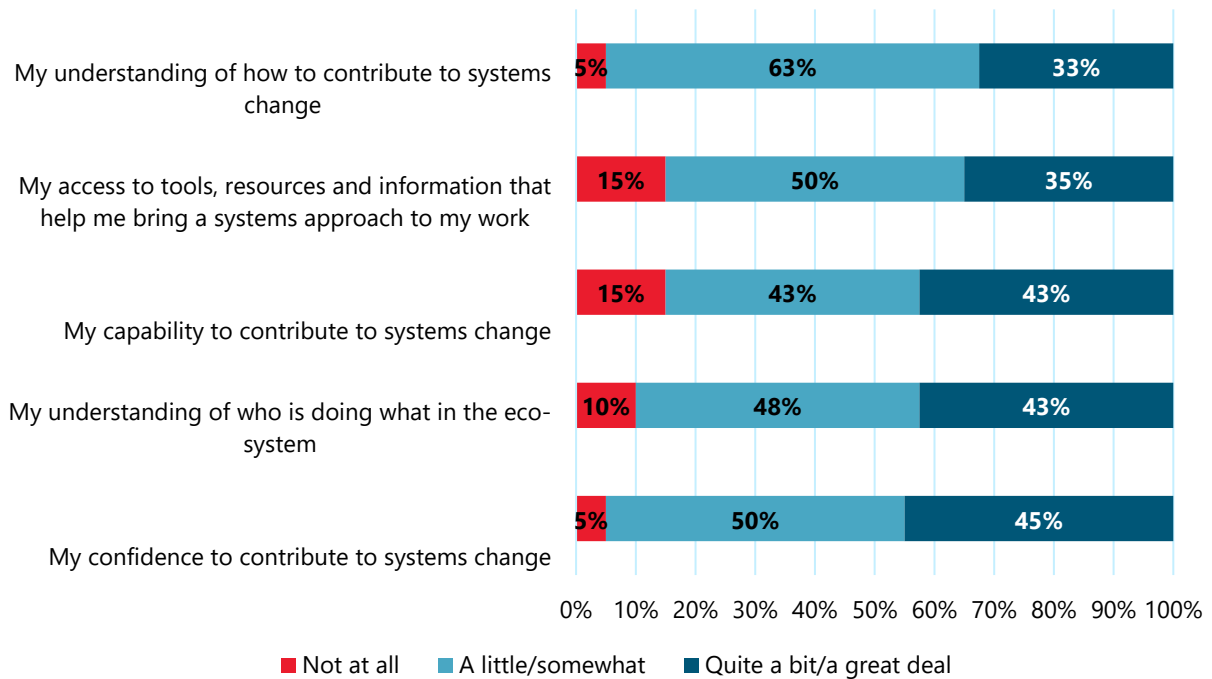
"There are lots of service providers and initiatives and groups but very few operating at the view of the system - TQKP can help to link to decision makers and influence things at that different level. They've helped in terms of helping people understand the need to think with a systems lens. If no one was thinking system-lens wise then we would all continue in our rabbit holes, with our blinkers on, and there's so much less learning that can happen. If we have the resourcing to stand up and look down and view at the systems level, there's broader and deeper learning that can occur." – partner, interview

There were also examples of take-up of tools and approaches from systems-thinking. Unprompted, several partners mentioned considering the use of or replicating an approach used by TQKP for their own context or organisation. This included two organisations considering how they can use the social network analysis approach demonstrated through the Country Collaborative's systems mapping project. One organisation replicating the 'data buckets' from the Place Based Data Framework, and one organisation identifying opportunities to use journey access mapping approaches used by the Country Collaborative to understand how users navigate service systems and supports. Another partner said they were having constant conversations about how to bring in place-based and hub approaches as a result of their engagement with TQKP.

The partnership survey also showed engagement with TQKP had improved capability and confidence around systems change (Figure 12). Confidence to contribute to systems change had been improved more by engagement with TQKP than had capability, suggesting there are more barriers to actually applying systems change approaches in practice.

Take up of a systems approach is beginning, with 23% (9) of respondents saying they had used a systems approach. Lower improvement scores in access to tools, resources and information that help people bring a systems approach to their work may indicate a need for more tailored support to help people contextualise a systems approach for their work or role.

Figure 12 Most people engaged with TQKP have had improvements in access to resources, understanding and capabilities around systems change



Source: Partnership survey responses to question that asked about improvements in these things since engaging with TQKP (n=40).

That use of a systems approach in practice is slower to develop is to be expected, as developing systems literacy requires a shift in mental models from individualistic and linear mindsets that are common to ‘management’ disciplines, an understanding of key language, concepts and tools, a degree of comfort with complexity, emergence and interdependence²¹, and the ability to apply these within one’s own context. Building systems literacy is known to take time²². Where leaders are confident and capable to contribute to systems change, TQKP has successfully built the platform for them to do so. This is discussed in the next section (2.4).

²¹ Dubberly, H. 2015. [A Systems Literacy Manifesto, Proceedings of Relating Systems Thinking and Design](#), 3(2). RSD Symposium [website]

²² Ibid.

2.4 TQKP is providing opportunities otherwise not available and improving capability around framing language and brain development

Lever: Concerted leadership; Putting Data and Learning to Work; Stronger Workforces; Integrated Delivery

"I've been in network meetings with the same people [as I now see in TQKP meetings] and they are having different conversations than they did before. [Before TQKP] visibility of how to make the change, the sense of power to make change was nebulous. How to be an active citizen of the system wasn't clear." – partner, interview

Bringing people together around a shared agenda is providing access to opportunities for collaboration, resources and initiatives that already exist or have already been funded. Both partners and decision makers noted in interviews that this helps to reduce duplication.

Examples include:

- integrating different sectors and sector connections into place-based programming
- involving connections as speakers at events
- engaging connection who worked on Brain Builders to deliver staff training
- a connection sharing existing education resources to use in a program that otherwise would have needed to be developed
- collaborating on project delivery with TQKP where it enhances both parties planned actions.

There was evidence that TQKP provides opportunities that are otherwise not available. This included:

- by providing the administrative support for and platforms for collaboration (through working groups, collaboratives etc). One partner noted that this allows people to move from an individual person wanting systems change to being in an organised group of people who share a vision, enabling them to move from problematising the system to being able to see what action is possible and what part they can play in it. This has led to partners taking charge of elements of the work.
- by offering a space to have conversations around testing policy, and timing and collaboration on advocacy



- by initiating longer-term future focussed thinking around place-based projects, which helps to plan for what growth and developments are needed to evolve the work
- through connecting people with the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC), enabling them to advocate for particular groups, needs or geographic locations at a national level
- by connecting organisations with funding opportunities and funders they would not otherwise have had
- opportunities to learn through TQKP's approach about what works in terms of delivering an aspirational and systems change focussed framework. TQKP's use of implementation science was noted by one partner as something that stood out.
- increased opportunities to have non-metropolitan concerns and lessons from implantation heard at a state and national level
- by facilitating the Qld element of the Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE) National listening tour, with a focus on coordinating attendance from surrounding regions at each event, rather than just representatives from the location the event was held
- hearing about what is happening in other parts of the system, for example through the newsletter, which helps keep them connected with what's happening in the larger landscape.

"The ability to feed back information from a local regional level provides increased opportunities for advocacy. Having that backing from broader TQKP and Country Collaborative for those issues is key." – partner, interview

In terms of improved capabilities, the one that came through most strongly in partner and Backbone team interviews was around Framing language. This involves using evidence and research about how best to 'frame' or talk about child development and wellbeing²³ that help to shift mindsets. This aligns with TQKP website statistics that show that the Framing Page and Framing for Change Learning Hub²⁴ are both in the top 3 pages most visited (other than the home page). There have been a number of examples of the Framing work informing policy documents, public communications, and other materials. New examples of how this was used since the last evaluation report (ARTD, June 2024) include:

- the 2024 Young Queenslanders Consultation Report
 - research grant applications
 - communications with schoolteachers

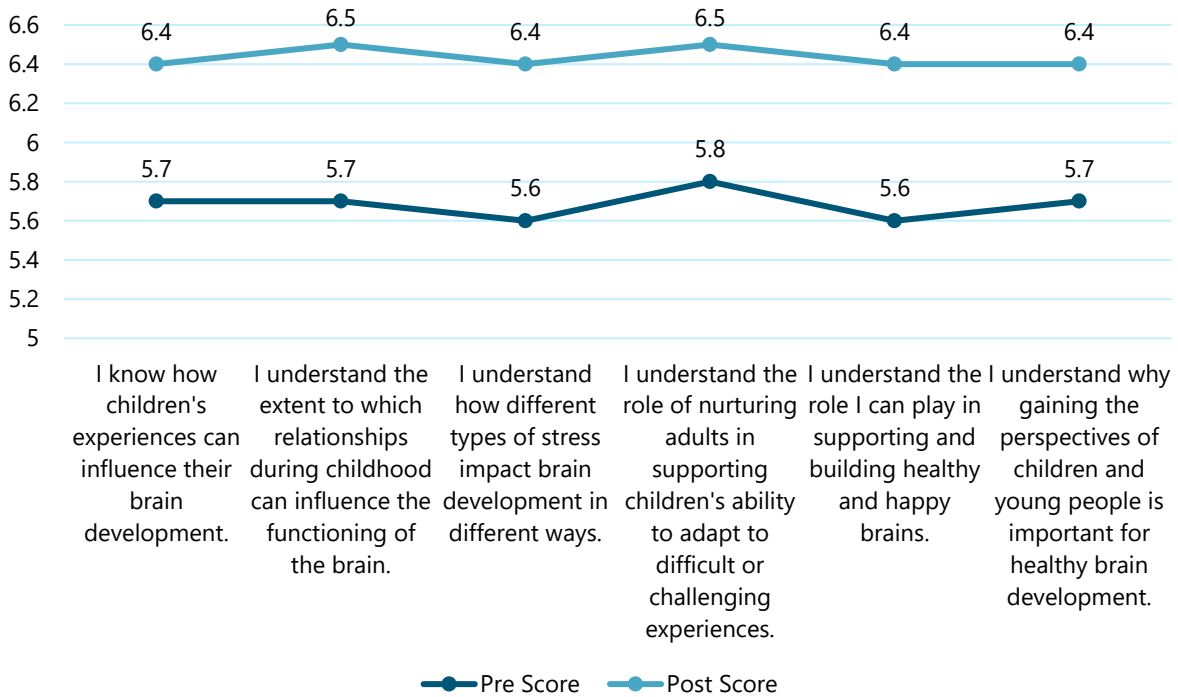
²³ [Framing for Change - Learning Hub - Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership](#)

²⁴ TQKP Backbone team interview. The other most visited page is the Enabling Workforces and Organisations Toolkit page.

- Early Years Matter flyer in Early Years Policy Summit participant showbags
- State Library of Queensland communications.

Data from Emerging Minds, which hosts the Brain Builders modules shows that capability is also being built in knowledge and understanding of brain development. Scores improved from pre-completion of Brain Builders Modules across all domains of knowledge and understanding (by 0.7 points on average).

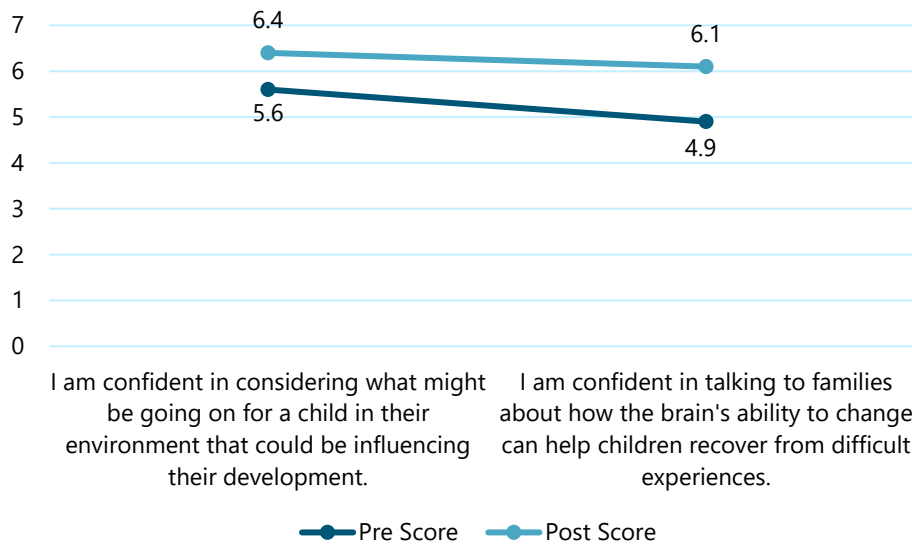
Figure 13 Improvements in knowledge and understanding scores pre and post completion of Brain Builders Modules



Source: Emerging Minds Brain Builders 24-month report.

Confidence scores improved even more (1 point on average) from pre-completion. The score which was the most positively influenced across all pre and post survey questions was the one relating to people’s ability to put their knowledge into practice (confidence in talking to families about how the brain’s ability to change can help children recover from difficult experiences). This question had the lowest average score pre-completion and shifted by 1.2 points. This suggests that people completing Brain Builders are better equipped and more likely to have positively framed conversations with families about adverse childhood experiences.

Figure 14 Improvements in confidence pre and post completion of Brain Builders Modules



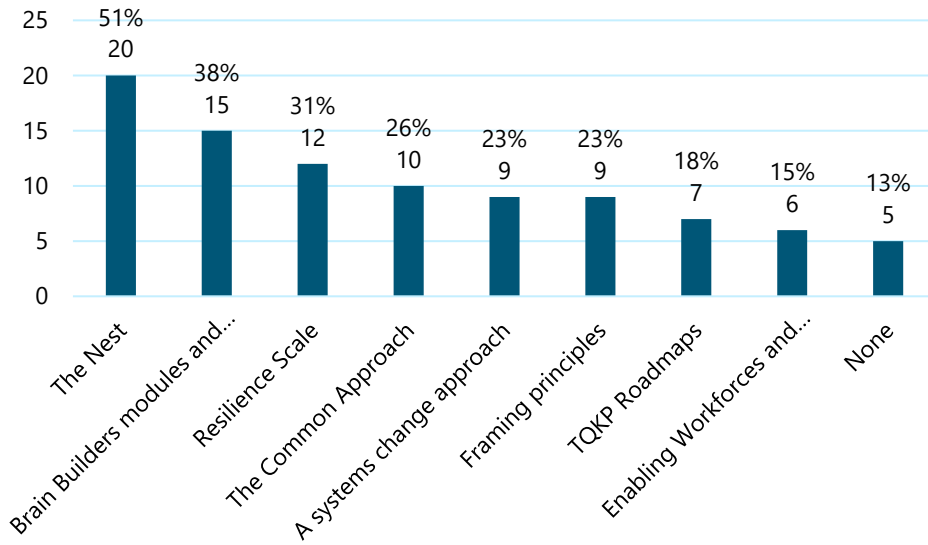
Source: Emerging Minds Brain Builders 24-month report.

2.5 TQKP resources are being taken up and utilised in ways that increase their reach and impact

Lever: Concerted leadership; Putting Data and Learning to Work; Stronger Workforces

It is clear from partner and backbone team member interviews, and partnership survey data that TQKP resources are valued and are being utilised by many of TQKP's partners and shared amongst their networks. All but 13% (n=5) of respondents had used at least one TQKP approach or resource, and around half (51%, n=20) had used The Nest.

Figure 15 Number and proportion of partnership survey respondents who have used a TQKP approach or resource



Source: Partnership survey (n=37)

Partners spoke to the general usefulness of the resources, reflecting that they are relevant to their work and user friendly. Some mentioned more specifically that their adaptability to the context and the format that enables users to quickly identify relevant information maximise their usefulness.

It is clear from partner and Backbone Team member interviews that TQKP's resources on strategic framing have strongly impacted on TQKP partners and their networks. Twenty three percent (n=9) of partnership survey respondents had used Framing Principles.

Many partners have started to apply Framing as a framework to shape their communication about their work, especially in the context of public messaging around advocacy and funding. One partner shared how joining the Framing group helped them rewrite their grant proposal using more positive, affirming language while still highlighting the challenges.

"...trying to find a balance between positive framing, where that was appropriate. Still highlighting the challenge, but with slightly different language that's still very family affirming, child affirming, you know neuro diverse affirming... I definitely took that forward and still consider that in any of my presentations and publications today." – partner, interview

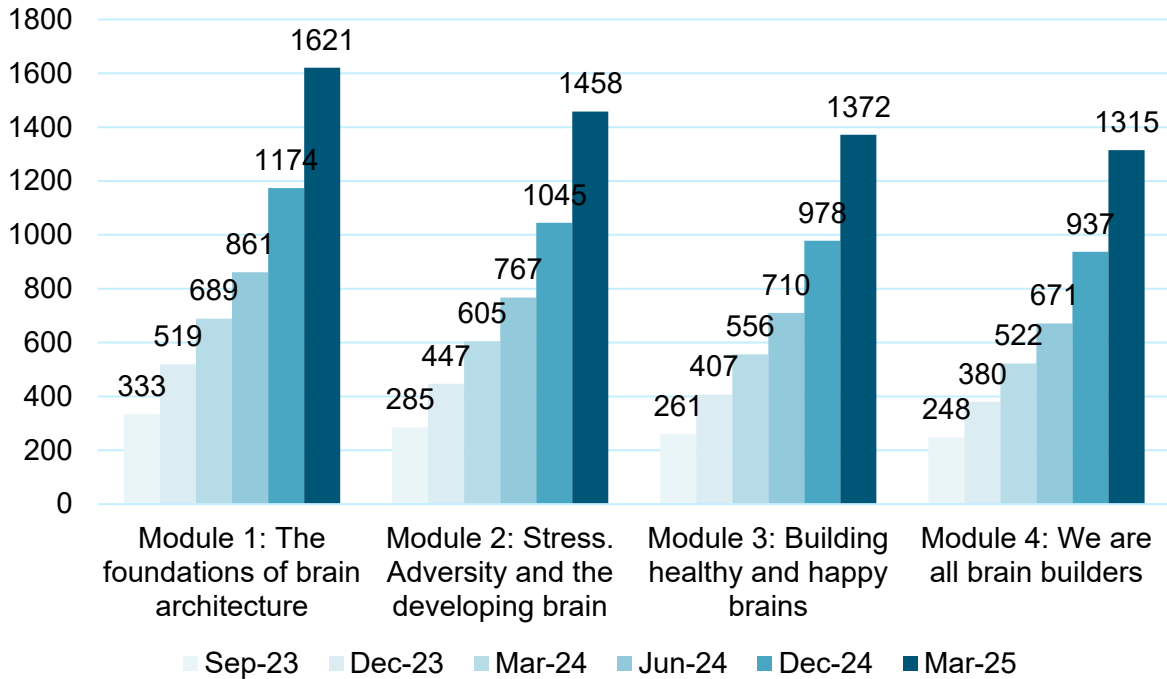
Another partner noted that they share the Framing Checklist with teachers.

For many partners, applying framing to their communication has become a regular part of their processes to make their case about why supporting children and young people to thrive matters stronger and more consistent.

Other resources that have had a wide reach amongst interviewed partners the Enabling Workforces Toolkit and the Resilience Scale. Backbone team member interviews confirmed that the resources that have been accessed the most via the TQKP website are the Enabling

Workforces and Organisations Toolkit (EWOT), resources related to framing and Brain Builders. Data from Emerging Minds, which hosts the Brain Builders modules, shows steady growth in completions of the modules over time. Figure 16 shows an increased rate of completions in the December 2024 to March 2025 period, suggesting that this resource is being shared and its use encouraged.

Figure 16 Brain Builders Module completion over time



Source: Emerging Minds Brain Builders 24 Month report

Note: Data is provided for 3 month increments until June 2024 and Dec 2024 to Mar 2025, however there is a 6 month increment between June 2024 and December 2024.

TQKP partners use the EWOT to strengthen how teams work with children and young people across Queensland. Embedding the 10-minute or less 'Heart' resources from EWOT into regular staff capability-building was trialled in 3 locations, including a Youth Justice Early Action Group (Early Action Groups coordinate multi-agency case management for children aged 8–16 years who are at moderate/high risk of future offending and their families), a school, and a child safety service centre²⁵. The evaluation conducted by Emerging Minds identifies that the EWOT 'Heart' resources and implementation approach were effectively embedded within workforce learning activities, that they were well received by staff, and that staff engaged in further reflection and conversations about the content in relation to their own context and work²⁶. The report also showed that staff engaged were thinking more

²⁵ Emerging Minds. 2025. Enabling Workforces and Organisations for Thriving Kids initiative Evaluation Report.

²⁶ Ibid.

about early intervention and prevention, understood the impacts of adverse childhood experiences better, had a better understanding of their own potential impact on children's outcomes, and were using the Resilience Scale metaphor²⁷. From this trial, the EWOT is now being embedded into a Youth Justice Early Action Group in another location.

"Because the whole [Early Action Group] team were engaging with the same learning resources and having reflective conversations in their context, which we know is needed for translation, they have found it really easy to apply to their work and they've seen real shifts in practice and in the way the team understand how one another interacts with this work." - TQKP Backbone team member

There was also evidence that resources from the EWOT have been used and shared by partners in other workforce capability building.

"We've benefitted from the work of EWOT. We updated our Learning and Development materials with high quality evidence-based materials [from EWOT] that we roll out state-wide [to workers from many different sectors working with youth]...We use the Resilience Scale as a conceptual frame for factors that influence vulnerability...We've found the EWOT tools to be very user friendly for metro, regional, rural, remote and with First Nations in the Torres. We go to all these places and people like what we've pulled in [from EWOT/Resilience Scale]." - partner, interview

"We've shared the EWOT through to our providers." - partner, interview

Another partner noted they were looking at how to bring aspects from the resources into their work with First Nations families.

During interviews, several partners highlighted how using TQKP resources has impacted their work positively. Using the resources within their organisations and sharing them with stakeholder organisations across sectors has facilitated a shared understanding and language to discuss childhood development and brain building. This simplifies communication generally and more importantly enables people from across different sectors to come together, take a 'coordinated and integrated approach' to collaboration and 'talk as a collective.' Within organisations which use TQKP resources, this has also unified processes and protocols which again simplifies communication.

"Using practices and protocols that are shared it makes it much easier to communicate about the work you're doing and make comparisons" - partner, interview

Several partners also noted regular use of the NEST Framework and Resilience Scale, including in direct work with children and families.

²⁷ Ibid.

One partnership survey respondent said they had learned *“a tremendous amount from the TQKP team members regarding how they do their work...I have drawn more on some of TQKP’s procedural/process style (internal) documents and approaches to help me with my work.”*

2.6 Elements of initiatives are starting to reach children, youth and families

Levers: Engaged public; Putting Data and Learning to Work; Smarter Investment

“Early next year I could talk about outcomes on the ground.” – partner, interview

“The Brain Builders resources have been used to strengthen our early years services by helping families and educators better understand how children’s brains develop. We have shared this information through yarning with parents, workshops, and everyday conversations, making it practical and easy to apply at home and in the classroom. This has supported families to respond to children’s needs with more confidence, while also giving educators tools to integrate brain development knowledge into their practice.” – partnership survey response

There are elements of TQKP’s work that are now beginning to reach children, youth and families, however this is still in early stages and not yet at the stage where outcomes for children, youth and families can be measured. However, the data does indicate that outcomes for children and young people are likely in the future, and that some partners may be close to being able to measure outcomes from their use of TQKP tools and resources for children youth and families.

- One partner noted that the Resilience Scale was helping members of the workforce to understand the importance of working in a coordinated way to get outcomes for young people.
- Investments were made by the previous government under the Putting Queensland Kids First Strategy (which was influenced by TQKP) into: Maternal Early Child Sustained Home Visiting Program (MECSH) at the Sunshine Coast, Townsville, and eventually state-wide to support children’s healthy development; and an Early Childhood Coordinator supporting families of children 0-8 in Gladstone with service navigation²⁸.

²⁸ Alston, F. 2025. [Putting Queensland kids first: Supporting Gladstone families through early childhood connection](#). The Sector

- There was an example of the NEST Framework being used as a tool in a therapeutic context to talk to children and families about their challenges in a safe, holistic and affirming way, and TQKP Backbone team members noted that they had heard of the Resilience Scale being embedded by a service provider in a case management process.
- Conversations sparked by the Thriving Kids in Disasters (TKiD) project about the need for children and young people's voices to be heard in disaster response and recovery efforts influenced one partner to undertake engagement with school aged children to inform design of their program
- One partner uses TQKP tools and resources to shift teacher mindsets about their students.

"We're working with some schools who think it's the kids' job to be at school and get it done so we are using that for psychoeducation. We use those resources [Framing checklist and Brain Builders] to explain that to teachers in an informative and appropriate way." – partner, interview

"It's subtle, but I think, you know, as a result of that [TKiD], we're like, OK, yeah, actually we need to go and talk to some young people and children. We need to hear their voice." – partner, interview

Some partners noted in interviews that they hadn't seen or weren't aware of any changes for children and young people from TQKP's work yet, and some noted the difficulty of measuring this and that it wouldn't be observable until a much longer period of time has passed.

3. What kinds of changes are the Initiatives producing within which parts of the system?

TQKP is making progress on embedding neuroscience and brain development knowledge across different sectors and workforces through engagement of the tertiary education sector. This in turn is helping to provide a shared language across different sectors.

In terms of the sectors it is engaging and influencing, TQKP has had the most success with the philanthropic, non-profit and public service sectors.

Rubric scores and the qualitative data demonstrate that while awareness of TQKP and engagement of government stakeholders have been easier to influence, advocacy work to keep children and young people’s wellbeing high on the Queensland Government’s policy agenda faces more challenges and progresses more slowly.

TQKP’s goals for productive investment into systems initiatives has been exceeded for Phase 2, and TQKP has had a clear influence on philanthropic funding and collaboration in Queensland.

Table 4 Rubric scores by criteria for the dimensions of increased child development capabilities, influencing the policy agenda and productive investment

Dimension	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating
Increased child development capabilities of the		Neuro-capability training is being embedded in workforce training		
TQKP’s efforts are keeping child and adolescent development high on the policy agenda		How highly leaders in the sector rank issues affecting children and young people on the Qld Government’s policy agenda	Engagement of government stakeholders in TQKP	Decision makers are aware of TQKP

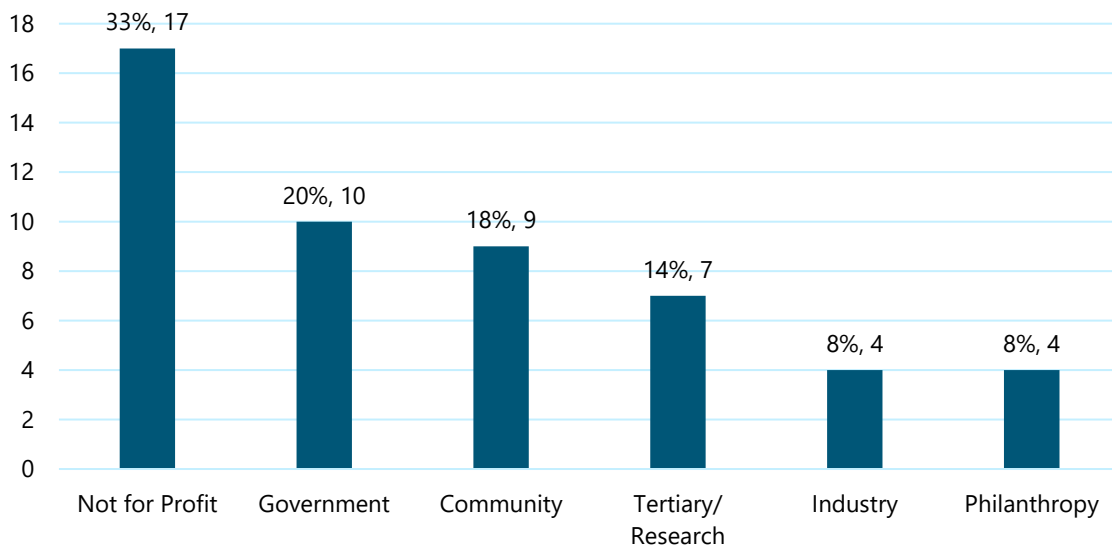


Dimension	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating
Productive investment into systems initiatives				Achievement of targets for co-investment into TQKP

3.1 Sectors and systems being reached

The partnership survey (Figure 17) shows that the greatest number of people are engaging from the Not-for-Profit sector (33%, n=17). However, it also showed engagement from the government sector is not far behind (20%, n=10).

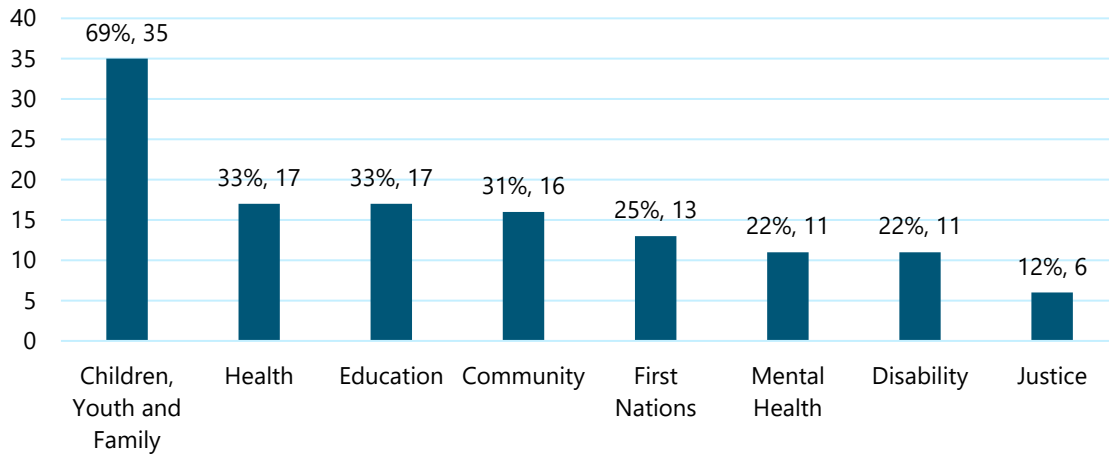
Figure 17 Sectors where partnership survey respondents work



Most partnership survey respondents worked in the children youth and family system (69%, n=35) (Figure 18). Health, Education and Community were also common systems for respondents to work in.



Figure 18 System where partnership survey respondents work (could select multiple options)



Source: partnership survey (n=51)

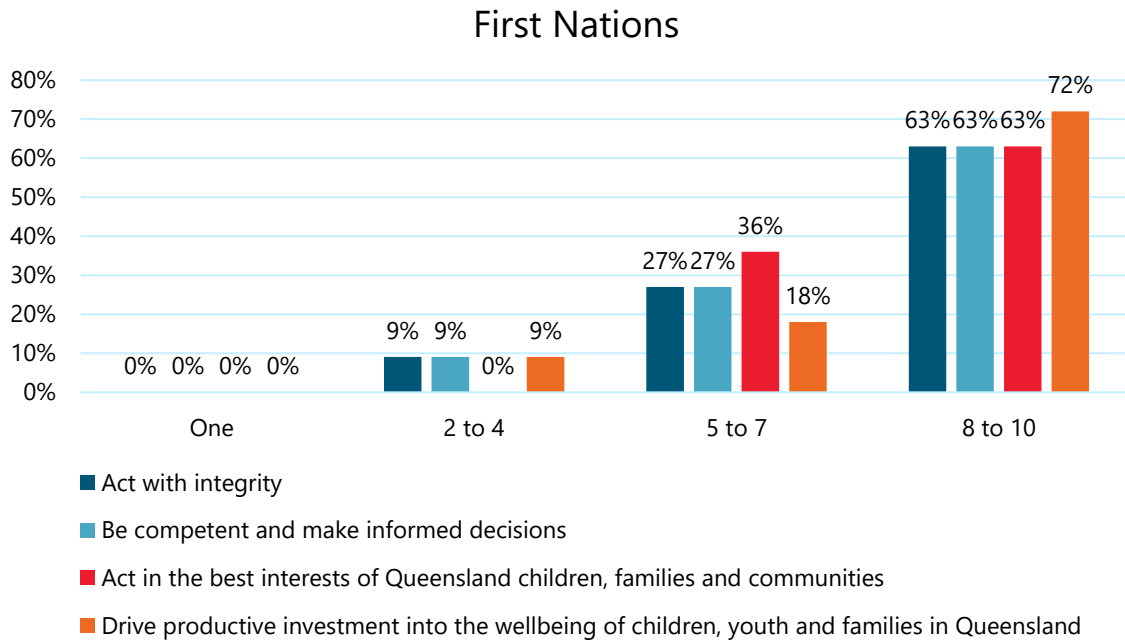
In terms of First Nations engagement, there was some positive feedback from partners interviewed:

- one said that EWOT has been well received with First Nations workforces
- two noted that TQKP consistently demonstrates respect for First Nations knowledge
- one said TQKP is seen as a role model for how to support self-determination.

There was a suggestion from one interviewee that TQKP needs Indigenous employees within the Backbone team, to further integrate self-determination at that level too.

Those that identified that they worked in the First Nations sector had relatively high trust in TQKP to act with integrity, be competent and make informed decisions, act in the best interests of Queensland’s children, families and communities, and drive productive investment into the wellbeing of children, youth and families (Figure 19), however this was slightly lower than for the whole cohort of participants (Figure 20). Interestingly, those working in the First Nations sector had higher trust in TQKP driving productive investment than other dimensions, compared with the whole cohort of participants. This may be explained by a theme from partner interviews and funders in the sensemaking workshop that TQKP is providing a valuable matchmaking service between philanthropies and organisations who aren’t generally on the radar of philanthropic funders.

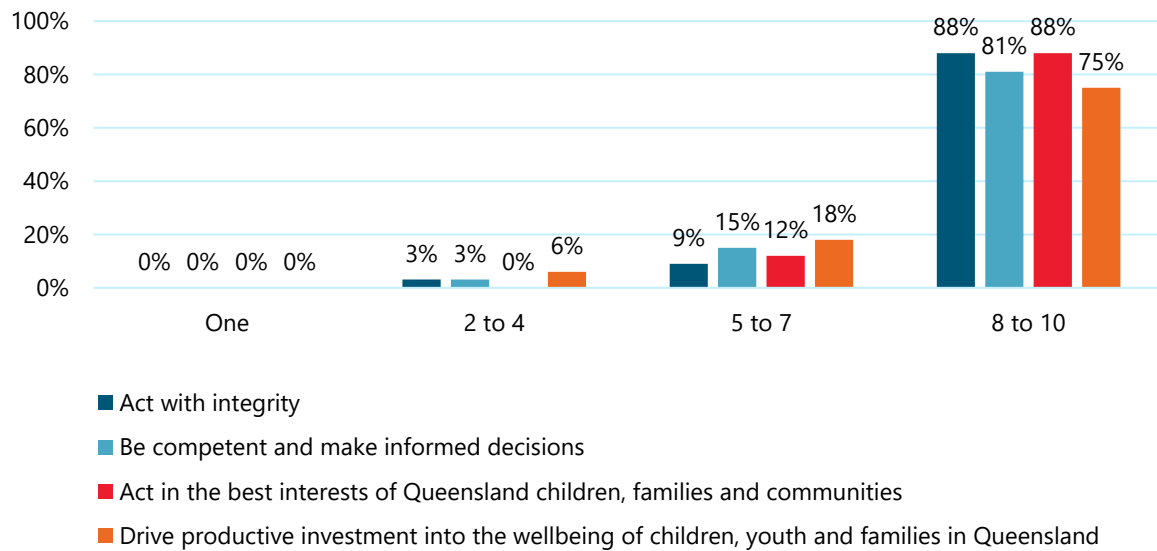
Figure 19 Most who work in the First Nations sector have high trust in TQKP



Source: Partnership survey (N=21).

Note: Response scale from 1=trust not at all to 10=trust completely)

Figure 20 There is very high trust in TQKP across sectors (inclusive of all responses)



Source: Partnership survey (N=32)

Note: Response scale from 1=trust not at all to 10=trust completely)

3.2 Neuroscience and brain development knowledge is being embedded across sectors

Lever: Putting Data and Learning to Work; Stronger Workforces

There was a theme in partner, decision maker and TQKP Backbone team interviews that TQKP's work on neuroscience and brain development training and collation of materials is now starting to be embedded in parts of the system. This was also visible in the partnership survey, with the most common initiative respondents had engaged with being Brain Builders (33%, 17). Interviewees provided examples of how TQKP's resources in neuroscience and brain development are being embedded in the system:

- modules from the Brain Builders course being used in pre-service curricula at the University of the Sunshine Coast
- neuroscience has been added to Queensland University of Technology (QUT) postgraduate nursing curriculum²⁹
- links to the Brain Builders course being provided in the TAFE Qld library
- Brain Builders Understanding Brain Development Modules have been adapted by Early Childhood Australia with a focus on Early Childhood Education (ECEC) and made these available on the [ECA Learning Hub](#)
- Brain Builders training and a community of practice have been added to the [Children's Health Queensland ECHO](#) (ECHO is an online learning platform and community of practice)
- Brain Builders materials being used by the State Library of Queensland to train First Five Forever facilitators.

A neuro-informed curricula review being conducted as a collaboration between UQ, the University of the Sunshine Coast, QUT and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Qld is looking at how to embed resources from Brain Builders and the EWOT (collates reputable training and information offerings by the time needed to complete them) in pre-service training.

²⁹ Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership. 2025. *Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership Phase 2 Year 3 Report to Paul Ramsay Foundation, July 2024-June 2025*; [QUT - Unit - NSN810 Contemporary Issues in Paediatric and Adolescent Nursing](#) (specifically uses terminology 'neuro-informed policy and practice'; [QUT - Unit - NSN811 Specialist Paediatric and Adolescent Nursing](#)).

One partner noted that there is a strong uptake and demand for training in neuroscience and brain development, even in professions where there is some pre-service training in child development, for example, paediatric nursing.

The TQKP Backbone team also noted that they have received several invitations to present on the EWOT and Brain Builders in various places and workforces – including the Queensland Police Service.

A TQKP Backbone team member said they'd have noticed a shift in the understanding of the key concepts of neurodevelopment, and the importance of neurodevelopment knowledge among the leaders they have contact with.

"They're doing the work of coming to the workshops and learning all they can and doing Berry Street Training too because they get it now." – TQKP Backbone team member

One partner noted a shift in how the State Library of Queensland talks about the role of libraries, from a literacy focus to playing a role in brain development. The State Library partnered with The University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute (TQKP partner and lead on the Brain Builders project) to deliver a 2-day national forum for libraries in May 2024 called 'Now and for their futures: Libraries brain building in the early years national forum'. This took a focus on child brain development, the importance of the early years, introduced The Nest Framework, and provided opportunities to consider the role of libraries in early childhood development and outcomes³⁰.

3.3 TQKP has catalysed more collaborative investment

Lever: Smarter investment

3.3.1 Influencing philanthropic funding and collaboration

TQKP's unique role as an intermediary between the early childhood sector, philanthropic funding bodies and the government has allowed them to co-develop a shared agenda around what children need to thrive, to advocate for these needs to engaged philanthropies, and support philanthropies to bring this agenda to government. This has included keeping a focus on outcomes, rather than outputs in funding and impact conversations.

TQKP has also influenced greater collaboration between philanthropies that fund into Queensland. Initially, a group of funders got together to fund TQKP, and because TQKP was

³⁰ State Library of Queensland. 2025. [Early Years Forum Evaluation](#). State Library of Queensland [website]

going well, the group continued and formalised as the Queensland Kids Funders Alliance: a mechanism for collaborative funding and information sharing for philanthropies funding into Queensland. One funder noted in the sensemaking meeting, *"It's one of those lovely positive reinforcement loops"*.

In addition to exceeding its target for government and philanthropic funding for Phase 2 by \$8.5 million, TQKP has been able to raise a significant amount of funding for its Phase 3 delivery (\$23.5 million) from philanthropic sources. The collaboration between funders to deliver this investment, as well as the investment of funder representatives' time and knowledge in developing TQKP's strategy and evaluation framework is unusual. As one partner we interviewed noted, *"It is, in my view, Australia leading and world leading, this kind of investment and approach... this kind of investment is incredibly rare."*

"In terms of the catalysing more collaborative investment and funding that's absolutely the case ...the Place network has made that whole collaborative investment possible. There's so much work that goes on behind the scenes with the Backbone team to bring such a complex and diverse network of stakeholders together to align into something that is engaged with across so many different stakeholders in a way that the value of that and the alignment of that is really clear. That's not something that is ever funded outside of something like this." – funder, sensemaking meeting

It is also possible that TQKP, alongside broader shifts in philanthropy and government to a systems approach to change, influenced the development of the IDAC, a 10-year collaboration between government and philanthropies to improve health and wellbeing for children, young people and families³¹. TQKP and the alliance of funders who collaboratively funded it may have acted as a 'test case' and helped strengthen relationships between funders involved in IDAC. The overlap in philanthropies involved in IDAC, who are also funders of TQKP makes this more likely (The Bryan Foundation, Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, Hand Heart Pocket, Minderoo Foundation, John Villiers Trust, Paul Ramsay Foundation. ARACY are the Strategic Convenor of the IDAC, and TQKP and ARACY are both highly visible on the IDAC website. One partner interviewed drew the parallel between the QKFA and IDAC:

"in some ways the partnership there [to fund TQKP in Queensland] was the first iteration of what IDAC is hoping to do. So in in many respects you that was TQKP ahead of the curve of the IDAC initiative. Almost a sort of test case kind of thing." – Partner, interview

The timeline of IDAC development aligns very closely with Phase 2 of TQKP, with a group of 14 philanthropic partners approaching the Australian Government in August 2022 to consider a partnership (TQKP was collaboratively funded for Phase 2 in May 2022). The greater

³¹ IDAC. 2024. [Our Story - IDAC](#). IDAC [Website]

engagement of philanthropy with government in Queensland since TQKP began Phase 2 in 2022 was noted by partners and Backbone team members.

3.3.2 Brokering relationships between funders and those at the coalface and advocating for funding needs not met

There are also several examples of TQKP acting as an incubator for solutions, first identifying a need, then identifying a match between the right organisation to lead the solution and the philanthropic body whose funding interests align.

TQKP have also been able to connect philanthropic organisations with organisations doing the work on the ground in communities, and to advocate on behalf of organisations who are commonly overlooked by funders – including in regional and remote areas.

“A lot of investment falls in that Southeast corner [metropolitan]. When it comes to advancing [our organisation] for funding at various tables with philanthropy and such I've been really leaning on [TQKP Backbone team member] ...to support children in regions.” – partner, interview

“The introduction through Thriving Queensland Kids to different types of partners has directly enabled one-on-one funding relationships to progress...the value of those more one-to-one introductions where funders are looking at their own strategy and how they're partnering directly with the services that they wouldn't otherwise have met or have any kind of context for.” – funder, sensemaking meeting

3.3.3 Engaging and influencing government

Being philanthropically funded, partners appreciate the autonomy and independence TQKP has, which some partners feel enables TQKP to have honest conversations with government without the fear of funding repercussions that can be a barrier for government-funded service-delivery organisations.

While there is yet to be evidence that TQKP has influenced the current Queensland Government (which began on 28 October 2024) on its policy agenda and framing of issues, or changes in investments, there were investments made by the previous government under the Putting Queensland Kids First Strategy (which was influenced by TQKP³²) prior to the 2024 election. This included into the MECSH at the Sunshine Coast, Townsville, and

³² ARTD. 2024. [Evaluation of TQKP: Engaging the system and improving evidence \(Report 1\) - Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership](#)

eventually state-wide to support children's healthy development^{33 34}, and in an Early Childhood Coordinator for Gladstone³⁵. Partners and TQKP Backbone team members also mentioned there are new opportunities for engagement with the Queensland Government led by David Crisafulli as it has instituted a Minister for Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, which brings together many of the services and issue areas touching Queensland children, youth and families under one portfolio³⁶. TQKP is liaising with central and line agencies, including an Office for Social Impact established in Queensland Treasury.

One partner interviewed noted that TQKP as an *intermediary* "can push for some of this [investment in programs for children] to happen by bringing people together and bringing us out of our silo. They provide pressure to what we [government] should and could be focusing on." – partner, interview.

The change in Queensland's Government in October 2024 has meant some setbacks in terms of the alignment of government policy priorities with TQKP's agenda³⁷. However, interviews with decision makers in 2025, compared to 2023, show a shift in awareness of a policy need for a shared purpose, increased service integration and earlier intervention to meet the needs of Queensland's children. Some interviewees also raised equitable service delivery and place-focussed policy responses, alongside data, measurement and standards as key areas that need to shift to better support outcomes for Queensland's children. These have all been areas that have been targeted in TQKP's Phase 2 strategy and work. This may be a signal that TQKP's messages about what's needed, and modelling of cross-sectoral collaboration are having influence.

The partnership survey showed government stakeholders have high trust that TQKP acts with competence and integrity, and in the best interests of children, families and community; and to drive productive investment into the wellbeing of children, youth and families. No government stakeholders gave ratings below 6.

³³ Fentiman S and Ryan R (3 September 2024) [Nurse home visits put Queensland kids first](#) [media release], Qld Government

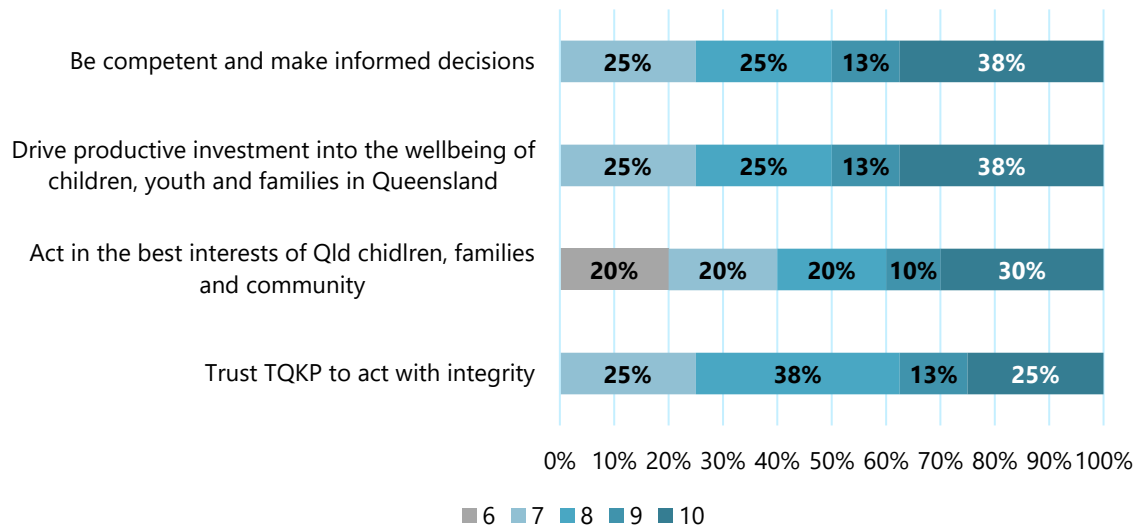
³⁴ Miles S and Fentiman S (5 June 2024) [Miles Government investment to put more Townsville kids first, with help at home](#) [media release], Qld Government

³⁵ C&K Association. [Gladstone Region Early Childhood Coordinator](#). C&K [website]

³⁶ Amanda Camm MP. is the current minister for this portfolio.

³⁷ The Miles Government's Putting Queensland Kids First Strategy had signalled strong alignment, but investments were discontinued under the Crisafulli Government.

Figure 21 Government stakeholders' ratings of TQKP (1-10, where 10 is 'completely')

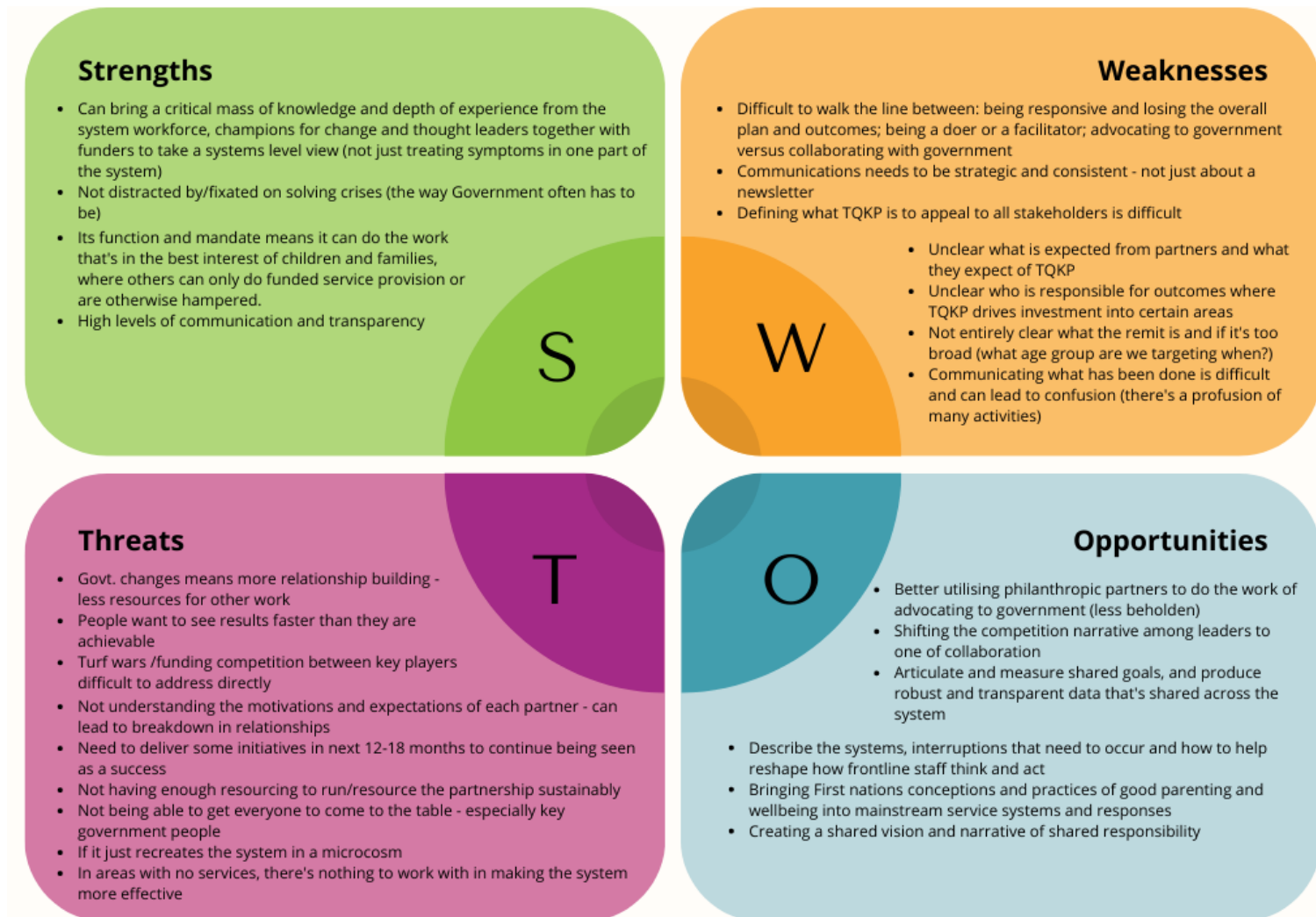


Source: Partnership survey. Trust TQKP to act with integrity (n=8); Act in the best interests of Qld children, families and community (n=10); Drive productive investment into the wellbeing of children, youth and families in Queensland (n=8); Be competent and make informed decisions (n=8).

3.4 What are the enablers to achieving TQKP's desired change in the system?

During the planning phase of this evaluation (June – December 2023), we undertook interviews with 6 board members to scope the evaluation. We asked them about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for TQKP (Figure 22). Most of these threats and weaknesses reappear in the barriers and risks identified by partners and decision makers in interviews, and many of the strengths and opportunities appear in the enablers identified, as well as throughout this and the previous evaluation report. This is suggestive that a key enabler of TQKP is its access to people with an understanding of the system, its parts and its dynamics to provide strategic insights that accurately reflect the context and reality.

Figure 22 SWOT identified by TQKP Board Member interviews



3.4.1 The enablers

TQKP is boosting confidence through connection and validation, creating a reinforcing loop

A reinforcing loop is 'found where a system element has the ability to reproduce itself or to grow as a constant fraction of itself.'³⁸

Partners said that an outcome of their engagement with TQKP was that they felt less alone in doing their work and in their approach to how they do their work. One of the barriers described by partners and the Backbone team to TQKP's ability to progress their goals is the difficulty of describing the work. TQKP is working as an intermediary or broker at the intersection of multiple systems, sectors, disciplines and levels, and this is about relationships and approaches - connecting, catalysing and learning - as much as tangible things like activities or outputs. It seems evident that this difficulty in describing the work has also been experienced as an isolating factor by individuals and communities taking a systems, holistic, place-based or collective approach, and that this impacts on confidence.

Having connection with and validation from others working in a similar way seems to help boost confidence and self-efficacy. There were several examples of this in interviews:

- One partner noted that they use TQKP Backbone team members to 'bounce ideas off'
- Another stated that TQKP gave them permission and confidence to lead differently and more effectively
- One noted that having TQKP highlight strengths of those working in a collaborative and place-based way in one regional town helped boost confidence in the approach they were taking
- One partner identified the community were energised and motivated by being included in the listening tour of PLACE (facilitated by TQKP), and that they had previously felt they were 'going it alone – especially as a community member'.

Data from the partnership survey reiterated that people engaging with TQKP are experiencing increased confidence and capability to contribute to systems change as well as knowledge of how to contribute to systems change (Figure 12).

Research has shown a connection between self-efficacy and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), which are voluntary constructive workplace behaviours that exceed contractual obligations such as extra-role performance, pro-social organisational behaviours (like supporting colleagues), and voice (volunteering ideas to improve effectiveness or voicing concerns)³⁹.

³⁸ Meadows, 2008.

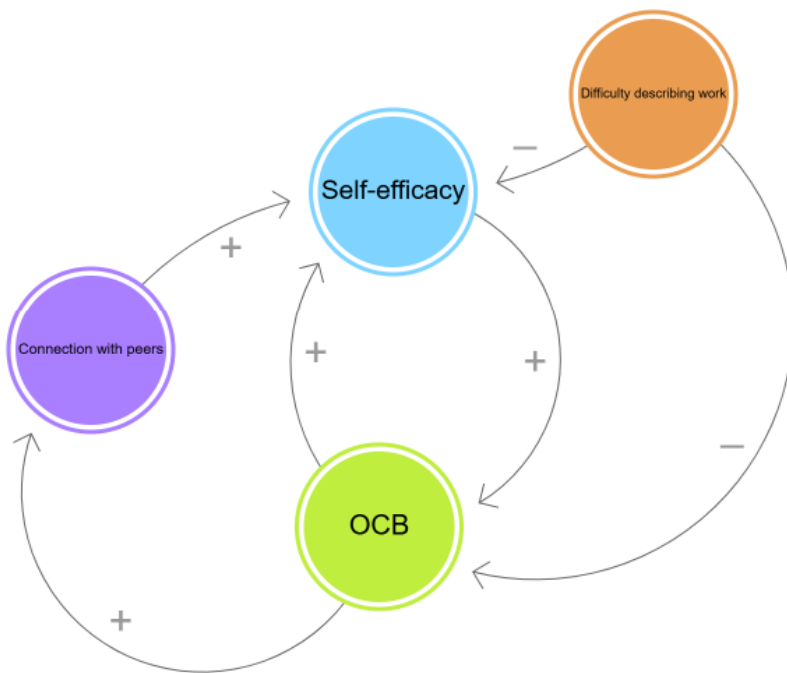
³⁹ Roberta Fida, Ivan Marzocchi, Mamoona Arshad, Marinella Paciello, Claudio Barbaranelli, Carlo Tramontano. 2025. [Self-efficacy and nontask performance at work: a meta analytic summary](#). *Personality and Individual Differences*, 241

This was something also remarked on by a Backbone team member, speaking about the skills and capabilities they've seen leaders develop through TQKP.

"We want to weave everything together, but we have lots of different projects... But there are people who naturally do it, ask for these things, get involved across different initiatives. It's a part of how they work. You often hear the opposite 'that's not in the scope of my work'. And then you see the other side of the coin where people just so naturally develop the skill and then do more with what they've got. I think that's something that we didn't plan for, but it happened." – TQKP Backbone team member

This relationship is visualised in the simple causal loop diagram below, in which connection with peers impacts positively on self-efficacy, which impacts positively on OCB, which then drives more connection with peers. Difficulty describing the work has a negative impact on self-efficacy and OCB. Making it easier to communicate systems change ways of working and their value is therefore likely to boost the positive aspects of the loop.

Figure 23 Self-reinforcing loop of connection with peers, self-efficacy, difficulty describing work and organisational citizenship behaviour



Given that TQKP is the kind of intermediary that relies to a great degree on system actors' organisational citizenship behaviours (as well as outside of organisation behaviours which we might term 'system citizenship behaviours') for achievement of its goals, this dynamic is likely a significant enabler.



The communication channels to feed knowledge up and down the system are now established

TQKP has established communication channels to feed knowledge and evidence up and down to the different scales of the system, from government and philanthropy to large not-for-profit service providers to community-based organisations and from the community level up to philanthropy and government. It has done this in many ways, including:

- by bringing members working at different scales of the system together within working groups and communities of practice
- through advocacy efforts like the Early Childhood Development Roadmap
- by communicating with philanthropies about the work of grassroots organisations
- by providing regular updates through the website, social media and newsletters that keep people apprised of what's happening in the system, and of available evidence and practical resources
- through meetings between Backbone team members and those in the system.

These channels have been enablers of TQKP's goals for Phase 2, to drive more concerted leadership, influence smarter investment, strengthen workforce knowledge and capability, to improve integrated service delivery and the use of data, evidence and experience. This provides a strong platform for TQKP's further work in Phase 3.

"We're tapping into this amazing repository of knowledge, and resources but also touching base and bringing ideas up from the ground to TQKP at this higher policy/research level because they are across so much more. And they are catalysing new work with philanthropists, local government and state government. If they are coordinating all those ways of creating change and ways people work in Qld, they are also creating a beautiful legacy in terms of research findings and evidence base [e.g. from policy/research but also practice evidence and case studies]. And they do share stuff – heaps of funding bodies over the years have had ample opportunities to establish clearing houses of reports but they haven't." – partner, interview

"The emails have helped me stay across those broader initiatives and I think that's been extremely helpful." – partner, interview

There's a growing awareness of the need for centralised funding or bodies for children's wellbeing, and for integrated and early services

"I really love the idea that there is an organisation that's attempting to address children specifically in Qld because I think it's really needed." - decision maker

Comparing interviews with decision makers in 2025 to 2023, shows a shift towards an appetite for change around service integration, followed by early intervention and strategic commissioning of services. As noted in ISSR's report (Appendix 2), interviewees in 2025 recognised the *"need for a structural shift to support more cross-sectoral collaboration and a shared purpose"* and the need for centralised or strategic funding approaches or bodies to oversee this and support accountability.

This alignment of decision makers' mental models about what's needed within the system with TQKP's agenda is likely to further enable productive conversations and collaborations in Phase 3.

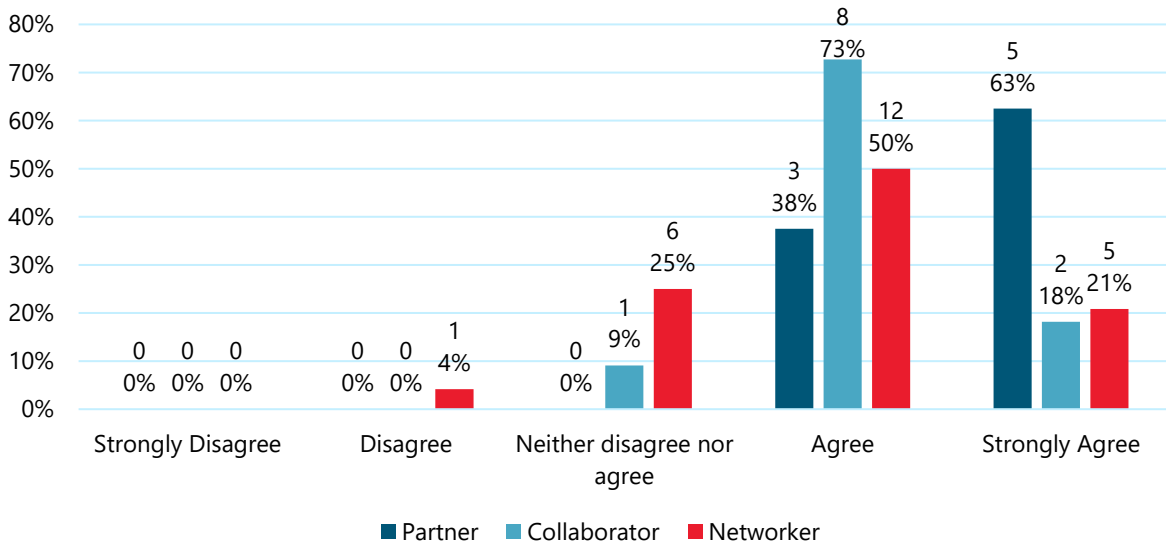
3.5 Dealing with barriers and managing risks

The Barriers

People can feel the value of TQKP but its value and what it does is difficult to communicate

Bellwether and Partner interviewees were clear that they valued TQKP, and this was reiterated by partnership survey responses that showed that regardless of whether people are networkers, collaborators or partners, they feel their engagement with TQKP is worth their time and effort (Figure 24). The majority of survey respondents (67%) also agreed/strongly agreed that the work of TQKP adds value to their work and/or role.

Figure 24 My engagement within TQKP is worth the time and effort



Source: partnership survey responses (n=43)

While the value is felt, it is difficult to communicate. TQKP Backbone team members commented on the complexity of communicating what and how TQKP works and about the need to first to communicate about systems concepts and ways of working in order to explain TQKP’s work. Partners also commented on the time it takes to understand TQKP:

“Takes smart people with a decent level of involvement quite some time and engagement to really get a good understanding of what TQKP is and does, and how it operates - not so much a barrier as part and parcel with the relational approach but does slow things down”. – partner, interview

“I find people don't know what they do. I think that's probably [an issue for] everyone who's working in sort of systems change and intermediary sort of stuff. It's not easy stuff to explain. But I do think that people don't know what they are doing. There's strong brand recognition, but people don't have a strong sense of the vision and ways of working and what they're trying to do...the way of working is different from what people are used to. I think there's room for improvement there.” – partner, interview

One partner noted how this could become a risk:

“TQKP is involved in many projects and initiatives, risk is that the partners are not clear on what their own role is in everything that is happening and withdraw in consequence.” – partner, interview

Partners and decision makers also noted that TQKP is operating in a landscape in which there are other intermediaries and initiatives, which can make it even more difficult to

communicate what it does that's unique and what it does that is aligned with others in the space.

"There are also many other intermediaries in the space and lots of place-based work happening. TQKP needs to remain relevant and offer a value add." – partner, interview

TQKP have recognised this as a challenge, and since the previous evaluation report (June 2024) have invested in further strategic communications capacity to address this.

Implication

Making it easier to communicate about systems ways of working and their value clearly and concisely would benefit to both TQKP and those in its network who already or want to work in systems ways. There is the opportunity to develop a working group or resources to support this.

This will also help:

- build systems literacy (of those involved in a working group and anyone else accessing any resources, metaphors or phrases developed)
- engage those who make decisions about investment and resources in understanding systems ways of working
- support those in TQKP's network to more rapidly understand how TQKP's ways of working and the value of this.

The who and what of the system are constantly changing, but government investment structures and incentives remain the same

Interviews identified the challenge of responding to constant change of the 'who' and 'what' in the system, while the 'infrastructure' of the system continues to provide resistance to change. As one TQKP Backbone team member put it, *"There are signs of shifts, but the barriers haven't changed"*.

The constant turnover and attrition of people from the system was noted by both partners and decision makers as something that can act as an impediment to the rate of systems change achievable but was also raised as a rationale for the continuous need for skilling and connecting leaders.

"Time, political climate, attrition - particularly attrition is a huge barrier in government. TQKP needs to continue to exist to relight the fire. They could do the best job, have the best resources, have inspired the most number of people in government, and in five years half of them aren't going to be in government anymore. Particularly if you looked at things like partnering with the Public Sector Commission. They run the Policy Futures graduate program. With avenues like that, you're constantly injecting the new policy grads with the knowledge, and then they're

going up, getting promotions, moving through the system". – partner, interview (talking about barriers and opportunities)

Short political cycles and associated policy and funding shifts were mentioned by partners in interviews as a context in which it is difficult to achieve the kinds of early intervention and prevention investments to create intergenerational outcomes. Decision makers also acknowledged the mismatch between 3-year political cycles and the long-term investments and vision needed to achieve outcomes. Additionally, the Queensland Government's investment infrastructure is a system of funding and commissioning in short-term cycles and to agencies which have a specific and bounded issue or sector, which interviewees noted directly acts as a barrier to addressing issues which cut across sectors.

"It's a challenge for Western democracies...we have entities and agencies which are funded and structured to deliver in a silo, and they're actually quite good at doing that within the confines of their agency, but they find it incredibly difficult to tackle challenges which run horizontally, so we're structured and funded vertically. I think one of the biggest policy challenges is really about how do you do that prioritisation piece and how do you do the really difficult piece which is to narrow down your focus to those really critical issues where you want to move the dial. What I see is that we...with all the best intentions, start way too many projects and we do about 25% of each of them. And the problem is that the 25% that I might tackle in my agency is different from the 25% that you tackle in yours. And then we're really disappointed with the outcome." – decision maker, interview

"I think funding models need to change...the way this agency is funded ...it's not funded from the get-go enough to meet demand, so it becomes this sort of retrospective of going back to government throughout the year. What that means is then you have an inability to make long-term investments because you don't have the available funds for that. There are those fundamental challenges around programmatic funding, specific agency funding, there's no combined funding for outcomes for children, so it's still a fragmented, siloed way of agencies being funded." – decision maker, interview

A recent report on the cost of late intervention also acknowledged the ways in which government funding and budgeting structures act as a barrier, noting that *"incentives to invest in early intervention are reduced when benefits do not accrue to the same portfolios or levels of government"* and notes the need for alternative approaches to budgeting for this reason⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ O'Connell, M. 2025, [The Cost of Late Intervention 2024](#), The Front Project, Melbourne

These themes suggest that these are structural barriers acting to hold the system in place, and that until these are addressed, the large shifts TQKP is working towards are unlikely to occur.

"Philanthropies can invest in actually, 'what does the system look like, what are the structures we need to have in place, but government needs to be walking behind that and picking it up and running with it...they need to be sustaining the way in which the system moves...we don't want to be sitting here in 5 years and saying government is still disengaged. That would be a missed opportunity." – partner, interview

In recognition of these issues, which were some of the frustrations with the system that TQKP was set up to address, TQKP's strategy is to create networks and collaboration structures "that can withstand the shifts in government, noting that they are going to change and that's the nature of [government]. So can we build a unified voice that, when government does change, the network stays on course" (Backbone team member, interview). This is based on the idea that: "When a system is far from equilibrium, small islands of coherence in a sea of chaos have the capacity to elevate the entire system to a higher order" (Quote attributed to Ilya Prigogine, Chemist and Nobel Laureate⁴¹).

Implications

Continuing to build on strategies for engaging government and driving more productive investment from government into child and youth wellbeing in Queensland will be essential in the next phase, to maintain momentum and enable achievement of TQKP's intergenerational change goals.

This includes providing targeted, clear and consistent messaging to government stakeholders on what TQKP activities or streams of work they should be involved in, how and why. TQKP also to be able to track and share how it is collaborating with and influencing government with the network regularly, so that the value of this work is better understood and recognised.

The recommendation from the June 2024 evaluation report to develop a strategy for how TQKP will engage with Queensland Government with key goals and responsibilities as well as a plan for monitoring how different engagement strategies work continue to be relevant.

⁴¹ [How Islands of Coherence in a Sea of Chaos Changes Social Change | by Collective Change Lab | Sep, 2025 | Medium](#)

Lack of integrated data systems and availability of data

Associated with the issue of short-term funding and funding in silos is the lack of data and measurement of children's wellbeing across portfolios.

One decision maker noted, Queensland lacks a shared database with data that covers children's health and wellbeing, and another felt the most important thing to address to better support outcomes for children in Queensland was to address the fragmented data and measurement about children's wellbeing.

"Some serious and refreshed ... measurement. I don't think we're very good and very timely with it and where it's being done. ...it's being done through AEDC⁴² or LSAC⁴³ ...that's sort of other people's data and they [Queensland Government policy makers] can pick or choose or ignore it. Queensland Health's own data sets are very minimal and not very subtle and only pick up a couple of elements as indicators. So, I think I think that's one of the issues and if you don't have the data then you can't argue for it. That's a real challenge is actually getting the correct information to drive on to drive policy setting. You know, the numbers should really tell us what the priorities are and help us rank them." – decision maker, interview

"All of these organisations that have the children's interests at heart...they're not collaborating because it's too hard and so there needs to be a structural level of change to make it easier and whether that's integrating databases and systems...In Qld we don't have a shared data database of children, health and well-being connected across all the different services...That's all about the privacy and all those things as well. It's about the ease of referring in and out of services and then not being able to track what happens to people... I don't think it's a lack of want. It's just that it is actually very difficult to do. And so having some sort of structural support that has a mandate around that is probably what I think is needed." – decision maker, interview

Again, while this is a barrier to achieving some of TQKP's other goals, it is another systems challenge TQKP was set up to address. TQKP is continuing to work with partners like UNICEF, ARACY and the Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas to explore the options for collating data across child and youth wellbeing domains that allows for more nuanced needs analyses to inform investment and policy. TQKP has also provided [capacity building around the use of social network analysis](#) to gather data on networks and partnerships, as well as

⁴² The Australian Early Development Census, conducted by the Australian Government Department of Education.

⁴³ The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children conducted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

improving literacy within organisations and communities around the different types of data through the Place Based Data Framework.

One partner also reflected on the lack of available data about the cost-savings of prevention programs, which makes it difficult to advocate for more investment in these, and that TQKP is collaborating on work to make data on this available.

"It's really hard to measure a prevention because if something doesn't happen, it's hard to measure that it didn't happen. You can measure things like how many kids stayed in school and all of those sorts of things, but it is actually quite hard to measure prevention. That's sort of where the data and the work that Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership brings in. It's really helpful." – partner, interview

Implications

Continuing to build collaborations to support better access to holistic data and addressing other data needs and gaps as they become salient will continue to be essential through Phase 3 to support goals, especially around more productive investment.

3.5.1 The risks

When asked about barriers, most Partners flagged potential risks. This may be reflective of the desire to see TQKP succeed, understanding that it is up against complex and entrenched challenges, and to ensure the potential for risks that could develop in future are attended to now.

Some of the concerns about risk are reflective of a lack of clarity on TQKP's role as an intermediary in the system, not as a service provider but as a facilitator of connection, collaboration, investment and learning.

Further, the data shows that at the present, the risks raised in consultations are potential future risks only. Feedback from all interviewee groups was strongly positive, with only one outlier who was sceptical about what tangible change TQKP can produce, but who still had positive things to say.

There's a risk to momentum if government don't engage through investment and policy shifts in Phase 3

There were concerns that if the philanthropic investment into TQKP is not also supported by government investment to "follow through on the expectation that's being set through this work" that credibility and momentum will be lost. One partner told us, "We don't want to be sitting here in five years and saying government is still disengaged. That would be a missed opportunity." Another partner noted, "philanthropy are taking a real risk here and we cannot

afford for this to fail because it will set us back a really long way...this kind of investment is incredibly rare..."

Several partners felt that to achieve its intended impact, TQKP will need to ensure it has the right skills and experience in the Backbone Team to continue driving advocacy to government. As one partner put it, "the only way to do systems integration is through advocacy." One partner spoke about a desire to see TQKP undertake more targeted advocacy to place pressure on specific policy issues (as opposed to system level advocacy), and a second identified an opportunity for TQKP to continue to advocate to government on where to invest in the ECEC sector.

"My very strong recommendation would be thinking about that influencing an advocacy arm... you can't take your foot off the throat of government." – Partner, interview

Another partner felt there was more work to be done "to engage lower-level leadership over top-level leadership, to overcome capacity issues at those levels".

Implications

It will be important for TQKP to have a strong strategy for how to engage with stakeholders at different levels of the Queensland Government. Given that there has been government engagement from those at lower operational levels of government and from Ministers, this may also point to the need to communicate more with TQKP's network about how government is engaging with TQKP around investment and policy.

It will also be important to have the strategies, skills and experience available to progress engagements with government to policy and investment changes. It is advisable to review the government advocacy and lobbying experience and skills of the TQKP Backbone team, and other resources available, to identify and address any gaps in what's needed to achieve changes in investment and policy. Providing training or professional development in this area to TQKP Backbone team staff and partners could also be considered if this is identified as a gap.

Risks to sector engagement include a lack of funding for those investing significant time and effort, and if high expectations of impact not being met

Many interviewees spoke very positively about the engagement TQKP has been able to create with diverse sectors, and one partner noted how impressed they were at how TQKP uses implementation science in their approach to engaging and communicating with people. Partnership survey data shows that new members of the network are still joining TQKP (of the 51 total respondents, 9 were new networkers and 4 new collaborators in the last 12 months). Survey results also show that currently, people see their engagement with TQKP as worth their time and effort (Figure 24).

However, there was also a strong theme around how stretched workforces are within the system and the tight financial setting they operate within, which limits how much they can engage long term.

"[The] networks and things coming together, that's amazing. But you're really relying on people's goodwill then to go ahead and do the work in resource stretched environments." – partner, interview

Partners and decision makers noted concerns around the limits to what can be achieved with a coalition of the willing in the absence of funding being made available to partners for implementation. They noted a need to identify ways to fund time spent on TQKP projects and work, where this is significant.

"We might be very interested in Thriving Queensland Kids Programs but if no one's paying for that...It's kind of [about] the license and ability to participate...there's no money to do this... [which means] people move around or get shuffled around so that continuity issue is a challenge...they're genuine bottle necks" – Decision maker

"I have been blown away by how willing people are to give their time and be part of it because they want to be part of something bigger than themselves. But I just know that there is a point at which that is very difficult for people to continue to do so in the long term without support for that...if they want to keep the buy in, there needs to be the funding to pay for that work. I think there is only so much goodwill before you actually need to be able to support people to take those next steps." – partner, interview

There were also some comments about the risks of losing engagement and trust with sectors and communities if the high expectations of impact, which come along with the large amounts of funding TQKP has received, are not met. Several partners noted that the impacts will need to be felt especially in non-metropolitan areas over the next few years in order to maintain trust and engagement.

"The sector have willingly participated in the process, but it does set up a bit of an expectation about, you know, what's going to come. I know they've got brilliant investment from philanthropies for the next five years. For cash strapped non-government organisations looking at that, it's 'oh, what we could do with that for service delivery'. But we really need the system stuff to move that along. But yeah, I think that's the barrier, keeping the sector engaged." – Partner, interview

There were also some comments around the need for TQKP to deliver more short, sharp communications around successes from tangible actions through regular monitoring and communications about impacts; as well as sharing case studies of things being implemented on the ground that TQKP's audiences can use to learn how to progress with implementation.

"Building those milestone evaluation pieces, sector consultations, routine impact measures so that we can have impact, I think is really critical because I know people are watching in Queensland and in the Federal Government..."

The risk of this seems to be decreasing as TQKP starts to have a more tangible presence on the ground in several communities. And where TQKP does have a strong community presence, there is the perception that it is applying funding well.

"I heard about it quite early on around like who are these people trying to come in and kind of put their brand on things? What about all this stuff that we've done for a really long time and how are they actually raising us up rather than like actually coming in and trying to take credit for it? And I'd heard that across a few, like a few different people. As TQKP has started to really translate that work into tangible actions that they've supported that's helped a little bit, but I think that communication around that, the messaging around their role and raising up the good work that's happening probably could be strengthened." – Partner, interview

One thing I've heard from community is that TQKP is receiving a lot of funding and is applying it well. Community will assess how that it is spent in the right way. The value goes both ways - as long as people are seeing this ongoing value then I can't see any issues – Partner, interview

Implications

Given how stretched workforces are within the system and the tight financial setting they operate within, there is a strong rationale to consider how to recognise and remunerate those who contribute significant time, resources and efforts into specific Initiatives or projects (where this is not feasible through their employed role), whether this be through TQKP's funds, by supporting people to make the case for involvement to their employer, or another way.

Continuous communication of progress towards TQKP's intended outcomes will be critical in Phase 3 to ensure the network are aware of the wins to help them feel the impact and associate them with TQKP. TQKP's communications with the network will need to be: regular, short and sharp; highlight successes from tangible actions; and share case studies of things being implemented on the ground that TQKP's audiences can use to learn how to progress with implementation.

As there are elements of TQKP's work that are now beginning to reach children, youth and families, and some partners are close to being able to measure outcomes from their use of TQKP tools and resources for children youth and families, there is the opportunity to capture this data. This could be done by providing a standard survey or interview question relating to

the most commonly used frameworks (The NEST and Resilience Scale) that organisations could add to their existing data collection with clients; as well as through TQKP's Ripple Survey. Sharing case studies with the network of how people are using TQKP frameworks and resources directly with their work with children, youth and families will help to encourage others to use them this way too.

Providing easy to interpret updates on how funding into TQKP is utilised will help to build trust and understanding around how TQKP's resources are used on behalf of the system. An example of what this could look like would be producing a pie chart with estimated amounts spent on each portfolio in annual reports, and sharing this on social media, acknowledging the network's curiosity about this.

A strong rationale for how TQKP directs funding is needed

It was noted by two partners in interviews that when TQKP makes statements about where investment should be directed to achieve the "biggest bang for buck", there are always going to be winners and losers, and there needs to be a strong evidence and rationale communicated about that to those groups or sectors that the funding is not being directed to.

"If that is the evidence that says it's going to have biggest bang for buck, we should be backing that as a sector and we should be wrapping around that but shaping it within a conversation about what then comes next." – partner, interview

This includes where TQKP advocates for government investment into specific areas. It was noted that TQKP is in a strong position to create the coalition of support around where investments need to go to be impactful, as well as creating support if government investments are made in those areas from those who are 'losing out' from an investment, by creating buy-in around the outcome.

"They can have a really important role in working with the sector to make those recommendations and positions and have each organisation sign off on it, which is what government is looking for, right? A bit of political cover. If you think about what happened when Grief Line was defunded, Red Nose Day was defunded, there was an outcry and that terrifies government, right? When you get people on board with the mission and they participate in the decision-making around the mission, you can provide that layer of protection because it's not about funding for individual organisations, it's about prioritising the outcome."
– partner, interview

Two partners noted a desire for more transparency around the process by which projects identified through a collaborative or initiative get funding. The processes by which investments are made into projects associated with TQKP but led by partners are not well understood by partners. This is likely because rather than being a funder itself, TQKP provides a vehicle for more relational funding arrangements to occur within the TQKP network as a

result of funders being equal partners and participants. Because this is a different way of working, it may need some further communication.

"How is TQKP supporting organisations or groups of people to apply for that funding rather than them holding the funding?" – Partner, interview

"I don't know how it [project funding] happens. And that does feel like it is very much done behind closed doors. The ability to be more flexible and fluid is probably what's needed. But then it comes at the cost to stakeholders, you can't sort of talk as openly about that and feels like you're not sort of part of that aspect of it." – Partner, interview

Implications

Given TQKP is driving a particular funding agenda in Queensland, it also has the job of responding to disappointed stakeholders around this and bringing them along on the journey by providing a strong rationale for why directing funding to a particular area and not another is likely to get the better outcome for Queensland's children.

Stronger positioning of TQKP's role as an intermediary and how and why it makes connections between philanthropies and organisations doing impactful work is necessary to avoid triggering concerns within a system in which competing for funding is the norm.

Through Phase 3 it will benefit TQKP to remain attentive to those areas – both geographic and sectoral – where interests do not as closely align with TQKP's agenda as others. This warrants continual efforts to transparently communicate about the data and evidence driving TQKP's work, how TQKP's funding is utilised, and the limits to TQKP's role in funding relationships.

There's a tension between universal and targeted needs

A key theme in interviews with partners and decision makers was awareness of the tension between the need for universal services, and the understanding that they are not sufficient or suited to support the needs of all families, especially those experiencing intersectional disadvantages.

Some partners felt that TQKP's focus on the universal or population level may come at the cost of having direct and deep impact where it's needed on the most disadvantaged children and young people and their families. There was a sense that TQKP has a role to play in bringing greater awareness to the cohorts or areas where there is the greatest need for targeted, integrated and person-centred supports, in order to direct investments towards where the deepest outcomes can be achieved. It was also noted that TQKP is generally responsive when provided with input about the need for targeted activity (whether that be advocacy, evidence building, or Initiatives) to meet specific population groups' needs.

Implications

Some of these concerns may be reflective of a lack of clarity on what TQKP is, and the role of an intermediary in the system, not as a service provider but as a facilitator of connection, collaboration, investment and learning. It is also likely a result of the fact that most who engage with TQKP are in roles that are strongly issue and mission driven, and part of the work is to advocate on behalf of specific issue or groups of people. There is a degree to which these concerns could be addressed through further communications about the type of organisation TQKP is, its role in the system, and how it supports those doing the more targeted service delivery.

However, there is also a very real degree to which TQKP does make decisions about where to focus energy and resources between broad or universal offerings (e.g. Brain Builders training) and offerings for demographics whose needs are not able to be addressed by the former (e.g. Yiliyapinya's Deadly Brains training for First Nations workforce and families).

TQKP also has influence around the issues and messages relayed from sectors and communities to government. As TQKP's work to address gaps in what's available in terms of holistic data progresses, particular cohorts or areas of need will likely become more obvious areas in which to focus more targeted investment and activity.

Given this, there is a responsibility to carefully consider the areas and demographics of greatest need (based on data where that is available), within the 'whole', and how to balance these with the more universal aspects of TQKP's work. As TQKP's work to address gaps in what's available in terms of holistic data progresses, particular cohorts or areas of need will likely become more obvious areas in which to focus more targeted investment and activity.

3.5.2 Phase 2 has successfully set the conditions to progress in Phase 3 to the 'Forming Phase' and to begin impacting outcomes for children, youth and families

Communication channels, connections and platforms for collaboration, and the knowledge and capabilities and shared language around systems change and child development developed in Phase 2 provide a strong base for work in Phase 3 to progress to the 'Forming Phase' in which "impact happens more consistently as infrastructure, collaboration and coordination accelerate progress"⁴⁴.

There continues to be a need to build systems literacy to build the capabilities needed for people to participate in systems change, including through the opportunities TQKP provides

⁴⁴ Farnham, L., Northmann, E., Tamaki, Z. and Daniels, C. 2020. [Field Building for Population Level Change: How funders and practitioners can increase the odds of success](#) The Bridgespan Group [website].

through its various working and leadership groups and collaboratives. Connecting people who are working in this way, and building their confidence and ability to communicate what they are doing is likely to act as a positive reinforcing loop.

In the next year, it is likely that some benefits for children, youth and families at least at an individual level will become visible, through initiatives developed with TQKP and run by partners, and through use of tools and resources by frontline workers, and engagement of young people in the Intergenerational Stewardship Table (currently under development).

Continuing to build on strategies for engaging government and driving more productive investment from government into child and youth wellbeing and integrated delivery in Queensland will be essential in the next phase, to maintain momentum and enable achievement of TQKP's intergenerational change goals. This includes providing targeted, clear and consistent messaging to government stakeholders on what TQKP activities or streams of work they should be involved in, how and why. TQKP also to be able to track and share how it is collaborating with and influencing government with the network regularly, so that the value of this work is better understood and recognised. The recommendation from the June 2024 evaluation report to develop a strategy for how TQKP will engage with Queensland Government with key goals and responsibilities as well as a plan for monitoring how different engagement strategies work continue to be relevant.

TQKP's role in facilitating connections between philanthropies and organisations doing impactful work, but who are not generally visible to funders, is valued by both groups. However, stronger positioning of TQKP's role and how and why this occurs is needed to avoid triggering concerns within a system in which competing for funding is the norm.

There is more work to be done in clear communications about TQKP's role in the system, as well as systems ways of working and particularly their benefits. This can benefit not only TQKP, but also others in its network that work in a systems-level way or with systems focussed approaches, to enable them to confidently communicate how and why this way of working is of benefit with their organisations, partners and funders.

There is a continuing role for TQKP in addressing the lack of integrated data systems and availability of data – especially joined up data about child and youth wellbeing in Queensland.

3.5.3 Strategic communications can address concerns about risk

Some of the concerns about risk are reflective of a lack of clarity on TQKP's role as an intermediary in the system, not as a service provider but as a facilitator of connection, collaboration, investment and learning. Collectively, this risk could be addressed through further communications about the type of organisation TQKP is and its role in the system.

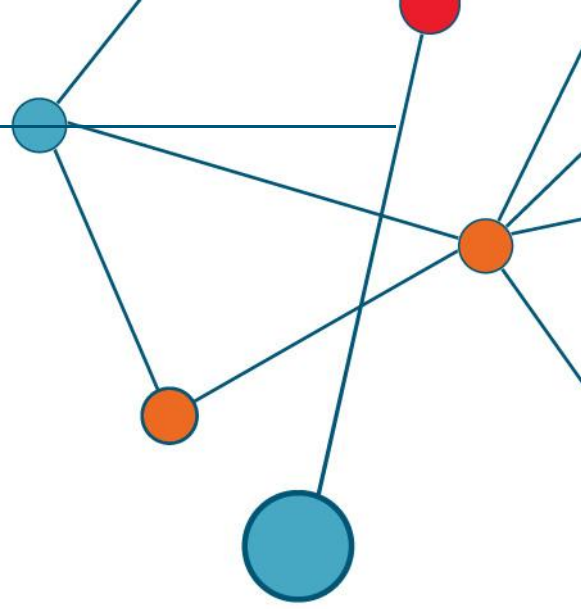
Further, the data shows that at the present, the risks raised in consultations are potential future risks only. Partnership survey data shows that new members of the network are still joining TQKP (of the 51 total respondents, 9 were new networkers and 4 new collaborators since 12 months ago). Survey results also show that currently, people see their engagement

with TQKP as worth their time and effort (Figure 24). Feedback from all interviewee groups was strongly positive, with only one outlier who was sceptical about what tangible change TQKP can produce, but who still had positive things to say.

As one interviewee pointed out, there will always be winners and losers when funding is involved. Given TQKP is driving a particular funding agenda in Queensland, it also has the job of responding to disappointed stakeholders around this and bringing them along on the journey.

The risks raised in interviews suggest that it is worthwhile to remain attentive that there are areas – both geographic and sectoral – where interests do not as closely align with TQKP’s agenda as do others, and that this warrants continual efforts to transparently communicate about the data and evidence driving TQKP’s work, how TQKP’s funding is utilised, and the limits to TQKP’s role in funding relationships beyond connecting philanthropies with trusted members of the network. Continuous communication of progress towards TQKP’s intended outcomes is also warranted.

Appendices



Appendix 1. Full rubric

Dimension: Partners are connected and collaborating

Lever: Concerted leadership

Data sources: TQKP Partnership survey

Elements of connection	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
Leaders and change agents are better connected	On average, 30% or fewer Partner and Collaborator respondents answer with a score 4 or 5 on the extent to which engagement with TQKP has fostered new connections + 30% or fewer Networkers answer this question with a score of 3 or more	31-50% Partner and Collaborator respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5 + 31-40% Networkers answer this question with a score of 3 or more	51-70% Partner and Collaborator respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5 + 41-60% Networkers answer this question with a score of 3 or more	71-100% Partner and Collaborator respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5 + 61% or more Networkers answer this question with a score of 3 or more	Partnership survey data: 84% of collaborators and partners answered with a 4 or 5 (quite a bit, or a great deal). 51% of networkers answered with a 3 or more (somewhat, quite a bit, or a great deal)
New connections made through TQKP are creating value for leaders	30% or fewer Partner and Collaborator respondents answer question about extent to which engagement with connections made through TQKP add value to how they do your job with a score 4 or 5	31-50% Partner and Collaborator respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5 31-50% Networker respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5	51-70% Partner and Collaborator respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5 51-70% Networker respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5	71-100% Partner and Collaborator respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5 71-100% Networker respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5	ARTD and TQKP decided on review of Partnership Survey that more meaningful data would be yielded by asking for stories of the value provided through connections than a ratings question. The score has been taken based on the below



Elements of connection	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
	30% or fewer Networkers respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5				<p>partnership survey and interview data.</p> <p>The majority respondents agreed/strongly agreed to the question about whether the work of TQKP adds value to their work and/or role (67%), however 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 29% were neutral.</p> <p>13 (25%) of the 51 partnership survey respondents responded to the question about the value provided by new connections. 7 of these provided substantive answers of value – generally sharing resources and learnings, referral networks.</p> <p>Interview data also suggests that connections fostered through TQKP are providing value, although not for all.</p>
New connections are leading to more collaboration	30% or fewer respondents answer question about whether engagement with TQKP had led to sharing information, resources or delivery of activities with	31-50% respondents answer this questions with a score 4 or 5	51-70% respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5	71-100% respondents answer this question with a score 4 or 5	46% (20) of respondents said that their engagement with TQKP had led to sharing information, resources or delivery of activities with new connections 'quite a bit' (30%, 13) or 'a great deal' (16%, 7)



Elements of connection	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
	new connections with a score of 4 or 5				

Dimension: Improved capabilities of leaders and change agents to reshape the system

Lever: Concerted Leadership; Putting Data and Learning to Work; Integrated Delivery

Data sources: Partner survey; Initiative documentation

Elements of capability	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
Capability to reshape the system	Average of survey responses for Partners and Collaborators to the question about how capable they feel to contribute to systems change is between 3 and 3.5	Average of survey responses for Partners and Collaborators to this question is between 3.5 and 4 AND it is over 3 for networkers	Average of survey responses for Partners and Collaborators to this question is between 4 and 4.5 AND it is close to 4 or 4 for networkers	Average of survey responses for Partners and Collaborators to this question is more than 4.5 AND it is over 4 for networkers	Partnership survey data: Average responses of partners and collaborators to capability to contribute to systems change was 3.3 - with the most common answer being 3 or 'somewhat'. However, confidence to contribute to systems change was quite a bit higher at 3.6, with the most common answer 4 or 'Quite a bit'. Networkers' capability and confidence were comparatively lower, with both at 2.7.



Elements of capability	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
					23% (9) of all respondents said they'd used a systems change approach in their work (most of these were networkers, n=6).
Opportunity to use capability in reshaping the system	The average number partner led or co-led initiative/ activities/ projects per portfolio is between 0.1 and 1	On average, there are 1-2 partner led or co-led initiative/activities/projects per portfolio	On average, there are 3-4 partner led or co-led initiative/activities/projects per portfolio	On average, there are 5 or more partner led or co-led initiative/activities/projects per portfolio	A survey of TQKP Backbone team members (October 2025) showed an average of 5 projects per Initiative. Examples provided by staff included: TKiD Seed and Grow; Supporting Infants and Children in Disasters practice guide: training initiative; Get Ready Kowie Kids ; Youth Psychological First Aid - Emergency Cadets; Central West Child Disaster Resilience Project; Queensland Kids Funders Alliance; Serve Return Rally Learn - State Library Qld; Investing for Prevention- jointly led with Queensland Kids Funders Alliance; Brain Healthy Schools – led by QBI; Curricula Reviews – led by QBI; Brain Health training – led by Yiliyapinya; Growing Deadly Brains – led by Yiliyapinya.



Elements of capability	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
Use of TQKP outputs/resources in their work	10-30% respondents answer Q15 output question with a score 4 or 5	31-50% respondents answer Q15 output question with a score 4 or 5	51-70% respondents answer Q15 output question with a score 4 or 5	71-100% respondents answer Q15 output question with a score 4 or 5	34 of the 39 (87%) who answered this question had used at least one approach or resource. The average was 2 approaches/resources per respondent. 5 respondents said they had used 'none'
Those engaged with TQKP frequently use a system approach	30-40% Partners/Collaborators use systems approach	40-60% Partners/Collaborators use systems approach	60-80% Partners/Collaborators use systems approach	80-100% Partners/Collaborators use systems approach	Partnership survey data: 14% of partner/collaborator respondents (3 of 21) said they had used a systems change approach.
Those engaged with TQKP frequently use NEST	30-40% all respondents use NEST	40-60% all respondents use NEST	60-80% all respondents use NEST	80-100% all respondents use NEST	51% (20) of respondents said they had used the NEST

Dimension: Increased child development capabilities

Levers: Putting Data and Learning to Work; Stronger Workforces

Data sources: Brain Builders data



Elements of improved capability	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
Neuro-capability training is being embedded in workforce training	Brain Builders materials are integrated into the curriculum of 1 or more relevant degrees/certificates of 1 QLD tertiary institution ⁴⁵	Brain Builders materials are integrated into the curriculum of 1 or more relevant degrees/certificates of 2-5 QLD tertiary institutions	Brain Builders materials are integrated into the curriculum of 1 or more relevant degrees/certificates of 5-7 QLD tertiary institutions	Brain Builders materials are integrated into the curriculum of 1 or more relevant degrees/certificates of 8 or more QLD tertiary institutions	<p>Interview data and desktop review:</p> <p>Brain Builders materials are integrated into the curriculum of pre-service training at University of the Sunshine Coast and QUT postgraduate nursing curriculum institutions. Further curriculum review led by QBI is being conducted with TAFE, QUT, University of the Sunshine Coast.</p> <p>Additionally, Brain Builders Understanding Brain Development Modules have been adapted by Early Childhood Australia with a focus on ECEC and made available on the ECA Learning Hub</p> <p>Brain Builders materials being used by the State Library of Queensland to train First Five Forever facilitators.</p>

⁴⁵ Australian Catholic University; Bond University; Central Queensland University; Griffith University; James Cook University; Queensland University of Technology; TAFE Queensland; The University of Queensland; University of Southern Queensland; University of the Sunshine Coast; Southern Cross University.



Dimension: TQKP’s efforts are keeping child and adolescent development high on the policy agenda

Levers: Concerted Leadership; Smarter Investment

Data sources: Bellwether interviews

Elements of the policy agenda	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
Decision makers are aware of TQKP	40%-50% Bellwether interviewees are aware of TQKP	50%-70% Bellwether interviewees are aware of TQKP	71%-90% Bellwether interviewees are aware of TQKP	91%-100% Bellwether interviewees are aware of TQKP	Bellwether interview data: 100% of the 8 Bellwether interviewees were aware and could speak to something TQKP is doing or advocating. This is up from 55% in the 2023 round of Bellwether interviews.
How highly leaders in the sector rank issues affecting children and young people on the QLD Government’s policy agenda	41-50% Bellwether interviews rank issues affecting children and young people between 7 and 10	51-70% Bellwether interviews rank issues affecting children and young people between 7 and 10	71% to 90% Bellwether interviews rank issues affecting children and young people between 7 and 10	91% to 100% Bellwether interviews rank issues affecting children and young people between 7 and 10	62.5% of Bellwether interviewees named issues relating to children and youth wellbeing as high on the Queensland Government’s policy agenda. ⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The three policy agenda items named by each respondent in response to a question about the general policy priorities of the Queensland Government were each given a score of alignment with TQKP’s child and youth wellbeing agenda. Areas of policy focus that are likely to negatively impact children’s wellbeing were given a score of -1 (for example, youth crime). Those likely not to have a positive or negative impact were given a score of 0 (for example, integrity or fixing tertiary health system capacity). Those likely to drive better wellbeing but not directly were given a score of 1 (for example, housing). Those specific to children and likely to directly drive wellbeing were given a score of 2 (for example, underinvestment in mental health of children). The average of scores for each respondent were then tallied. We then counted each interviewee with a positive score to get the proportion who said issues relating to children and youth wellbeing issues were high on the Queensland Government’s policy agenda.



Elements of the policy agenda	Beginning but limited	Making progress	Fully realised	Leading/innovating	Supporting data/ rationale
Engagement of government stakeholders in TQKP	There is attendance from public servants at TQKP briefings/events when invited	There is attendance from Departmental decision makers at TQKP briefings/events when invited	There is attendance from Departmental senior decision makers TQKP briefings/events when invited	There is attendance from senior decision makers from diverse Departments at TQKP briefings/events when invited	<p>Interviews and document review:</p> <p>Minister Amanda Cam has said she wants to be part of and listen to the Stewardship Table as a brains trust. - TQKP interview; Place Network - invested heavily in engagement building with state and fed gov – had significant gatherings over last few months bringing together state and fed gov with and through the network. - TQKP interview; 30 government agencies (local government and state government) engaged with Enabling Workforces (PRF Report); TKiD Leadership Alliance includes representatives from key government departments; TQKP have made many inroads but not as much as they could. There is an opportunity to engage lower-level leadership over top-level leadership to overcome capacity issues at those levels - Partner</p>



Dimension: Productive investment into systems initiatives

Lever: Smarter Investment

Data source: PRF application and TQKP Annual Reports

Elements of smarter investment	Not achieved	Fully realised	Exceeding	Supporting data/ rationale
Achievement of targets for co-investment into TQKP	\$ targets for co-investment into TQKP were not reached	\$ targets for co-investment into TQKP are reached for the period	\$ targets for co-investment into TQKP are exceeded for the period	<p>Document review:</p> <p>The original target for investment in Phase 2 as per the PRF funding application was \$3.1 million in other philanthropic and government sources for Phase 2.</p> <p>This has been exceeded by more than \$8.5 million.</p>



Appendix 2. Decision maker interviews report



Institute for Social Science Research
28 August 2025



CREATE CHANGE

Contemporary policy and its impact to the wellbeing of Queensland children: Insights from decision-makers – Phase 2



Title:	Contemporary policy and its impact to the wellbeing of Queensland children: Insights from decision-makers – Phase 2
Prepared for:	ARTD Consultants
Prepared by:	Dr Miriam Yates & Professor Tim Reddel
Date:	28 th August 2025
Revision:	10 th September 2025

This report is 'Draft' until approved for final release, as indicated below by inclusion of a signature from the project work package lead (Institute for Social Science Research) or their authorised delegate. A Draft report may be issued for review with intent to generate a 'Final' version, but must not be used for any other purpose.

Project work package lead

Tim Reddel

The Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which UQ operates. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

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Executive Summary

This report distils and describes the second wave of interviews conducted with eight key decision makers from the Queensland policy ecosystem to glean their key insights regarding the current policy landscape in Queensland relating to the wellbeing of children. These interviews were conducted in the context of an evaluation of the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership.

Kingdon's Agenda Setting Theory¹ seeks to explain why and how some policy issues gain traction ahead of others. It was utilised to offer insights into the attention of policy makers, their appetite to invest sustained effort over time, and politics. Drawing on their responses, we weave together the various threads of data and feedback to offer insights into the extant policy-windows in which the possibility of change and policy shift might be realised through the mobilisation of the various levers described by decision-makers.

Key decision makers were identified by the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership's backbone team, who were asked to nominate prospective interviewees they considered "knowledgeable and innovative thought leaders whose opinions about policy issues carry substantial weight and predictive value in the policy arena". A total of eight interviews were undertaken representing a variety of sectors (e.g., youth justice, youth mental health, health, education, public and community sectors, policy making and governance).

While not exhaustive, the responses suggest important policy levers and provide useful context about the current policy agenda affecting the wellbeing of Queensland's children.

In summary, a total of ten questions (see Appendix A) were posed to each interviewee (see Appendix B) spanning topic areas including the existing policy landscape in Queensland, key advocates operating in the space of children's wellbeing, policy changes required to improve the wellbeing of Queensland's children, cross-sectoral collaboration and impactful lived experiences relating to Queensland's children.

Key insights from interviewees

- Policy making as it relates to children in Queensland, particularly those more vulnerable, was observed as fragmented and disjointed in some contexts.
- Policy attention continues to be monopolised by the disproportionate focus on youth crime and the current Queensland government's 'tough on crime' approach (c.f., Adult Crime, Adult Time).
- Interviewees reflected on various aspects of policy responses that are informed by a focus on equity (rather than equality). In recognition of the increased evidence and awareness of negative outcomes for inequitable 'inputs' during the early years, interviewees described a need for increased focus on prevention and more strategic approaches to collaboration, commissioning and service delivery to support the wellbeing of Queensland's children from conception to adulthood.
- Similarly to responses in 2023, interviewees voiced their support for collaboration, coordination, and a more systematic approach to Queensland children's wellbeing. They supported centralised or overarching policy approaches that draw on various levers (e.g., funding, policy, governance) to drive cooperative approaches and impactful outcomes.

Contemporary focus of policy making in Queensland

Interviewees were asked about their views on what the most important or urgent issues are affecting children and young people in Queensland. Consistent with earlier interviews undertaken in 2023, insights tended to coalesce around interviewees' field of expertise (e.g., interviewees in the education sector raised and voiced education-related policy issues or challenges). Interviewees described issues including **education and schooling, cost of living, social determinants of entrenched disadvantage**, the need for government to

¹ Kingdon, John. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, New York: Harper Collins. This theory – also known as the Multiple Streams Framework – was used in both 2023 and 2025 to inform the interview protocol development.

think strategically about **maintaining connections with Queensland’s children over the lifespan**, alongside **mental health challenges linked to climate and online engagement**.

Interviewees were asked to rank the issues affecting children and youth on the QLD Government’s policy agenda. Their responses signalled that youth crime is highest on the QLD Government’s policy agenda, followed by a concern with value for taxpayer money (aligning with comments around being more conservative in terms of expenditure). Interviewees saw child safety, equitable service delivery, the tertiary health system, housing for young people and youth mental health as being fairly high on the Queensland Government’s policy agenda. However, contrasting with these was the perception that education, prevention and early intervention and cost of living, social determinants and poverty were ranked lower on the government’s agenda.

Table 1 Interviewee’s rankings of issues affecting children and young people on the Queensland Government’s policy agenda (0 = lowest priority, 10= highest priority)

Issue affecting children and youth	Average ranking	Total number of responses
Youth crime	10	3
Value for money	9	1
Child safety	8	1
Equitable service delivery	7	1
Tertiary health system	7	2
Housing for young people	7	2
Youth mental health	7	1
Education	5	1
Prevention and early intervention	5	3
Cost of living/social determinants/ poverty	4	3

Several interviewees noted that the current government is maintaining a focus on establishing their credibility through implementing the agenda of the 2024 election around youth justice. To many interviewees, the election commitments were not viewed as consistent with a prevention or early intervention focus. There was also a sense from the interviewees that there continues to be uncertainty about Queensland Government’s priorities and how these will be operationalised in various sectors.

Appetite for sustained effort toward policy change

Interviewees were prompted to reflect on key policies and processes that needed to change to better support the outcomes of Queensland’s children, and the sectors that would need to participate to achieve change.

In contrast to the 2023 interviews, interviewees 2025 displayed a greater awareness of a policy need for a shared purpose, increased service integration and earlier intervention to meet the needs of Queensland’s children. Some interviewees also raised equitable service delivery and place-focussed policy responses, alongside data, measurement and standards. Common between interviewees was the clear acknowledgement that the social and policy shifts needed to improve the lives of Queensland’s children extends beyond any single political cycle. As one interviewee shared:



“It’s ironic in these sort of social change disciplines like we’ve got a lot of patience when it comes to buying submarines or building roads, or ... the casino, you know, 10 years from go to woe before the Star opened its door. So we can wait 10 years to build a new casino. We just want intergenerational disadvantaged fixed next year. Otherwise, we get bored.”

Interviewee

Interviewees were also asked about the single policy, system or process change they would be most willing to support. Responses revealed interesting nuance between views in 2025 and those shared in 2023. There was a **clear appetite for change around service integration, followed by early intervention and strategic commissioning of services**. This shift in views towards a solutions orientation diverged from interviewee insights in 2023 that broadly underscored a more reactive approach to policy responses, rather than strategic approaches to tackling issues relating to the wellbeing of Queensland’s children, particularly the most disadvantaged. While interviewees saw the need for a policy or system shift, they also expressed difficulty in disentangling or identifying any one single shift capable of producing the change central to improving outcomes for Queensland children’s wellbeing.

Interviewees also expressed their recognition of a need for a **structural shift to support more cross-sectoral collaboration and a shared purpose**. For some, this included a **centralising funding approach, or strategic commissioning approach**, whereas for others, this included **centralising a decision-making body or linking funding to a centralised government function** that could support increasing ministerial accountability for outcomes relating to Queensland’s children. In reflecting on Queensland’s most vulnerable children, interviewees reflected on the multiple government agencies that have a vested interest including Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, Education, Health, Policing, Youth Justice, etc. To support increased collaboration amongst these agencies, and the broader sector stakeholders that inform responses to Queensland children’s wellbeing, interviewees reflected on **the need to explore and further develop mechanisms for shared understanding, responsibility and responses**. As one interviewee reflected on their experience working in government:



“... we can't get mobilised and singularly focused ... and that's because what one agency sees as their priority is not the priority of another agency. So that's the challenge ... it's until different ministers have different cross portfolio, line responsibilities , or you have joint funding processes and until your Minister cares about what actually happens in that space like ... that's sort of not how the system [works].”

Interviewee

A key challenge recognised by interviewees regarding the magnitude of policy change required was funding structures and commissioning strategies. Several interviewees noted that at present, **funding of services supporting the wellbeing of Queensland children is plagued by duplication, lacks data and measurement, and struggles to respond to the diverse needs and geographical dispersion** of services across the state. As one interviewee explained:



“At the moment, providers say ‘if only I was funded to deliver the full suite of service, it'd be fine’, which it might be, but every provider says that... ‘from sort of prevention all the way through to intervention, it'd be seamless’, which it might be. But that's sort of not where we're at, is it? We've given people choice and control and we need a mix of providers and we do fund in segmented ways.”

Interviewee

Interviewees expressed a common and increasing awareness of the distinction between services delivered through an **equality** approach, versus through an **equity** approach. As one interviewee described:



“I think there are a number of communities in Queensland where children are experiencing real economic disadvantage and that is obviously part of the feeder for our child safety and youth crime issue. I think government is looking at the end product, but...I don't see enough consideration of that real growing inequity in QLD... So if you asked me, that is the most urgent”

Interviewee

Political forces informing policy directions and policy making

In both 2025 and 2023 interviews, decision makers described an array of contextual elements that – in their view – impacted policy making and the attention of policy makers on certain issues. In 2025, interviewees felt the strongest influence on policy direction is the political cycle – specifically, the October 2024 Queensland election win by the Liberal National Party. In addition, public sentiment and mood, advocacy efforts, competing crises, portfolio shifts, and the role of media (e.g., print, television, social) were all noted as drivers of attention and energies towards one policy approach or another. One interviewee described their frustration about what they saw as the incompatibility of political cycles and a prevention focus:



“...here are a whole series of research studies that prove that your health experiences in your first 2000 days from conception is a great determinant of the rest of your health experiences through the rest of your life, and we can see that in the justice system. The challenge there is that the political cycle is on a very different time frame. So when a politician gets up and talks about the pressures on the health system, it is very difficult for them to prioritise addressing that kind of demand pressure way back early in children's lives at the expense of opening another wing or announcing you're going to recruit some more doctors or paramedics and all those kind of things. I am oversimplifying a very complex area, but that is the fundamental challenge that government grapples with.

Interviewee

In remedy of this frustration and toward a more considered, long-term and strategic approach to improving the wellbeing of Queensland's children, another interviewee argued that:



“...somehow we've got to get to a pure policy approach; one that's led by good policy logic and not contaminated by politics... the whole dialogue is contaminated by this political sort of bullshittery that's going on all around us, and the media's interest in stoking those flames of fear.”

Interviewee

Some interviewees also described the focus of the current government on value for money as positively influencing, or having the potential to influence, the Queensland Government's willingness to invest in prevention and early intervention. Nevertheless, an immediate focus on developing a 'track record' of action, was noted as inhibiting focus on a longer-term prevention agenda at this point in time.

In reflecting on the funding contexts underpinning policy responses to Queensland Children's wellbeing, interviewees highlighted short funding cycles, a fiscally conservative funding environment and a lack of willingness to explore new – or 'experimental' models – of funding public services. These funding challenges were described as being reinforced by the current Government's approach to funding and their political change agenda throughout the first 18 months since elected to parliament. These forces were seen by interviewees as barriers to more strategic commissioning and investment into prevention and early intervention (beyond Youth Justice).

As in 2023, many interviewees noted the impact of the often-disjointed funding by different government agencies on service delivery. Funding approaches, commissioning practices and lack of willingness to explore new models of funding public services targeting Queensland children was discussed by many interviewees as reflective of political forces and related policy directions and policy making that then produced the challenges raised by interviewees.

In response to this political environment and appetite for practical policy responses, some community sector stakeholders noted that they are narrowing the focus of or being more targeted in their advocacy efforts.

Stories, messages and data influencing views on children and young people

Interviewees were asked what data and stories they found most influential on their views about children's wellbeing in Queensland. Their reflections coalesced around impactful statistics and data stories – including those that counteract media hype around youth crime, and stories of impacts of adverse childhood experiences on individual children – alongside stories of positive opportunities and shifts. One interviewee noted a lack of visibility of stories that illustrate approaches that have effectively helped children and families, to help professionals know what to do when they need to assist children and families to access the right supports. One interviewee mentioned the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS, 2023), as providing confirmatory evidence about the impact of early childhood experiences on brain development.

This suggests TQKP should continue to build their approach to storytelling, drawing on data, facts and figures where applicable to share and communicate key messaging, and an opportunity to highlight case studies of what works in terms of successfully supporting children and families.

Perceptions of and engagement with TQKP

There was greater awareness and understanding of TQKP's work among the interviewees, compared with the cohort interviewed in 2023. This included awareness of The Nest Framework, and Brain Builders.

When asked about the value TQKP is creating, interviewees spoke about TQKP's willingness to collaborate, the strength of their advocacy, their strategic leadership, and being separate from and ability to advocate to Government. There was generally a sense that it is beneficial and worthwhile to have an entity in Queensland that is driving positive action for children and young people, and which helps to coordinate actors in the system so they are, as one interviewee put it, "taking that collective approach...not getting in each other's way to attend to the interests of Queensland's young kids." The value of the connections TQKP facilitates – including facilitating intentional connections around specific projects – was noted by several interviewees.



"It's a very important and nationally significant torchbearer for all of these ideas and more than that, it's operationalising [these]. What it's doing practically now is ...gathering exemplar practise. It's performing a very important function as a dating service between neuroscientists and child safety officers, and teachers and Education Department people... building out that ecosystem."

Interviewee

Interviewees were also asked what from TQKP's work to date has started to become sustainable in the system. Common themes in interviewee's responses were the connections and cross-disciplinary links that will remain in the system. One mentioned that TQKP has embedded neuroscience across sectors, and has increased trauma, neurodevelopment, neurodivergence, and cultural diversity knowledge of a cohort of leaders. Some didn't have visibility of or exposure to enough of TQKP's work to be able to answer.

While there was acknowledgement that TQKP have successfully pulled together a coalition of the willing, some interviewees noted that there are limits to what can be achieved without the ability to distribute funding to others in the system doing some of the work, given the short-term and fragmented funding many sectors are working with.



"I feel like there's a need for some concerted child focused initiatives in Queensland and that they could be the organisation that helps drive that, whether it's by offering funding, which obviously they would need funding from the government to do, or whether it's by setting priorities, which is obviously what's sort of happening here to a degree. There's potentially more as a governing body or a peak body that could be done. I don't know what that is. Maybe they

need to be responsible for administrating some funding or something, maybe they already are supporting some of the existing organisations and that's how these projects and programmes have done, but I feel like having a centralised body within Queensland focus on children and mandated to sort of look broadly across the state would help them develop initiatives that will be translated and that are drawing on the expertise from across the state rather than just within the organisation."

Interviewee

Some interviewees were unsure about or hadn't heard anything about how TQKP's actions are leading to impact on the ground. As one interviewee shared when prompted to consider the impact of TQKP's work to improve outcomes for children, youth and families:



"I'm familiar with it...we've been along to a lot of events...so I'm generally familiar with the program of work...although I don't know a lot about each of the individual projects, so I guess I wouldn't be able to confidently say what is coming out of TQKP directly for families... I know they're working hard and I know they're good people, and I know they're doing things. But there could be more knowledge on the ground, especially at the community level, as to what it is that they're actually doing that would be helping families."

Interviewee

In reflecting on collaboration and advocacy in the context of the new government, interviewees also noted the need for TQKP to tailor the 'pitch' to incorporate governmental priorities, philosophical approaches or expressed views to build engagement and buy-in. Interviewees expressed an awareness of a general need for sectors engaging with government to reconsider the language, motifs or approaches to engaging with policymakers to support realisation of their objectives. One noted it may be helpful for TQKP to align with the Queensland Government's 'Team Queensland' messaging.

Appendix

Interview Guide



1. Thinking about policy issues in general—not just issues related to children—what three issues or priorities do you think are at the top of the Queensland Government policy agenda right now?
2. Thinking about issues affecting Queensland’s children, specifically, what three issues do you think are the most urgent or important?
3. If you were to rank issues affecting children and young people on the QLD Government’s policy agenda currently, where 0 is not at all on the policy agenda and 10 is highest on the policy agenda, where would you rank it?
 - a. What would you give it this score?
4. What do you think are the three key policies or processes that need to change to support better outcomes for Queensland children?
 - a. What sectors would need to implement these changes?
5. What is the one policy, system or process change you would be most willing personally to support in relation to Queensland children’s wellbeing and life outcomes?
 - a. How much support do you think there is currently across the state for this kind of change?
6. Thinking about all the different sectors that support children’s growth, development and wellbeing, what do you think are the necessary elements to create cross-sectoral collaboration and a shared purpose?
7. What kinds of cross-sectoral collaboration would you be most willing to be involved in?
 - a. cross-sectoral forums, communities of practice and knowledge sharing events
 - b. collaborative service delivery and risk sharing
 - c. place-based collaborations
 - d. funding or co-funding cross-sectoral initiatives or activities
 - e. collaborating across sectors on research and evaluation (outcomes measurement)
 - f. co-location of personnel to develop cross-sectoral capabilities and knowledge sharing
8. Has anything changed in the past year for you about how you think about children and young people’s development and wellbeing” (what? Why has this changed?_
9. What kinds of messages, stories or data have you encountered in the past 6-12 months that have been most influential on your views about children’s wellbeing in Queensland?
10. What, if anything, have you heard about the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, led by ARACY?
 - a. In what sort of ways have you engaged with the work of TQKP?
 - b. What sort of value do you feel TQKP is creating and for whom?
 - c. What are the things TQKP is doing that you feel as more likely to improve outcomes for children, youth and families right now and why?
 - d. What are the things from TQKP’s work that have the greatest potential to become self-sustaining, do you think? (what things would continue if TQKP disappeared?

Tables

Table 2: Stakeholder demographic table

Stakeholder Type	Sector	# of Interviews
Queensland Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CommissioningPremier & CabinetYouth Justice	3
Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Childhood Mental Health & Wellbeing	2
First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Non-profit service provider	1
Peak Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing and HomelessnessEarly Childhood Education	2

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