

CITY OF SYDNEY

# FY 21/22 EVALUATION ALIGNMENT

AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK  
AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT  
FOR CREATIVE CITY

JUNE 2021

**Culture  
Counts**

Document Control				
Document Version	Description	Prepared By	Approved By	Date Approved
V1.0	Finalised FY 21/22 Evaluation Alignment	Natasha Mian Tom McKenzie Jordan Gibbs	Jordan Gibbs	24 September 2021
v 0.1	FY 21/22 Evaluation Alignment	Natasha Mian Tom McKenzie Jordan Gibbs	Jordan Gibbs	29 June 2021

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## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Background.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	About Strategic Alignment .....	4
1.2	About Culture Counts.....	4
1.3	Alignment Methodology .....	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Alignment .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Sydney 2030 .....	7
2.2	Community Recovery Plan.....	8
2.3	Previous Evaluations .....	9
<b>3</b>	<b>Suggestions .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	Metric Options .....	11
3.2	Alignment Visualisation .....	11
3.3	Metric Explanation .....	14
3.4	Alternative or Additional Dimensions.....	15

# 1 BACKGROUND

## 1.1 About Strategic Alignment

The City of Sydney has used the Culture Counts evaluation platform since 2016 to evaluate its activities and programs, distributing over 259 surveys and collecting over 4,860 responses in that time. After trials throughout different teams within the City, including City Business, Libraries, Major Events, Grants & Sponsorship and Arts & Culture, the City is looking to align its ongoing evaluation to its larger Strategic Community Plan and its COVID-19 Recovery Strategy.

The City of Sydney and Culture Counts have worked together to determine an appropriate alignment methodology that:

- Gives individual teams the flexibility to measure activity-specific outcomes to aid practical program-level evaluation, reflection and decision-making
- Can collect data related to larger strategic outcomes, supporting policy decision-making processes
- Uses standardised terms and practices wherever possible to maximise comparative evaluation between programs and activities
- Considers the evaluation activity of external partners and other third-parties in a manner that can support City of Sydney evaluation activity
- Reflects the holistic and evolving strategic goals of the City of Sydney and its research and learnings into evaluation practice thus far

The multiplicity of these requirements demands a strategic evaluation process that is flexible and considered, to ultimately determine a standard set metrics to be used in the evaluation of programs via stakeholder surveys. The metrics should link back to the City of Sydney Community Recovery Plan and Operational Plan 20/21, however the metrics are not necessarily 'nested' in those policies. This is to say that the metrics are able to sit on their own, while still having links back to relevant policies. Where policies may change, the metrics do not necessarily have to.

By agreeing on a standard set of outcomes across all programs, it is possible for data to be aggregated across City of Sydney teams, which assists in strategic planning and review, such as identifying where unique impacts are being created, celebrating successful initiatives or identifying areas for improvement.

## 1.2 About Culture Counts

Culture Counts is an international evaluation consultancy working with over 800 cultural and government organisations across Australia, NZ and the UK to evaluate the social, cultural and economic value of their activities, programs and events. Its ground-breaking research in 2011 delivered a public value model for events and cultural activity, with an associated evaluation tool that is now employed by Arts Council England, DLGSC (WA), Creative Victoria, Create NSW, Arts Queensland, Creative New Zealand, as well as the City of Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Gold Coast and over 100 local councils across Australia.

Culture Counts is the only organisation in the world to have successfully implemented a public value framework for cultural events and activity at a large scale. Its approach ensures the implementation of best-practice evaluation practices required of bodies such as Tourism WA, Destination NSW and Tourism Events Queensland. Culture Counts received the 2019 IPAA Australian Evaluation Society award for Best Practice in

Public Evaluation and has recently been applied to the ongoing assessment of the £1.1B cultural infrastructure development project 'East Bank' in London, the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, the Sydney 2019 New Year's Eve Fireworks and the Arts Council England £1.5b National Portfolio fund (2018 – 2022).

Working with academic and sector partners, Culture Counts hosts a set of metrics on its online platform to enable the evaluation of places, events, services and experiences. Culture Counts also provides consulting and policy services to government, peak bodies and cultural/community organisations; supporting their use of data to inform outcomes-driven and evidence-based decision making. There are more than 300 users of the Culture Counts platform and metrics framework in Australia/NZ and over 500 in the UK. It has one of the most comprehensive and data-driven understanding of public value in the world, with an Australian database consisting of 12.7m data points from over 630,000 public respondents for the evaluation of 12,464 events and activities.

Drawing on best practice methodologies and theoretical frameworks such as Theory of Change and Logic Modelling, Culture Counts works to identify how activities/interventions achieve outcomes, what the impact of those outcomes are, and what value this impact has within the context of a strategic plan and its rationale.

### 1.3 Alignment Methodology

The alignment methodology considers three major factors in evaluating outcomes for the City of Sydney:

- The types of outcomes being measured
- The demographics of those experiencing the outcomes
- The strategies that drive the delivery of those outcomes

Outcomes are aligned to the Cultural Development Network's outcomes schema, which categorises outcomes under five domains. An additional domain of Quality is also available, allowing users to evaluate metrics such as experience and characteristics, that are considered important but are not considered an 'outcome', as they do not measure a change.

Demographic types are determined by previous surveys undertaken by the City of Sydney, including Culture Counts surveys and the Wellbeing Survey. Demographic standards are required for evaluation templates, but do not appear to interact with the actual outcome being evaluated. For this reason, demographics are not considered in the strategic alignment dimension selection process.

Finally, the two key strategies are the Strategic Community Plan (Sydney 2030) and the COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan. Sydney 2030 is considered through the strategic directions detailed in the latest Operational Plan 20/21. There is an expectation that the alignment will need to consider the upcoming Sydney 2050 plan, but the strategic directions in that plan are yet to be made available at the time of this work.

The following table details the considerations of these three factors.

**Table 1: Alignment Methodology Considerations**

DATA TYPE	NOTE
Outcome Area	
Social	22 dimensions available
Cultural	22 dimensions available
Economic	14 dimensions available
Civic	11 dimensions available
Environmental	5 dimensions available
Quality	17 dimensions available
Demographic Type (Beneficiaries)	
Age	Currently targeted with identifier buckets
Gender	Currently listed as a demographic cohort
Location	Currently split into Village Areas for Residents
Priority Groups	Currently considers a range or groups at the activity level
Strategy Area	
Community Recovery Strategy	6 key strategies with 58 sub-strategies
Sydney 2030	10 key strategies with 49 sub-strategies
Sydney 2050	Strategies TBC
TOTAL	XX

Source:

## 2 ALIGNMENT

The alignment first considers the two primary strategies of the City of Sydney:

- Sydney 2030
- Community Recovery Plan

### 2.1 Sydney 2030

The Sydney 2030 plan lists 10 key strategies, as part of the latest Operational Plan 20/21. Of these plans, only four contain sub-strategies that are of relevance to program-level outcomes evaluation. These four strategies are listed below, along with the relevant sub-strategies.

#### 1. A globally competitive and innovative city

- 1.2 *The city economy is competitive, prosperous and inclusive*
- 1.4 *The city economy is resilient*
- 1.5 *The city enhances its global position and attractiveness as a destination for people, business and investment*

#### 2. A leading environmental performer

#### 3. Integrated transport for a connected city

#### 4. A city for walking and cycling

#### 5. A lively and engaging city centre

- 5.1 *The city centre has safe and attractive public spaces for people to meet, rest and walk through at all times of the day or night; with George Street as a distinctive spine*
- 5.2 *The city centre provides diversity of built form, uses and experiences*
- 5.3 *Innovative, creative, retail, hospitality, tourism and small business activity is supported in the city centre*
- 5.4 *The city centre is a place for cultural activity, creative expression and participation*

#### 6. Resilient and inclusive local communities

- 6.1 *Our city comprises many unique places – a ‘city of villages’ – for communities to live, meet, shop, study, create, play, discover, learn and work*
- 6.2 *Our city is a place where people are welcomed, included and connected.*

6.3 *Local economies are resilient, meet the needs of their community, and provide opportunities for people to realise their potential*

6.4 *There is equitable access to community facilities and places, parks and recreational facilities to support wellbeing in daily life*

6.5 *The community has the capacity, confidence and resilience to adapt to changing circumstances*

#### 7. A cultural and creative city

7.1 *Creativity is a consistent and visible feature of the public domain and there are distinctive cultural precincts in the city and its villages*

7.2 *The City supports and encourages individual creative expression by ensuring opportunities for creative participation are visible, accessible and sustainable*

7.3 *Sydney’s cultural sector and creative industries are supported and enhanced leading to greater sector sustainability, productivity gains, and innovation*

7.4 *The continuous living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is visible and celebrated in our city*

#### 8. Housing for a diverse community

#### 9. Sustainable development, renewal and design

#### 10. Implementation through effective governance and partnerships

## 2.2 Community Recovery Plan

The Community Recovery Plan lists 6 key strategies. Of these plans, all six contain sub-strategies that are of relevance to program-level outcomes evaluation. These strategies are listed below, along with the relevant sub-strategies.

### 1. Safely manage public spaces and streets to support community life and business

*1.3 Clean public places and streets to a high standard*

*1.5 Communicate that Sydney is safe, clean and open for business*

### 2. Provide equitable access to the essentials for safe and comfortable daily life for all residents

*2.2 Continue to provide online and face-to-face programming with a focus on supporting health and wellbeing, digital literacy, social inclusion, reskilling and employment*

*2.3 Manage community spaces, services and facilities to ensure safe, equitable and affordable access and participation*

### 3. Strengthening community cohesion to build the resilience of local communities

*3.7 Empower communities to manage their own recovery by strengthening local connections through networks, events and forums, for example supporting community celebrations at the end of the pandemic*

### 4. Protect and empower the cultural and creative sector by prioritising the role of local creativity, cultural spaces, talent and knowledge in recovery.

*4.1 Direct existing grant support to sustain cultural organisations and stimulate development opportunities for local creatives*

*4.3 Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and knowledge sharing*

*4.5 Enable diverse local cultural infrastructure and activation through the City's Open and Creative planning reforms*

*4.6 Facilitate opportunities for collaboration and capacity building to ensure cultural sector resilience and sustainability*

### 5. Rebuild the visitor economy through promotion of the city as vibrant and safe with activated main streets and nightlife

*5.2 Continue to invest in local festivals and major events that demonstrate Sydney's vibrancy and encourage local Sydneysiders and others from around the state and country to visit*

*5.5 In line with health advice, welcome people back to Sydney through roaming ambassadors, maps and digital services*

*5.8 Engage local creatives in the City's programs and advocate to others to do the same, to activate precincts to support local businesses, sustain local culture and drive footfall on main streets*

### 6. Support businesses and organisations to innovate and adapt and allow industries to evolve

*6.9 Produce skills development programs to enhance innovation, collaboration, digitisation, and e-commerce*

## 2.3 Previous Evaluations

The City of Sydney have used Culture Counts to evaluate a selection of its activities since 2016. The following table details the dimensions that City staff have selected previously, and it is ordered by the number of responses that exist within the City of Sydney evaluation dataset.

**Table 2: Dimension Response Count, City of Sydney Culture Counts Evaluations (2016 - 2020)**

DIMENSION	STATEMENT	RESPONSE COUNT
Presentation	<i>It was well produced and presented</i>	1,651
Learning	<i>I learned something new</i>	1,574
Connection	<i>It helped me to feel connected to people in the community</i>	1,574
Inclusion	<i>It made me feel welcome and included</i>	1,377
Captivation	<i>It held my interest and attention</i>	997
Rigour	<i>It was well thought through and put together</i>	984
Distinctiveness	<i>It was different from things I've experienced before</i>	968
Challenge	<i>It helped me gain new insight or knowledge</i>	899
Access	<i>It gave me the opportunity to access activities I would otherwise not have access to</i>	858
Local Impact	<i>It's important that it's happening here</i>	855
Place	<i>It made me feel proud of my local area</i>	786
Access	<i>It gave me the opportunity to access cultural activities</i>	698
Belonging	<i>It helped me feel part of the community</i>	665
Authenticity	<i>It had a connection to the State/Country we live in</i>	623
Creativity	<i>It inspired my own creativity</i>	582
Imagination	<i>It opened my mind to new possibilities</i>	575
Skills	<i>I gained new skills</i>	542
Heritage	<i>It made me feel connected to a shared history/culture</i>	427
Motivation	<i>I feel motivated to do more creative things in the future</i>	416
Celebration	<i>It celebrated my own cultural heritage</i>	263
New People	<i>I got to know people who are different to me</i>	238
Cultural Contribution	<i>It provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area</i>	204
Profile	<i>It raised the profile of the artists</i>	200
Practice development	<i>It contributed to the development of my arts practice or business</i>	186
Connection	<i>It helped me to feel connected to my local community</i>	183
Diversity	<i>It engaged people from different backgrounds</i>	182

Source: Culture Counts (2021)

### 3 SUGGESTIONS

In order to achieve the goals established as part of the alignment methodology, we recommend the City of Sydney take an agile approach to dimension and metric selection. In this way, metrics will be aligned in one of two ways:

- A **core set** of metrics will be aligned to the City of Sydney's overall strategies, with the expectation that all activities will seek to achieve at least one of these outcomes
- All **aligned set** of metrics will be linked to the City of Sydney's overall strategies, with the expectation that activities will look to achieve a range of outcomes that are strategically relevant to the City, but not necessarily shared by all activities or programs.

The aligned set of metrics is presented in the attached spreadsheet, and will be linked to the Culture Counts platform for reporting purposes.

The core set of metrics needs to be confirmed by the City of Sydney. The alignment process to determine the core set considers two factors:

- How frequently the dimensions are linked to the City of Sydney strategies (top-down)
- How commonly dimensions are used by City of Sydney staff as part of the previous Culture Counts evaluations (bottom-up)

A top-down process ensures a high-level of strategic alignment to dimension selection, as it considers all relevant sub-strategies and therefore maximises compatibility with the most amount of strategy areas. The concern with this approach is that while it may maximise strategic alignment, it also reveals potential strategic biases across policies that may relate to their strategic intention. For example, though most of the relevant strategies and sub-strategies have links to economic outcomes such as skills development and organisational collaboration, was it the strategic or policy intention of the City of Sydney for these outcomes to underpin every program or activity it delivers? The methodical process of categorising dimensions by their outcomes alignment to City of Sydney strategies works to ensure alignment, but it does not weight other strategic considerations higher than any other, and so is drawn to the most common outcomes – frequency does not necessarily correlate to relevance.

As an alternative, a more curated approach can be considered to the strategic alignment that considers other factors; the key being a bottom-up approach to selection. i.e., what City of Sydney teams are already measuring, and to use this as a proxy for the metric's alignment to the strategic direction of the organisation. This approach will favour popularity, rather than strategic intention, however it can be used in combination with the first method to craft a strategically aligned set of metrics that speak both to City of Sydney delivery teams and the overall City of Sydney strategy areas.

### 3.1 Metric Options

The following tables detail both options:

- Option 1: A core set of metrics based on the frequency of alignment with City of Sydney policy areas
- Option 2: A curated set of metrics, based on frequency of alignment, frequency of responses and cross-sectionality to a broader range of outcome areas.

**Table 3: Option 1 - Core Metrics**

DOMAIN	DIMENSION	STATEMENT	COUNT
Economic	Prospects	It has made me feel confident about future employment prospects	9
Economic	Practice development	It contributed to the development of my arts practice or business	8
Economic	Opportunity	It opened up new opportunities for me	7
Quality	Vibe	I enjoy the vibrancy and the people in this place	7
Quality	Vibrancy	I enjoy the vibrancy and activity here	7
Economic	Networks	It connected me with other people in my field	6

Source: Culture Counts (2020)

**Table 4: Option 2 - Core Metrics**

DOMAIN	DIMENSION	STATEMENT	COUNT (RESPONSES)
Cultural	Learning	I learned something new	4 (1,574)
Economic	Skills	I gained new skills	4 (542)
Social	Inclusion	It made me feel welcome and included	2 (1,377)
Civic	Belonging	It helped me feel part of the community	1 (665)
Environmental	Place	It made me feel proud of my local area	1 (786)

Source: Culture Counts (2020)

### 3.2 Alignment Visualisation

The following figures visualise the core metrics as aligned to the two key strategies, along with the other dimensions that have been aligned to the various sub-strategies. The first alignment highlights the core dimensions based on the frequency in which they are linked to sub-strategies in the two strategic plans. As the alignment does not show the sub-strategy level, the links are only represented by one or two lines, depending on whether they link to both the Community Recovery Plan and the Operational Plan.

The second alignment highlights the core dimension selected in Option 2, with colours used to distinguish between domain areas. Explanation of dimensions are provided in the following section.

Figure 3.1: Option 1 – Strategic Alignment with Core Metrics Highlighted

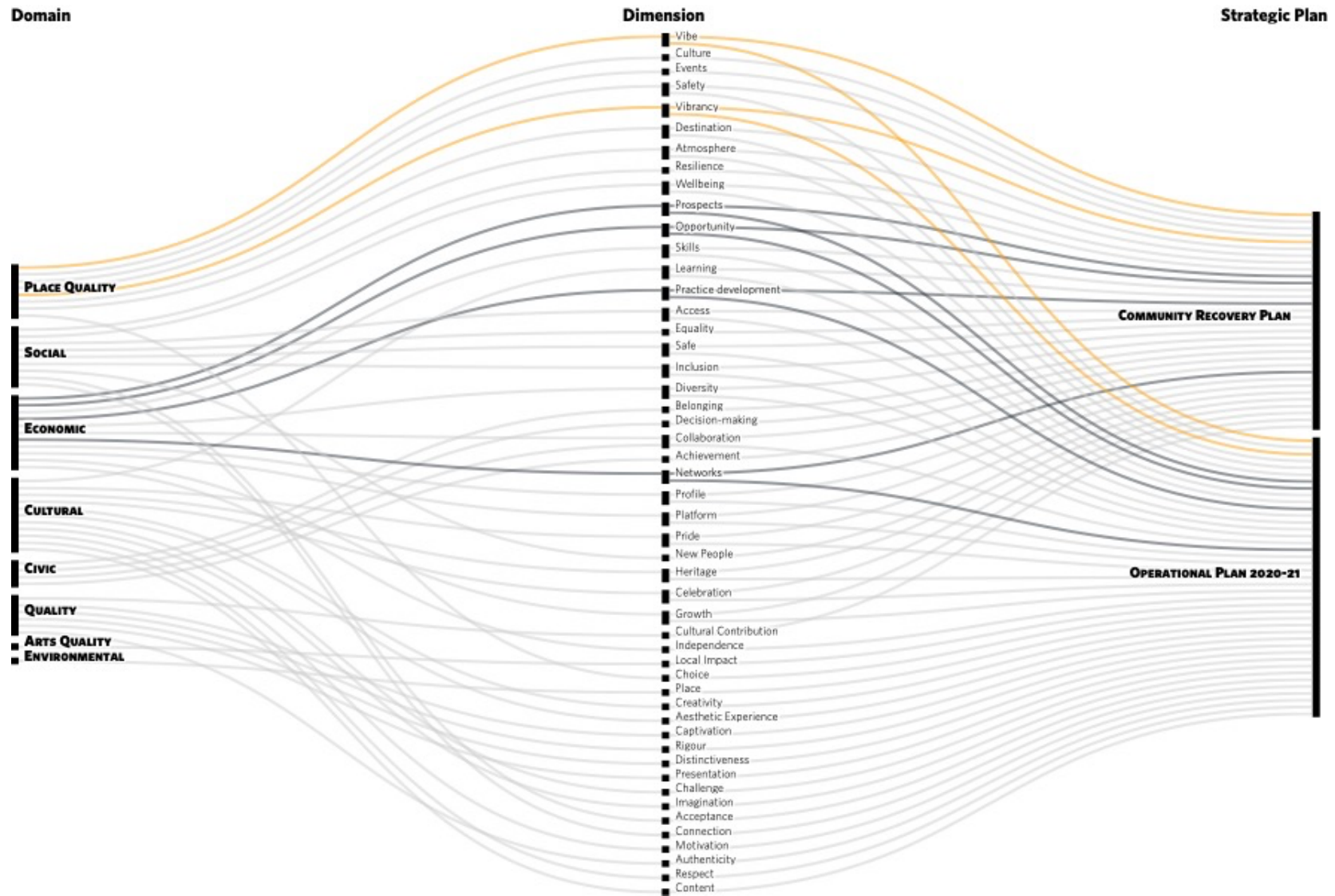
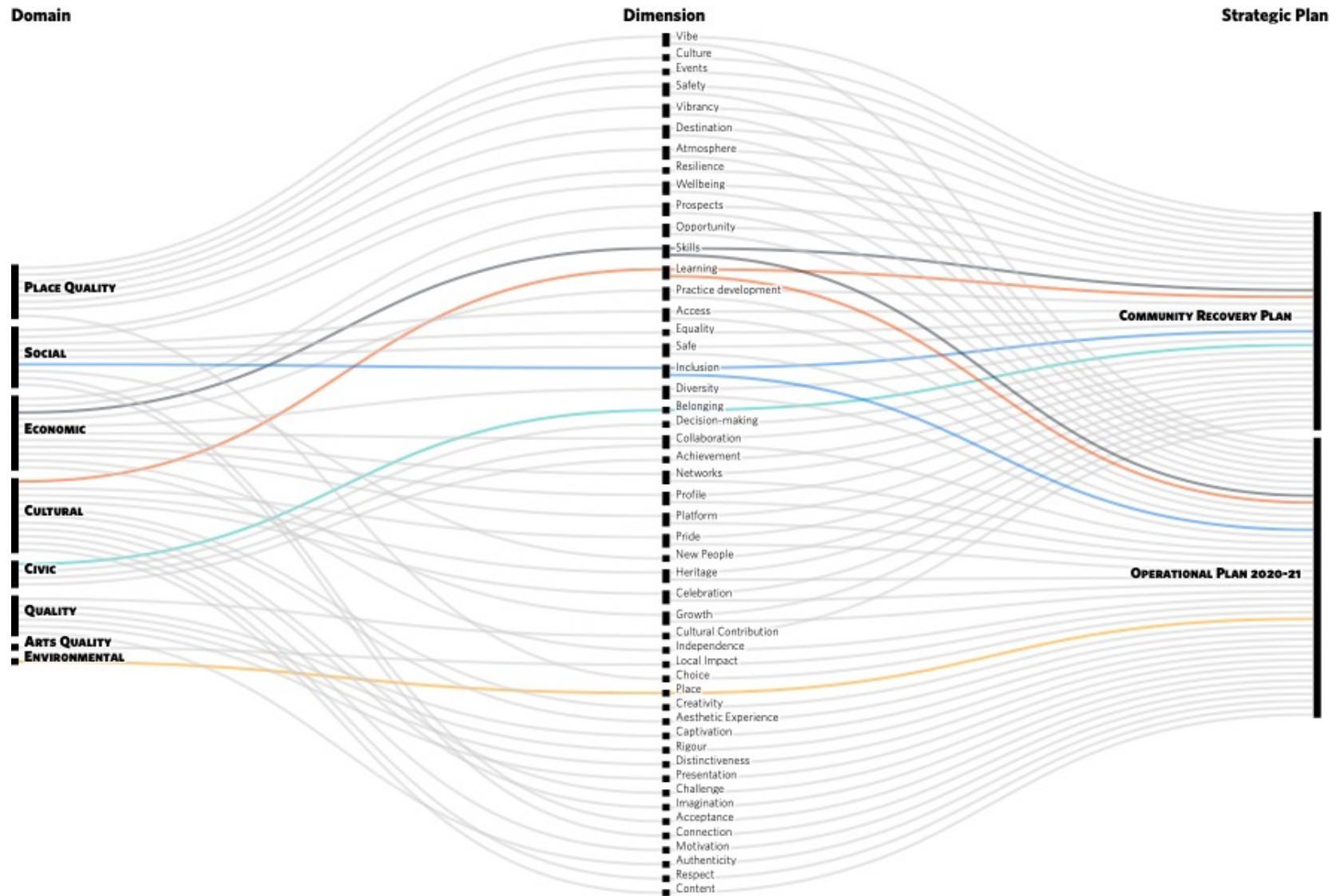


Figure 3.2: Option 2 - Strategic Alignment with Core Metrics Highlighted



### 3.3 Metric Explanation

Considers for the curated set of core metrics are detailed below.

#### **Cultural: Learning**

The learning dimension is a key outcome of cultural activity – that being that through an experience, the respondent learned something new. The dimension has 1,574 responses in City of Sydney Culture Counts evaluations, representing the second most selected dimension in the City of Sydney database. The metric has four strategy links:

##### **Strategic Directions**

- 2.2) Continue to provide online and face-to-face programming with a focus on supporting health and wellbeing, digital literacy, social inclusion, reskilling and employment
- 3.7) Empower communities to manage their own recovery by strengthening local connections through networks, events and forums, for example supporting community celebrations at the end of the pandemic
- 6.9) Produce skills development programs to enhance innovation, collaboration, digitisation and e-commerce

##### **Community Strategy Plan**

- 6.3) Local economies are resilient, meet the needs of their community, and provide opportunities for people to realise their potential

#### **Economic: Skills**

The skills dimension is a key economic outcome of development activities – that being one outcome that support the local economy through the development of new skills. The dimension has 542 responses in City of Sydney Culture Counts evaluations. The metric has four strategy links:

##### **Strategic Directions**

- 2.2) Continue to provide online and face-to-face programming with a focus on supporting health and wellbeing, digital literacy, social inclusion, reskilling and employment
- 3.7) Empower communities to manage their own recovery by strengthening local connections through networks, events and forums, for example supporting community celebrations at the end of the pandemic
- 6.9) Produce skills development programs to enhance innovation, collaboration, digitisation and e-commerce

##### **Community Strategy Plan**

- 6.3) Local economies are resilient, meet the needs of their community, and provide opportunities for people to realise their potential

#### **Social: Inclusion**

The inclusion dimension is a key social outcome of programming and activity, by encouraging activities that make participants feel welcome and included, thus support social bonding and bridging. The dimension has 1,377 responses in City of Sydney Culture Counts evaluations, representing the forth most selected dimension in the City of Sydney database. The metric has two strategy links:

##### **Strategic Directions**

- 2.3) Manage community spaces, services and facilities to ensure safe, equitable and affordable access and participation

##### **Community Strategy Plan**

- 6.2) Our city is a place where people are welcomed, included and connected.

#### **Civic: Belonging**

The belonging dimension is a key outcome of activity because it ensures activities support social connection and community development. The dimension has 655 responses in City of Sydney Culture Counts

evaluations and represents the most selected civic-domain dimension in the City of Sydney database. The metric has one strategy links:

**Strategic Directions**

- 3.7) Empower communities to manage their own recovery by strengthening local connections through networks, events and forums, for example supporting community celebrations at the end of the pandemic

**Environmental: Place**

The place dimension is a key environmental outcome of programming and activities because it support pride in where respondents live, which correlates to other important social and economic outcomes. The dimension has 786 responses in City of Sydney Culture Counts evaluations and is the most selected environmental/place dimension in the City of Sydney database. The metric has one strategy links:

**Strategic Directions**

- 5.2) The city centre provides diversity of built form, uses and experiences

### 3.4 Alternative or Additional Dimensions

The second option for a core set of metrics only contains five dimensions, in comparison to the first option which contains six. For various reason, the City may wish to broaden the core set of dimensions in the second option. If this is the case, suggestions for additional dimensions to complement the core set are provided in the following table, which the associated strategy count and number of responses.

The reason for these suggestions are either because:

- The dimension is commonly picked by City of Sydney staff to include in their evaluations currently
- The dimension has links to sub-strategies that are not represented in the current alignment
- The dimension is commonly picked and contains links to underrepresented sub-strategies.

**Table 5: Optional Additional Dimensions**

DOMAIN	DIMENSION	STATEMENT	COUNT (RESPONSES)
Social	Connection	It made me feel welcome and included	1 (1,574)
Social	Safe	It made me feel safe and welcome	3 (0)
Economic	Networks	It connected my to other people in my field	6 (0)
Quality	Vibrancy	I enjoy the vibrancy and activity here	7 (0)
Cultural	Heritage	It made me feel connected to a shared history/culture	2 (427)