

NSW Guide to Preparing an Activation Framework Public Spaces



NSW Department of Planning
and Environment

March 2022





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and rich contribution to society.

Aboriginal people take a holistic view of land, water and culture and see them as one, not in isolation from each other. The NSW Guide to Preparing an Activation Framework is based on the premise upheld by Aboriginal people that if we care for Country, it will care for us.

Published by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment

dpie.nsw.gov.au

NSW Guide to Preparing an Activation Framework

Image on front cover: Vivid Festival, The Rocks, Sydney.
Courtesy Destination NSW

Artwork (left) by Nikita Ridgeway

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*Image: NAIDOC Week Launch.
Courtesy Cassandra Hannagan*



Introduction

Public spaces

Public spaces are our streets, open spaces, and public facilities. They are publicly owned or of public use, accessible to and freely enjoyable by all. They include:

- public open spaces: for example, parks, gardens, playgrounds, public beaches, riverbanks and waterfronts, outdoor playing fields and courts, and bushland that is open for public access
- public facilities: for example, public libraries, museums, galleries, civic/community centres, showgrounds and indoor public sports facilities
- streets: for example, streets, avenues and boulevards; squares and plazas; pavements; passages and lanes, and bicycle paths.

Public spaces are the heart of our communities and can define the lived experience and wellbeing of everyday life. The careful design, delivery, and management of public spaces is essential to healthy and productive neighbourhoods.

Purpose of guide

This guide accompanies the NSW Guide to Activation which promotes public space activation and its benefits, the three enablers for activated public spaces, and practical tools for a range of audiences and practitioners to maximise activation in a way that is appropriate to the space.

We have prepared this guide to provide you with the steps for how to prepare an activation framework for public spaces. It will assist with the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of activation initiatives for public spaces. The guide covers:

- what public space activation means
- what is an activation framework and why you need one
- examples of activation frameworks
- practical step-by-step guidance for how to get started, analyse the place, plan the activation framework, plan the evaluation, and to activate the place.

The approach, structure, and content can be tailored to suit the specific public space through engagement with the local community.

Public spaces are social spaces

Public spaces should be welcoming and inclusive. People can connect with each other in these social spaces, building community resilience. Activation of public spaces should consider:



Connection to Country –

All public space in NSW is on Country, which is at the core of every Aboriginal person's identity and sense of belonging. It is the place from which Aboriginal language and culture is derived, which determine families, kinship, and communities.



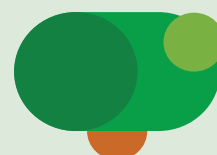
Equity and inclusion –

Inclusion in public spaces and in the processes of planning, designing, managing and activating them is central to creating equitable public spaces and ensuring all people can access the benefits they provide.



Community engagement

– Engaging the community as active participants when planning, designing, managing, and activating public space will help ensure that it reflects their values, needs, and aspirations.



Who is this guide for?

This guide aims to help anyone who is interested in, involved in, or responsible for, activating public spaces. This includes:



Community

For example, local residents, visitors, workers, students, groups, and clubs



Government

For example, elected representatives, activation practitioners – refer to the practitioner categories



Business

For example, businesses operating within or near public spaces, developers delivering public space



Strategic practitioners

For example, strategic planners and designers



Regulatory practitioners

For example, statutory planners and policy makers



Administrative practitioners

For example, development managers



Operational practitioners

For example, construction and asset managers



Tactical practitioners

For example, place and events managers

What public space activation means?

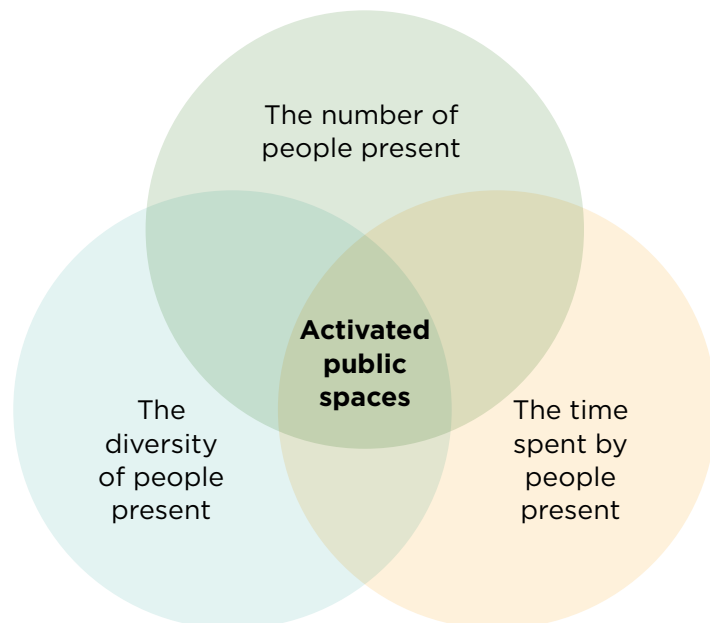
When a public space is activated, a diverse range of people feel welcome there and use the space for a variety of purposes, making it vibrant and lively. People develop a sense of ownership of the activated space, which encourages them to look after it and spend more time there. Activation, as related to public space, is typically used interchangeably with the terms vibrancy, animation, liveliness, or programming.

Activation is about people and the social life of public space. Activation refers to the level of human activity in public spaces, and can be measured by the:

- number of people present (also known as ‘footfall’ or ‘visitation’)
- time spent by the people present (also known as ‘dwell time’)
- diversity of people present.

Places can be activated by inviting people to use them on a permanent or temporary basis. Invitations include using visual cues, pleasant amenities and opportunities to safely enjoy the outdoors, socialising and other activities.

Activation refers to the social life of public spaces

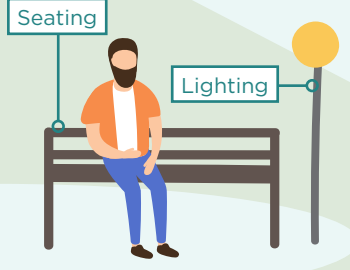


Activation includes both permanent and temporary invitations



Permanent activation

Public spaces have a baseline level of activity that occurs naturally across various times of the day, week, and year. This can be greatly affected by their location and surrounding destinations, as well as the amenity and infrastructure.



Temporary activation

Public spaces may also offer more temporary activation to attract people. Ideally, these incentives to use public spaces give people opportunities to connect, acknowledge culture, and be included.





Port Macquarie Town Square Markets. Courtesy Marketplace Events

Activation frameworks

What is an activation framework?

An activation framework for public space is a coordinated way of delivering, managing, and evaluating enhanced activity. They can:

- provide tools for planning, facilitating, and managing activation
- guide activation to reflect the character, qualities, and capacity of the public space
- provide the framework to implement activation-related outcomes in public space visions and strategies
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in public space activation
- foster collaboration across disciplines within an organisation
- provide a reference point for future programming and curation of the public space.

Why you need an activation framework

Successful activation requires collaboration and partnership from initiation, through to delivery, and ongoing management.

To align stakeholders, particularly in an organisational or partnership setting, it is crucial to adopt an activation framework.

This will help incorporate activation into all parts of an organisation, including its management and governance structure, funding approach, strategy development, operational planning, marketing, engagement, and review processes.

If your organisation has adopted and put in place a specific activation framework, it is more likely to achieve activation-related outcomes for a public space.



Parklet, Bondi Beach. Courtesy Sam George



Examples of activation frameworks



Barangaroo Place Activation Framework

Barangaroo's activation framework provides guidelines to assist the planning and management of activation across Barangaroo's public spaces. The framework emphasises the need for activation to be considered in the context of the identity of the place, including physically, socially, and culturally. The framework is an important reference point for the governance, management, funding, and regulatory aspects of Barangaroo's public spaces.

'The principles inform the management of Barangaroo as a place for all. In particular, they drive the variety of strategies which contribute to activation.'

Infrastructure NSW



Maitland Place Activation Strategy

Maitland's activation strategy established four activation priorities – after dark, repurpose, street art, and interpretation. Extensive community engagement identified both quick wins and longer-term projects, including art, food, play, performance and renewal activities. Delivery was coordinated through programs such as Street Eats, Walls that Talk, and the After Dark Festival, as well as the award-winning Maitland Levee revitalisation project.

'One of the key benefits of having the Maitland Place Activation Strategy has been helping to build relationships internally across Council... we now have strong collaboration and internal support... With the Strategy in place we could demonstrate that there was a rationale behind what we were doing'

Maitland City Council



Gilgandra Activation Blueprint & Place Plan

Gilgandra's activation blueprint seeks to illuminate a clear and compelling future vision for Gilgandra's CBD, and to identify those matters of greatest importance to achieving its potential. The blueprint calls for the local community to use its imagination to go beyond a 'business as usual' approach to design and craft innovative solutions that drive change.

'The Gilgandra Activation Blueprint has sparked ideas for transformational change and endless possibilities... businesses have become key drivers with their own activations and growth projects... It is now a collective journey with the community and businesses demonstrating their confidence and excitement for the future to create a vibrant CBD.'

Gilgandra Shire Council

Structure of guide

Preparing the activation framework

Step 1: Get started

Step 1a Review the background

Step 1b Prepare a project plan

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Step 2: Analyse the place

Step 2a Understand the character of the public space

Step 2b Understand the quality of the public space

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Step 5: Activate the place

Step 5a Deliver the action plan: capital works

Step 5b Deliver the action plan: temporary activation

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Activation framework

- Public space analysis (background and context)
- Vision + objectives
- Activation strategies
- Action plans
- Evaluation model



*Lost Lanes (part of the [Places to Love Program](#)), Wagga Wagga.
Courtesy Matt Beaver*

Step 1.

Get started

Step 1 is about the preparation required to deliver a successful activation framework. High-quality delivery of an activation framework requires high-quality project planning. Follow this step to initiate an activation framework and to deliver the components required to mobilise it.

The first step is to develop a roadmap for how an activation framework will be developed and delivered through a project plan. The project plan is important to understand the strategic context of the public space and surrounding area through a background review.

Typically, public space managers have existing strategic plans, management frameworks, and funding structures in place. There may also be existing district, precinct, or organisational-level policies, and plans with valuable information available to help understand the broad opportunities, constraints, and potential directions.

The strategic context can include any existing plans, strategies, and programs already in place. Reviewing these documents and engaging key people associated can help to identify what has been tried before, what has worked well, what could be improved, and how to work with the local community and other diverse stakeholders from now on.

The background review will support the initial development of a problem definition, as well as the key objectives for an activation framework, including what it will set out to achieve, how it can be produced, and who will be involved in its production.

After this initial background review, the next step is to map out how an activation framework will be developed and delivered through a project plan. Steps 2 to 4 of this guide outline the typical approach and content of an activation framework. Reading through this guide will help in the development of a project plan.

Typical outputs in this step:

- background review
- project plan for the activation framework
- business case (if not already produced prior to step 1).

Key steps

Step 1a Review the background

Step 1b Prepare a project plan



Step 1a. Review the background

Identify and review all background information relevant to the public space.

Think about:

- Existing models of ownership, governance, management, funding, and regulation for activation initiatives in the public space
- Existing visions, strategies, policies, plans (including plans of management), and commitments or targets for the public space
- Existing technical studies, masterplans, concepts, user surveys, mapping, data, and other baseline information
- History of activation of the space such as previous upgrades, events, or other initiatives and the results
- Systems and processes currently in place for managing activation of the public space
- The local community (including the results of past community engagement surveys), other key stakeholders and who is responsible for the processes and activities that are important to activation.

Step 1b. Prepare a project plan

Develop a project plan to guide the preparation of the activation framework.

Think about:

- Preparing a project statement, rationale, objectives, and outcomes
- Developing the scope, deliverables, actions, and success criteria
- Stakeholder mapping, milestone identification, managing risk, and preparing a communications plan (including key messages for how you will engage with the local community and varied stakeholders in the development of the framework)
- The key strategic objectives and directives driving a desire for better activation
- Governance structure and approval (for example, consider what is the pathway to have the framework adopted and widely supported)
- Budget and resourcing to prepare the activation framework (including deciding what can be done internally versus externally, and any procurement requirements)
- Working groups with appropriate representatives to guide the preparation of the activation framework
- Incorporating the key elements from the background review in step 1a.

Step 2.

Analyse the place

Step 2 is about understanding the current state of the public space through a place-based analysis. The analysis will establish an empirical baseline, inform future activation strategies, and provide a starting point to measure future progress. Follow this step to complete a place-based analysis that includes character, quality, and community considerations.

Taking a place-based approach to understanding public space means first understanding its current character, qualities and potential to meet the economic, social, environmental, and cultural outcomes through activation. Through this approach, the strengths of the public space, how the community and others value the public space, and its potential for further and more diverse activation, can be better understood.

Building on the strategic context reviewed in step 1, step 2 involves understanding the layers of history for the public space, its uses, and engaging with the community to discover why they value it. It also helps to establish the potential for the space, and set the scene for the vision that can be tested with the local community and other stakeholders in step 3.

This step also helps to frame the frequency, type, and scale of activations to ensure they are responsive to the place and at an appropriate scale.

Typical outputs in this step:

The information collected in this step, combined with the strategic context collected in step 1, will give you:

- a baseline of the current state
- local community and/or stakeholder engagement on what is valued and the potential
- opportunities and constraints given the topography, connections, community, etc.
- specific public space quality evaluation.

Key steps

Step 2a Understand the character of the public space

Step 2b Understand the quality of the public space

Step 2a.

Understand the character of the public space

The character of a public space is influenced by the public space lifecycle, encompassing identity, design and planning, management, and experience, as outlined below.

Think about:

- **Place identity:** Why is the public space meaningful and what Country is it on? How does the existing vision reflect the local character? Does the existing vision inform the governance, management, and programming of events?
- **Design and planning:** How does the design process enable highly liveable and loveable places with social, cultural, economic, and environmental outcomes, including community infrastructure? How do regulatory instruments support community outcomes and enable public life?
- **Place keeping and management:** Is a safe, inclusive and pleasant environment provided through:
 - asset management (repairs, conservation, services)
 - operations (security, maintenance, cleaning)
 - oversight of place infrastructure (public art, wayfinding, heritage, power, embellishment)
 - leasing or licensing agreements?
- **Place experience:** How does the curation of activities and experiences for the community create an inclusive

and welcoming place? Do positive experiences and collaboration exist through community programs, grants, sponsorships, and the temporary use of buildings and spaces? Is best-practice governance supported and enabled? What previous studies and engagement has been done and who are your communities?

Summary of place character





The Crescent, Parramatta Park. Courtesy DPE



Step 2b. Understand the quality of the public space

The quality of the public space is just as important as being invited into it, as quality makes people feel safe, welcome, and included. Quality is not only reflected in a public space's physical form – how it's designed, managed, and integrated with its environment – but also through the activities it supports and the meaning it holds. Quality can change at different times, and may vary for different people.

There are a range of tools, resources, and consulting services available to understand public space qualities, including quantifiable public space and public life surveys, qualitative user surveys, and reviewing commentary on a public space from broadcast, print, digital, and social media platforms.

Regardless of the approach, it is important to invite contributions from a diversity of people and consider whether they can get to a public space, stay, play and participate, and connect.

Documenting and baselining the activation of a public space should include the:

- number of people present in a given period (also known as visitation or footfall)
- time spent by people present in a given period (also known as dwell time)
- diversity of people present in a given period.

For existing and future residents, workers, and visitors of a public space, this might also include a:

- geographic understanding, including the location and size of the population, and the physical proximity of people to the public space
- demographic understanding, including ages, genders, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as well as the population growth rate
- psychographic understanding, including values, lifestyles, needs, wants, preferences, activities and interests
- behavioural understanding, including people's knowledge of a public space, their attitude towards it, the way they use it, and their responses to it.

NSW Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life

In 2021, the Department released the [Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life](#), as part of the Great Public Spaces Toolkit. This step is adapted from the tool with a specific focus on activation-related considerations. More broadly, the tool can assist in evaluating what is working well and what could be improved in your public space. The tool draws on research and globally renowned methodologies by Gehl and Project for Public Spaces amongst others.

Step 2b. (continued)



Are people able to get there?

Consider if:

- People of all ages and abilities find it easy and pleasant to get to the public space, through a network of paths, streets, public transport, and signage
- People of all ages and abilities can easily and comfortably move around the space
- People walking are protected from vehicles and cyclists, and people riding bikes are protected from other vehicles
- The public space is accessible at all times of the day (for example, people feel safe at nighttime)
- People can easily access the public space via multiple entry points
- There are access and egress procedures in place in the event of an emergency
- There is integration with adjoining spaces and uses (that is, the public space is seamlessly connected with adjacent areas and transport hubs)
- There is suitable access to set up temporary activations (for example, manoeuvring space, height limits, and weight limits)
- The public space is supported by cycle and vehicle parking, if required.



Are people able to play and participate?

Consider if:

- There are a range of things to do in the public space, including exercise, recreation and/or learning opportunities
- The public space encourages positive social interactions or individual experiences, such as talking, casual or planned get togethers
- People of all ages and abilities can use the space and have the facilities they need to stay, such as end-of-trip facilities or drinking water
- There is a choice of places or features to safely sit, play, thrive, and relax
- There are social or cultural activities appropriate to the space, including those that complement day-to-day use, for example, programmed activities or events.

Step 2b. (continued)



Are people able to stay?

Consider if:

- There are a range of comfortable places to sit, stay, or relax in the shade or in the sun
- Amenities are provided (for example, toilets, BBQs, water fountains)
- There are enough trees, grass, and plants to make the public space shaded and comfortable
- The public space feels safe during the day and at nighttime
- The public space is lit at night and has clear sight lines and good visibility
- The public space is clean (for example, it has waste facilities) and well-maintained
- The scale of surrounding buildings is not overly dominating, allowing people to feel comfortable in the public space
- The space is well-designed, visually attractive and has scenic qualities
- There is shelter from wind, sun, and rain
- People are protected from noise, dust, unpleasant smells, or pollution in the public space
- There is storage space and infrastructure (for example, a stage) to support programmed activities and events
- The public space is serviced by utilities such as power (for example, single-phase or three-phase), telecommunications, and water to support programmed activities and events.



Are people able to connect?

Consider if:

- People with a diversity of ages, genders, cultural or ethnic backgrounds are using the public space
- There is an interesting atmosphere and there are activities such as arts and cultural activations and people watching
- People can meet others and socialise, and it is a positive place
- There are shops, cafés, community services, or economic activity close by
- People can connect with each other in both commercial and non-commercial settings
- Local stories of significance (for example, First Peoples, historic and cultural stories) are told and celebrated in the public space and there are features that enable people's connection with Country and culture (for example, a firepit for smoking ceremonies, a dance circle)
- There are public artworks, heritage, points of interest, or monuments that reflect the unique local character
- There is evidence of volunteerism, community stewardship, and/or the space is well-loved and well-attended for its function
- There are cultural, performance, or musical activations
- The public space feels welcoming; there is a sense of belonging and people feel encouraged to return.

Step 3.

Plan the activation framework

Step 3 is about the broad collaboration needed to unify the local community and diverse stakeholders in setting the vision and realising it. Follow this step to collaborate on the development of a vision, supporting objectives, operating model, and strategies.

Planning for successful activation includes co-creating a shared vision, aligning a high-quality operating model, and developing action plans to turn a vision into reality.

At the heart of activation planning is collaboration and communication. Public space activation is multi-layered and diverse stakeholders hold varied roles and responsibilities. Harnessing these skills and expertise within a positive, pragmatic, and coordinated approach is the ultimate goal.

Following steps 1 and 2, activation planning should seek to most effectively build on the positive aspects of the existing context, and ensure that strategies are coordinated, reflect a common identity, and can be managed efficiently.

Page 22 illustrates an example of an operating model aligned with the vision for a public space, while page 25 illustrates an example of the key steps to plan activation.

Typical outputs in this step:

An adopted activation framework:

- vision, objectives, and measures of success
- operating model (governance, management, funding, and regulatory models aligned with the vision for the public space)
- activation strategies and action plans.

Key steps

- Step 3a** Define the vision and objectives
- Step 3b** Align the operating model with the vision
- Step 3c** Plan activation strategies



A detailed case study of the [George Street Places to Love](#) temporary activation is available in the Great Public Spaces Toolkit.

Step 3a. Define the vision and objectives

Step 3a (i) Develop a shared vision

A shared vision is co-created with the local community and diverse stakeholders, and describes the desired level of activation, typically through an aspirational statement. This may be already available for a public space or partly defined through an existing vision, strategy, or plan. The example on page 25 illustrates an example of the key steps to plan activation.

A large public space may also have different character zones, or the vision may be for a sport centre, recreational parkland, or library for a diverse community.

Think about:

- An aspirational statement that will guide the objectives, operating model, activation strategies, and action plans
- Participation of residents, workers, and visitors through planned community engagement
- Collaboration across departments, governments, and sectors.

Step 3a (ii) Develop objectives for activation

Objectives for activation are statements of what is to be achieved for the public space with specific milestones that will make the vision a reality. The example on page 22 illustrates an example of objectives for activation. Not all objectives may be feasible to address every year. The objectives will:

- embed the vision and clarify what you want to achieve within a certain timeframe and how it benefits the community (outcome-based planning and investment)
- promote the core principles of activation: the desired number of people present, the desired time spent by people present, and the diversity of people present
- guide the balance of busy space and quiet space, permanent and temporary activation, and the facilities and infrastructure required to support these
- inform the strategies for temporary activation
- provide a basis for evaluating and monitoring activation.

Think about:

- Three to five clear objective statements based on the vision
- Setting targets that are in line with the vision, realistic and specific to the capacity of the public space
- Setting targets that consider a return on investment and how value for money can be demonstrated.

Step 3a (iii) Identify what success looks like for each objective

Each objective should have measures of success. This will help to identify what strategies can help to achieve the objectives, and measure how well they are contributing to the objectives, or can be adjusted when they are not (refer to step 3c for further detail). This will enable the public space owner and/or manager to:

- prepare activation strategies and action plans in line with the vision and objectives
- provide a basis for evaluating and monitoring activation to ensure progress towards the vision.

Think about:

- Identifying the data that is available
- Identifying what data isn't available and needs to be collected, including the methods of collection.

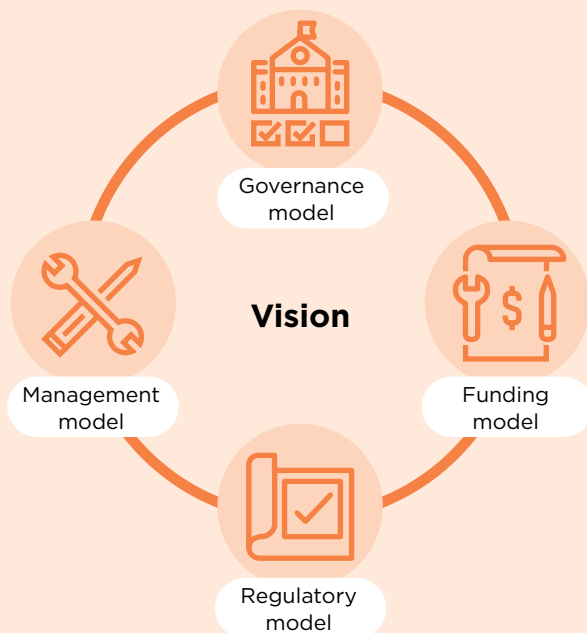


Step 3b. Align the operating model with the vision

Planning for the public space operating model to align with the vision might involve a new model or improving the existing governance, management, funding, and/or regulatory aspects that are necessary to facilitate the desired level of activation. An example of an operating model aligned with the vision for a public space is on page 22.

At a minimum, a public space owner or manager should look to develop or improve the plans, policies, guidelines, and forms, as well as the overall capability and capacity to deliver the activation action plans that will be prepared in step 3c.

Summary of operating model considerations



Step 3b (i) Align the governance model with the vision

Governance provides the wider framework, structure, and direction for high-quality public space management.

There are many governance models and ownership entities to enable sustained activation of successful public spaces. While all can operate successfully, each has distinct qualities and challenges, and needs to be appropriate for the public space and the vision.

Refer to page 12 of the *NSW Guide to activation* which provides a detailed outline of the various models currently in practice in NSW.

Think about:

- Reviewing and understanding existing governance structures relevant to the owner, manager, and land
- Identifying local community needs and the major stakeholders in the ongoing management and maintenance of the space
- Assessing who has the skills and capacity to contribute positively
- Assessing legislative and policy requirements for management, as required
- Identifying any specific requirements to be met by existing governance for the public space
- Assessing, liaising, and collaborating to define the potential options applicable.

Step 3b (ii) Align the management model with the vision

There are several potential mediums for the management of public spaces. These can be thought of as a continuum ranging from maximum control on the part of the public space owner through to transfer of control and responsibility. Each model should be appropriate to the public space and the vision.

Refer to page 13 of the *NSW Guide to activation* which provides a detailed outline of the various management models currently in practice in NSW.

Think about:

- Temporary management for public spaces undergoing construction staging
- Direct management and operations where the owner directly manages the public space with an in-house team
- Active (contract) management where the owner contracts operations for management and activation but is relatively closely involved
- Passive (contract) management where the owner retains nominal control of the public space management and activation but would contract out operations in full
- Transfer to an outside party for ownership/management responsibilities
- Concession model where the owner temporarily assigns public spaces to an outside party for operational management and capital investment.

Step 3b (iii) Align the funding model with the vision

Sustainable funding is vital to enable, facilitate, stimulate, coordinate, promote, and/or directly deliver the activation of public spaces.

Across NSW, there are many examples of public space owners or managers generating recurring revenue that is 'ring-fenced' to support activation.

These funding options are not necessarily mutually exclusive; rather, they can be operated in various combinations, particularly in precincts of a size and type that demands diverse models.

Think about:

- The various models identified on page 15 of the *NSW Guide to activation* which provide a detailed outline of the funding models currently in practice in NSW
- Early preparation of a funding plan to support the vision, objectives, and activation strategies
- Ensuring any activation-related funding involving special rates or levies is captured early in the precinct or public space lifecycle.

Step 3b (iv) Align the regulatory model with the vision

The regulatory framework (including codes, rules, policies and procedures) provides the basis upon which the public space is managed and activated.

The regulatory landscape for activation can be complex and diverse. The regulatory model for a public space will have a major influence on the level and type of activation present.

It may be desirable to consider reform appropriate to the public space and the vision, and to provide greater scope and flexibility for site-specific activation management.

Think about:

- Existing policies and regulatory models that are applicable to the space
- Benchmarking best-practice policy and regulation suitable for the intended activation approach
- Reforming the regulatory model to support the intended activation approach.

Example of an operating model aligned with the vision for a public space





Unity Place Activation (part of the [Places to Love Program](#)), Burwood Council. Courtesy Mike Belkin

Step 3c. Plan activation strategies

Step 3c (i) Prepare activation strategies

Activation strategies identify what you need to do to meet the objectives established in step 3a. A strategy is still relatively high level in terms of how the vision and objectives will be achieved. Step 3c (ii) introduces the role of action plans, which explains in detail how the strategy will be executed.

Activation strategies are the starting point for site-specific requirements, improvements, and initiatives that are necessary to facilitate and encourage the level of activation desired.

Inviting participation from existing and potential visitors, as well as other key stakeholders, can play an important role in developing this knowledge and direction. Refer to page 25 for an example of preparing activation strategies for a public space.

When developing activation strategies, consider:

- The strategic roadmap for how to achieve the vision. What does it look like: What are the milestones to achieve the objectives that capture the what, where, when, and by whom?
- What major and minor initiatives and projects are to be implemented to realise the vision and objectives?
- How has the place-based analysis (step 2) informed the strategies?
- How has collaboration and engagement created the case for change and investment?
- How will you represent the governance structure, how will decisions be made, and what other guiding documents will be used?

Step 3c (ii) Prepare the activation action plans

The action plan will ensure that there is a sequence of tasks under each strategy.

At a minimum, action plans are recommended for activation-related capital works (for example, major and minor works), and temporary activation (for example, an events program) to ensure that there are clear steps for delivery.

When developing action plans, consider:

- What activities or projects are required to deliver the strategy, who is responsible and when will they be delivered?
- How will individual actions be based on an understanding of relative importance, 'early-wins', catalyst potential for future initiatives, and an understanding of lead times?
- What dependencies, partners, stakeholders, and coordination will be identified?
- How will capital planning and the allocation of resources deliver the vision, objectives, and strategies?
- How will the progress reporting structure and timeline best support delivery towards the vision?

Example of planning activation for a public space

Example public space vision

To develop and manage an activated public space that reflects and attracts the diversity of our community

Step
3a (i)

Example activation objectives

To invite a wider diversity of people to participate in the activated public space, within the first year

To invite people to spend more time in the activated public space, within the first year

To invite more people to visit the activated public space more often, within the first year

Step
3a (ii)

Example activation measures of success/outcomes

Increase in the diversity of people present after the first year

Increase in average dwell time from 30 minutes to 45 minutes after the first year

100% increase in visitation (footfall) after the first year

Step
3a (iii)

Example activation strategies and action plans

For example,

1. Initiate a co-design process - young and old, families and carers, people of all abilities, genders, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds - to understand needs, wants, and preferences
2. Develop and deliver an action plan of activation-related capital works, with a specific focus on the items defined in the co-design process to enhance inclusivity and accessibility
3. Develop an events calendar providing a diverse range of experiences and activities (see the objective 'To invite more people to visit the public space more often')

For example,

1. Develop and deliver an action plan of activation-related capital works, with a specific focus on inviting more people to spend more time in the public space:
 - a. Minor works comprising seating, toilets, shade structures, drinking fountains, and public art
 - b. Enabling infrastructure for temporary activation including three-phase power, water supply, storage, and access

For example,

1. Enable, stimulate, coordinate, promote, and/or directly deliver 40 events within the first year with key program focuses such as First Nations storytelling, diversity, memorability, connectivity, civic-mindedness, inspiring, and experiential
2. Define event locations and capacity, event ranges/genres, comparison venues, indicative event descriptions, target occurrence, and event management/responsibilities
3. Identify and select high-quality partners for a range of events including both directly-managed events and third-party events

Step
3c (i)



Step 4.

Plan the evaluation

Step 4 is about establishing a model to monitor, evaluate, and review the progress of activation strategies. It is required to track incremental progress towards achieving the vision, which is fundamental to the successful implementation of an activation framework. Follow this step to monitor the progress of activation strategies and act on the findings to realise the vision.

The activation strategies and action plans should deliver progress towards the vision, objectives, and measures of success developed in step 3. It is important to continually evaluate the quality of a public space, of permanent and temporary activation, and the success of the activation framework.

Evaluation allows a public space owner or manager to ensure that the activation strategies are achieving incremental progress towards the vision.

Evaluation can help an owner or manager analyse the benefits of activation strategies and secure more ongoing funding and resourcing.

Typical outputs in this step:

- evaluation model for the activation action plans (capital works and temporary activation)
- evaluation model for the activation framework.

Key steps

- Step 4a** Evaluate the action plans
- Step 4b** Evaluate the activation framework





Step 4a. Evaluate the action plans

Establish a process to evaluate the action plan activities regularly to ensure you make incremental progress towards the vision, objectives, and measures of success in step 3. The action plans will guide the delivery of capital works and temporary activation, as outlined in step 5. The example on page 29 illustrates an example of an evaluation model for a public space.

Step 4a (i) Develop an evaluation model

Develop a robust evaluation model that allows you to monitor the success of the capital works and temporary activation initiatives.

The evaluation model should be tailored to assess the success of the action plans in delivering progress towards the vision, objectives, and measures of success developed in step 3. At regular intervals, it should also monitor movement from the baseline conditions identified in step 2.

Think about:

- The systems and processes to track progress towards the vision, objectives, and measures of success developed in step 3
- Using the quantitative and qualitative baseline developed in step 2 to monitor the movement relative to the baseline.

Step 4a (ii) Implement the evaluation model

A high-quality evaluation program will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, based on the prioritised actions that have been implemented.

Seeking feedback from those who use the public space, or those in the vicinity who don't, is fundamental to the evaluation process. Feedback can be synthesised to identify key themes. Incremental benchmarking, relative to the baseline (step 2), will reveal progress towards the vision, objectives, and measures of success developed in step 3.

If the action plans are delivering progress towards the vision, consider options to retain and improve performance. If the action plans aren't delivering progress towards the vision, consider the change necessary: who, what, where, when, why, and how (see step 4b).

Think about:

- Identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the actions delivered to date
- Observational, intercept, and exit surveys (for example, see step 2 and the NSW Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life which is free to use)
- Monitoring broadcast, print, digital, and social media platforms
- Documenting movement relative to the quantitative and qualitative baseline developed in step 2.

Step 4b.

Evaluate the activation framework

Sustaining high-quality activation in public space is an iterative process. Review the activation framework and operating model regularly to ensure that the approach is adaptive, innovative, and consistently fit for purpose. For example, formal reviews of an activation framework might take place on 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year cycles.

Step 4b (i) Analyse feedback and identify actions

Review the evaluation from step 4a and identify any actions needed to address the issues. Consider building on the positive aspects and opportunities. When measures of success/outcomes are reached, new targets may need to be set. Identify any actions for integration into the review of the activation framework.

Think about:

- The findings of step 4a and whether progress is being made with the action plans
- Reviewing the objectives, measures of success, and operating model developed in step 3 to ensure that they are still aligned with the vision and fit for purpose
- Trend monitoring.

Step 4b (ii) If required, review and update the activation objectives, strategies, and priorities

Review the activation framework using the information gathered in step 4 to assess any recommended changes to the objectives, strategies and/or action plans. After reviewing and revising the activation framework, it is likely that you will need to get approval, as you did for the original plan in step 1.

Think about:

- Reassessing objectives, strategies, and the action plans, if required
- Identifying actions that are completed, to be amended, or actions that will be new
- Setting a timeline for formal reviews of the activation framework.

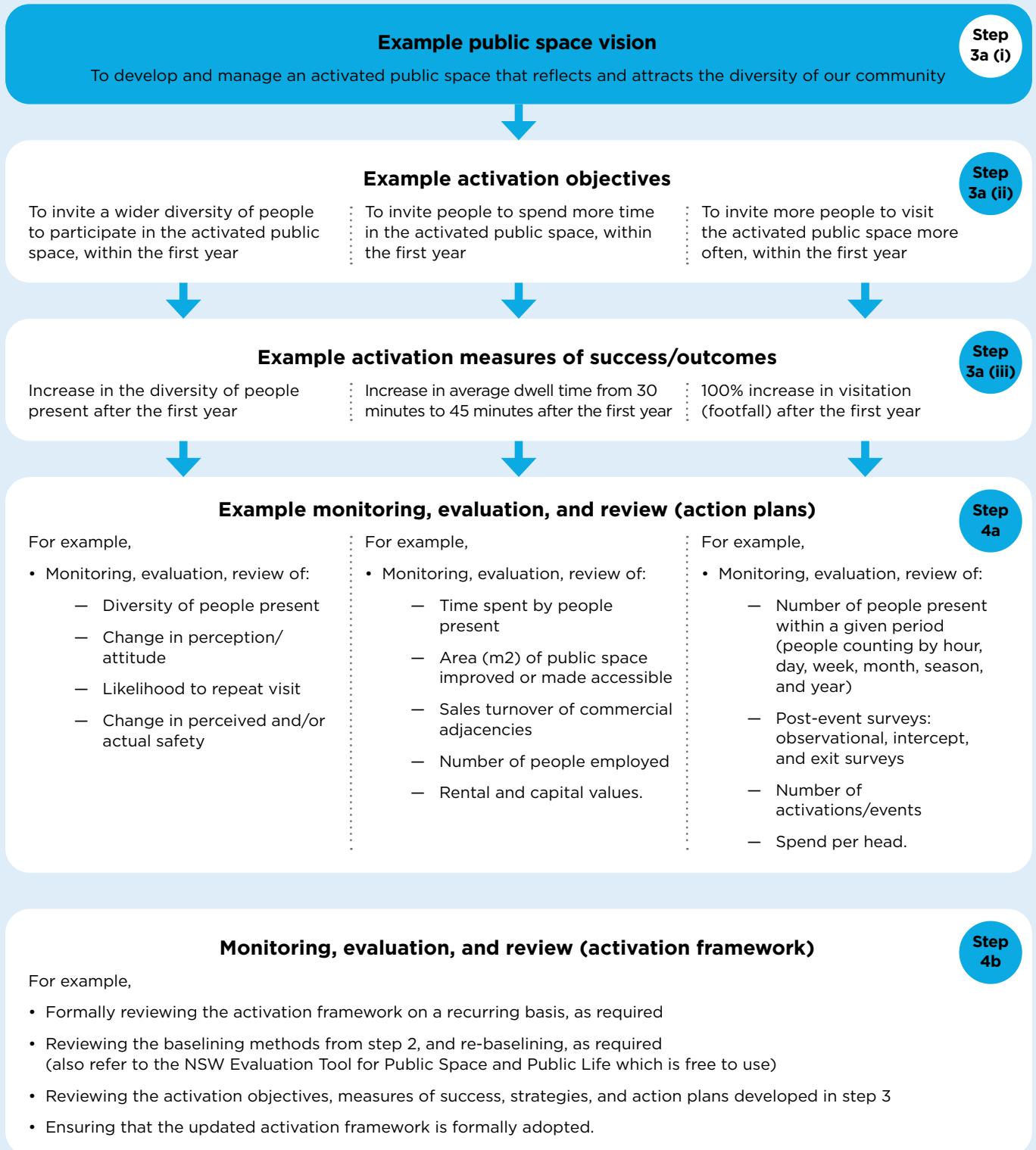
Step 4b (iii) Implement refinements and improvements

A reviewed and revised activation framework should be updated, as required. This may include operating model improvements (that is, the governance, management, funding, and regulatory models), capital works improvements (major and minor works), or temporary activation improvements (for example, an events program).

Think about:

- Implementing improvements to the public space operating model (governance, management, funding, and regulatory models)
- Implementing improvements based on the updated action plans.

Example of an evaluation model for an action plan or activation framework



Step 5.

Activate the place

Step 5 is about realising the vision by carrying out the activation strategies. Follow this step to implement a program of capital works and temporary activation.

With the activation framework now in place, bringing the public space to life involves delivering the action plans, with the support of the improved public space operating model, to realise the vision. This involves action plans for activation-related capital works (major and minor works), and temporary activations (for example, an events program).

Typical outputs in this step:

- capital works implementation (major and minor works)
- temporary activation implementation (for example, an events program).

Key steps

- Step 5a** Deliver the action plan: capital works
- Step 5b** Deliver the action plan: temporary activation



*A Sunday Session @ Moama Soundshell.
Courtesy Murray River Council, Rebecca Pilgrim*

Step 5a.

Deliver the action plan: capital works

Step 2 baselined the current state of the public space while step 3 identified the activation strategies to translate the vision into reality. This step involves delivering the action plan, through a program of capital works, to realise the desired level of activation. Capital works for public spaces will broadly fall into major and minor works categories.

Step 5a (i) Scope, design, and procure the capital works

Major works require a cohesive and coordinated co-design process that will make the desired level of activation possible. Minor works (for example seating, drinking fountains, shade and toilets) are more targeted to allow for a better activated public space.

Approval pathways for works will vary, depending on the scale and context. Both major and minor works typically follow structured stages to guide implementation.

Think about:

- Collaboration and co-design
- Design development and testing to embed the vision, objectives, and measures of success
- Design development addressing the baseline developed in step 2, including the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the existing public space
- Supporting technical information
- Defining construction staging, temporary management, and early temporary activation.

Step 5a (ii) Construct the capital works

High-quality construction delivery and management is essential for both major and minor works. Public space managers should have early involvement to ensure that the built product meets activation objectives and is implemented as designed.

Think about:

- High-quality construction governance, management, and communications
- Quality control (including production, delivery, risk management, and cost)
- Implementation of construction staging, temporary management, and early temporary activation.

Step 5a (iii) Handover and public space management

Management and ongoing maintenance is critical for high-quality public space. As defined in step 3b, this might include management approaches to strategy, design, and delivery; finance and property; communications, engagement, and partnerships; and operations and visitor services. Funding options to support operational resourcing should be identified and secured early.

Think about:

- Implementing an operating model aligned with the vision, in line with step 3b
- Evaluation, in line with step 4.



Pioneer Pictures, Lithgow City Council. Courtesy Summar Hipworth

Step 5b.

Deliver the action plan: temporary activation

It is important to reflect on the baseline established in step 2, as well as the vision and strategies established in step 3. Step 5b involves delivering those strategies through an action plan for temporary activation such as events, markets, fairs, fêtes, food trucks, pop-up shops or services, and performances.

Step 5b (i) Create a program for temporary activation

From the themes identified in the activation strategy (step 3c), a series of concepts and ideas for temporary activation can be programmed, with the required feasibility, collaboration, consultation, and budgeting. When considering an annual program of events, it is the sum of the parts that is significant. No one event is likely to address all objectives. An annual program of events should be curated to ensure that the measures of success are realised.

Think about:

- Collaboration and partnership
- Delivering a program of creative concepts and ideas that align with the vision
- Assessing feasibility including capacity of the public space
- Ensuring high-quality licensing arrangements and hire agreements for third-party delivery

Step 5b (ii) Get approvals

As part of the production process, various liaison, coordination, assessment, and planning tasks may be required to refine the plans for the activation setup and operation. Some of this background will need to be submitted to support a development application, if required, or other approvals such as land owner's consent, licensing, traffic management, and permits.

Think about:

- Approvals mapping (what approvals are required and in what sequence)
- Management plans and safety/risk assessments
- Land owner's consent.

Step 5b (iii) Produce, procure, and deliver temporary activation

Production involves the design development and organisation of a temporary activation. This may be carried out in-house or outsourced and guided by event aims, the creative direction, approach to set-up, operational procedures, and budget management.

Event set-up (bump-in), the event itself, and de-commissioning (bump-out) can be overseen by a manager or coordinator, which is recommended for quality control and clarity of roles and responsibilities.

Think about:

- Preparation of an event plan
- Definition of roles and responsibilities.

Step 5b (iv) Market and promote the activation

Community awareness of activation programs is essential and a coordinated approach to innovative marketing and promotion is recommended.

Think about:

- Promotion of individual activations and the seasonal/annual program
- Evaluation in line with step 4.



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