REPORT SUMMARY

Prevention Partnerships Program 2019–2022

Evaluation report summary

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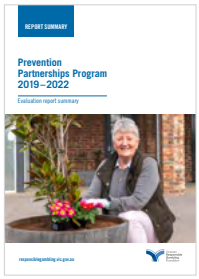
Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation



Front cover image:
Spending time in new ways
through the All-In project, delivered
by Ballarat Community Health.

This is a summary of the report:

Healey, M, Healy, D, Stephenson, C and Miller, M, 2022,
Evaluation of the *Prevention Partnerships Program*, First Person Consulting, Melbourne

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Abbreviations and definitions

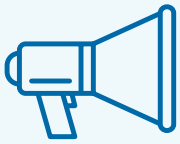
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CEP	Community Engagement Program, funded by the VRGF and delivered through Gambler's Help services in Victoria
Community members	People participating in funded activities in a public setting
FPC	First Person Consulting
Funded activity/session	Any activity delivered as part of the funded projects e.g. community event, information or training session, workshop, recreational activity
Professionals	Staff and volunteers participating in a funded activity in a work setting
PPP	Prevention Partnership Program
SPF	Strategic Partnerships Funding – initiatives to prevent and reduce gambling harm delivered through community organisations across Victoria and funded by the VRGF
VRGF	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

Evaluation findings at a glance

Program outcomes

Key findings from the Prevention Partnerships Program (PPP) evaluation included:

- improvements in awareness of gambling harm and help seeking options
- a reduction in community members' stigmatising attitudes towards those experiencing gambling harm[1]
- improved capabilities in designing prevention activities, as reported by funded organisations
- intentions to share and apply what was learned (noted by community members and professionals who had participated in funded activities).



Program reach

More than
3.1 million
people were reached through broadscale awareness-raising (social media, radio, newsletters)

Just over
41,000 people
were engaged through medium (e.g. one-off information sessions, community events) and high-level intensity activities (e.g. series of training sessions)

Partnerships

Project partners added value through in-kind contributions and support for growth in knowledge, skills and reach into communities.

14 organisations received a grant, who worked **with** **99** different organisations, **with** **39** of these being ***new*** partnerships

> "It was a great opportunity to make connections and collaborate in a positive and meaningful way to address gambling harm in the community."
>
> – Activity participant (professional)

[1] Interpretation based on the finding that: 68 per cent of survey respondents (n=484) had a more sympathetic attitude towards people being harmed by their own gambling and 70 per cent of respondents (n=513) had a more sympathetic attitude towards those being harmed by someone else's gambling, after exposure to the program.

Throughout this report, 'n=' refers to the number of people who responded to the question in the survey.

The Prevention Partnerships Program

The PPP is a key initiative of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation's public health approach to preventing and reducing gambling harm.

Since 2014 the PPP has built an evidence base for 'what works' in preventing and reducing gambling harm by funding projects that target priority populations and testing new ideas. More information on former PPP projects and evaluation findings can be found on the Foundation's website.

In 2019, 14 organisations were funded a total of just under $2 million over two years.*
The funding comprised two streams:

- innovation grants – larger grants for the delivery of innovative primary prevention initiatives to at-risk communities
- capacity building grants – smaller grants for projects aiming to raise awareness of gambling harm.

Table 1 outlines the program objectives for each of these funding streams.

*Several projects were extended into a third year (2022) due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Program objectives for innovation and capacity building funding streams, Prevention Partnership Program 2019–2021

Innovation grants	Capacity building grants
Deliver innovative gambling harm prevention initiatives and test new ideas. Demonstrate a primary prevention approach, aiming to prevent gambling harm before it occurs. Focus on subpopulations and settings, targeting at-risk groups. Build evidence for effective practice in the prevention of gambling harm.	Raise awareness among professionals and community members of gambling harm as a public health issue and the risks associated with gambling. Facilitate conversations to reduce stigma around gambling and promote help seeking. Implement projects that aim to reduce gambling harm, including alternative recreation activities.

Summaries of the 14 funded projects are provided at the end of this document.

First Person Consulting (FPC) was engaged by the Foundation to independently evaluate the program and this document provides a summary of the final evaluation report.

Evaluation design and methodology

The evaluation focused on responses to the following questions

1. Were the intended outcomes of the program achieved?
   a) What evidence is there that:
      – the program extended the reach of the Foundation
      – funded projects sustained outcomes (e.g. awareness of gambling harm and help-seeking options)
      – project activities demonstrated efficacy
      – partnership opportunities emerged
      – harm from gambling is more widely understood as a public health issue?
   b) What, if any, unintended outcomes occurred?
   c) What lessons are there from the PPP that can inform future prevention activities or programs?
2. Did partnerships contribute to the effectiveness of the program?
3. Did funded projects contribute to the program's intended outcomes?

Data sources

Centralised survey data: A centralised survey instrument was developed by CQUniversity's Professor Nerilee Hing in collaboration with FPC. It covered an extensive range of concepts including awareness, attitudes, confidence, intentions, and behaviours.

FPC worked with each funded project to select relevant survey questions aligned to their intended outcomes. A professionally translated version of the survey was also made available in 14 languages. Across the entirety of the PPP a total of n=758 completed surveys were collected between July 2020 and 31 May 2022. Surveys were completed by either community members or professionals participating in funded activities.

Final reports from PPP-funded organisations: Data was included from all 14 PPP organisations through their end of project reports.

Data analysis involved:

- quantitative analysis of centralised survey data
- content analysis of qualitative survey data
- content analysis of project reports.

Limitations

The following limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the evaluation finding:

- long-term outcomes can only be inferred as this evaluation did not include follow-up measures
- project activities, settings, target populations and intended outcomes vary across projects. This has implications for the standardised approach to data collection in terms of comparison between projects. Data collection questions have been kept as consistent as possible to allow for aggregation, analysis and interpretation across the program
- the varied approach across projects also resulted in a varied number of responses to each question from the centralised survey and therefore some findings may be based on small sample sizes (throughout this report the relevant sample size is noted)
- as with any survey process, there was the potential for self-selection bias in those who chose to respond to surveys.

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and the Hon. Maree Edwards MP, Member for Bendigo West, visit Bendigo Community Health for an update on their collaboration with Foundation and Gamblers Help Anglicare.

Key findings

Demographics of survey respondents

- 82 per cent of survey responses came from community members, 18 per cent from professionals (n=758).
- Over half of all respondents identified as female (57 per cent, n=720).
- People aged 18–29 years made up 23 per cent of respondents, 20 per cent were 30–39 years and 17 per cent were 40–49 years (n=726).
- Almost all respondents did not identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (97 per cent), 2 per cent were unsure and 1 per cent preferred not to disclose (n=710).
- Amongst professionals, 47 per cent reported working in non-health community services (n=57), and just over a third had more than 10 years' experience in their sector (n=79).

65%

of respondents reported that they speak a language other than English at home.

(n=721)

Changes in awareness

As highlighted on page 4, more than 41,000 people engaged in PPP information sessions, community events or training activities.

- There were improvements in survey respondents' awareness of a range of issues related to gambling and gambling harm (reported as 'good'/'very good' following a PPP activity). Figure 1 demonstrates statistically significant improvements in awareness, which were statistically significant.

Levels of awareness of gambling harm before and after attending a PPP information session

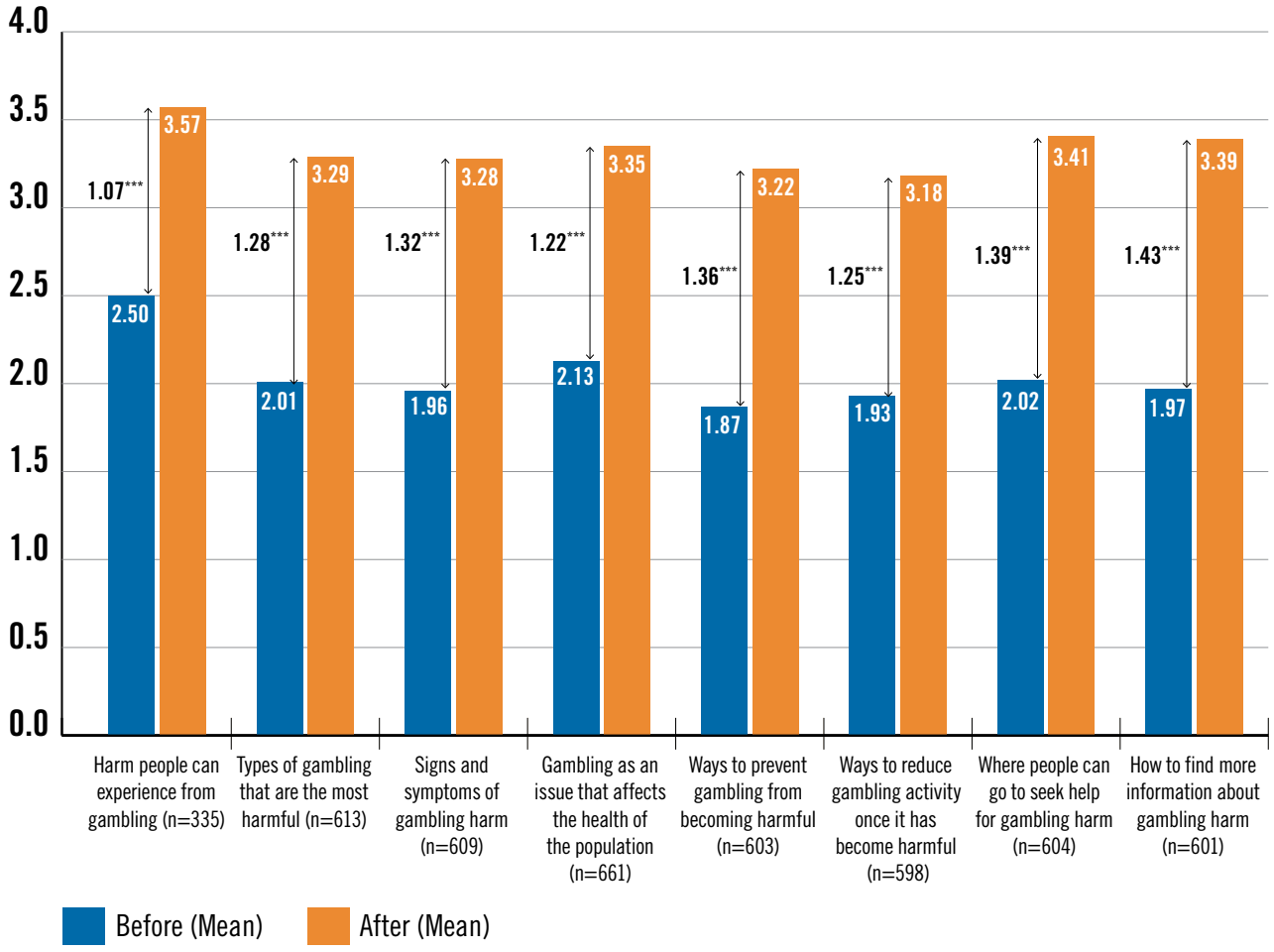


Figure 1: Changes in awareness of gambling harm before and after a PPP information session for professionals and community members.

*Mean response scale: 1–Poor, 2–Fair, 3–Good, 4–Very Good.
*** indicates the difference in mean scores from before to after is significant at p<001

Changes in participant attitudes

- As reflected in the PPP program objectives, reducing gambling harm-related stigma, which can be perpetuated by societal attitudes, is an important step in improving help-seeking behaviour.
- Understanding changes in survey participant attitudes is also an important element of determining the likelihood that actual behaviour change might occur.
- There were substantial improvements in participants' attitudes relating to most aspects of gambling and gambling-related harm, which was measured *after* participation in a PPP activity.[2]

68%

of respondents (n=484) had a more sympathetic attitude towards people being harmed by their own gambling.

70%

of respondents (n=513) had a more sympathetic attitude towards those being harmed by someone else's gambling, after exposure to the program

> "Empathy is paramount and no-judgement listening is key to building trust between us and a gambler or their affected other."
>
> – Activity participant (professional)

Changes in professionals' confidence

Raising professionals' awareness of gambling harm and building their knowledge, skills and capacity is a key focus of the PPP.

After participating in a funded activity:

92% of professionals felt 'extremely confident' in referring clients to support services (n=85).

75% were 'confident' to use what they had learnt in their work (n=90).

Areas for further focus include implementing culturally sensitive practices and speaking to clients about gambling harm. Professionals felt least confident about these, with 37 per cent (n=72) reporting 'not at all confident' and 38 per cent (n=85) 'somewhat confident' after participating in a PPP activity.

[2] For example, 'Your level of concern about gambling harm in the community' – Strongly increased / Increased / Neither increased nor decreased / Decreased / Strongly decreased.

Intentions and barriers to implement learning

Data on intentions to implement learnings was gathered for community members and professionals.

Professionals indicated high intentions (ranging from 95 to 100 per cent 'likely' or 'very likely') to implement or engage in further activities to reduce and prevent gambling harm (sample sizes varied from n=111 to n=122) – see Figure 2.

Most professionals did not feel there were barriers to implementing what they had learnt, but about a third (38 per cent, n=53) agreed that they had not had enough training – highlighting a potential area for further focus.

87%

of community members were 'likely' or 'very likely' to put what they had learnt into practice (n=436), and to find activities other than gambling (n=327).

Intention to implement or engage in further activities (professionals)

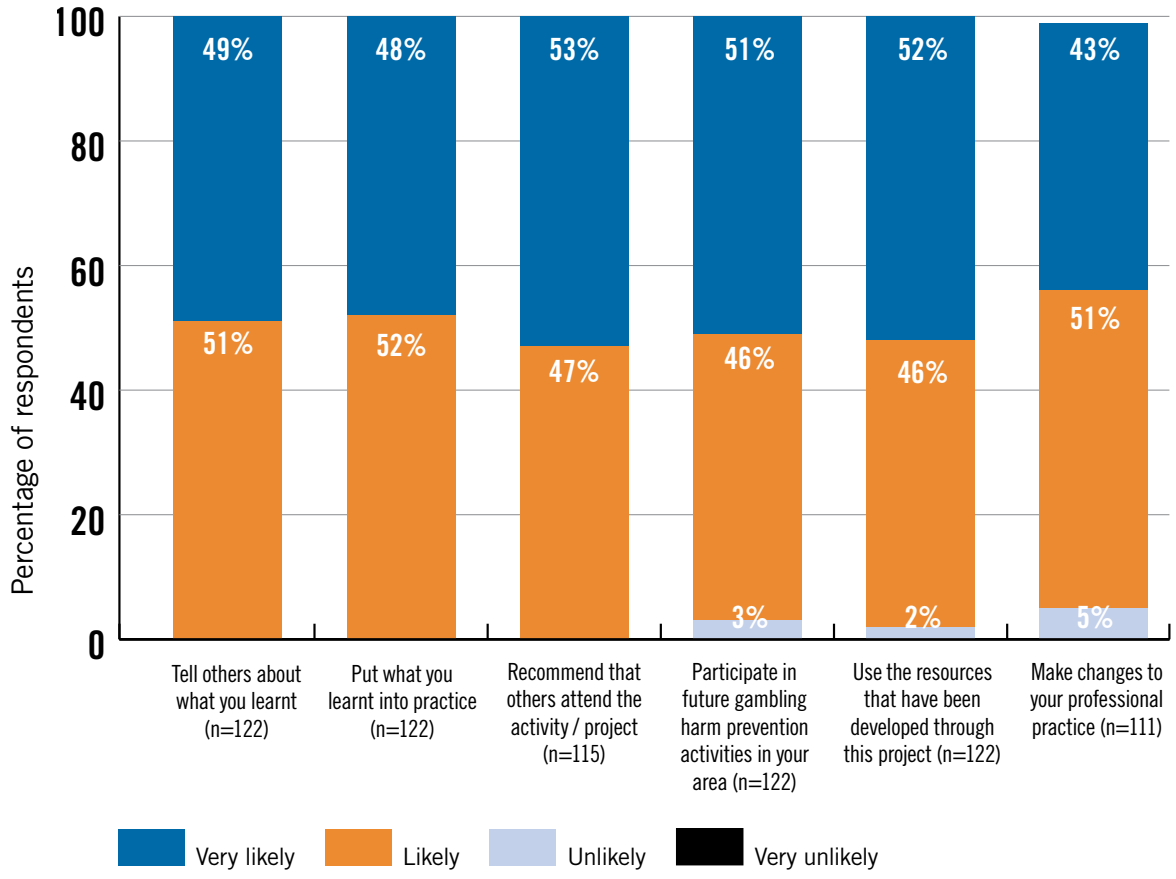


Figure 2: Intention to implement or engage in further activities (professionals only)

Unintended outcomes

COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift to online delivery. COVID-19 brought challenges for projects such as reduced numbers attending events, however it also provided opportunities to expand reach through online delivery. Examples include social media campaigns, online support groups and developing an online hub for in-language resource distribution.

New knowledge and skills led to employment opportunities. One project encouraged young people from their co-design process to add new skills and experience to their resumés and university applications. Four young people gained new employment and study pathways.

Partnerships

> “Strong partnerships were made across the regions providing opportunities for ongoing collaboration, especially around the intersectionality of gambling, alcohol and other drugs, family violence and mental health.”
>
> – PPP-funded project staff

Four organisations were funded through the PPP. They worked with **99** of their own partners, creating 39 new partnerships, demonstrating the PPP as a convenor for partnerships and relationship building.

All project partners added value through in-kind contributions and support for growth in knowledge, skills and reach into communities. Partners included councils, community-based and ethno-specific organisations, drug and alcohol service providers, sports and recreation bodies.

Nine of these partners were involved in the Foundation’s CEP, three were from the SPF, and two were funded through other streams of VRGF investment outside the community-led initiatives – see Figure 3.

Thirteen of the 14 funded organisations provided an estimate of in-kind contributions, with the total value equalling **$425,148.** This is roughly 24 per cent of their budgets expended. Partnering not only results in valuable contributions to projects such as those noted above, but is a demonstrable leveraging of the Foundation’s investment, improving the value of the program.

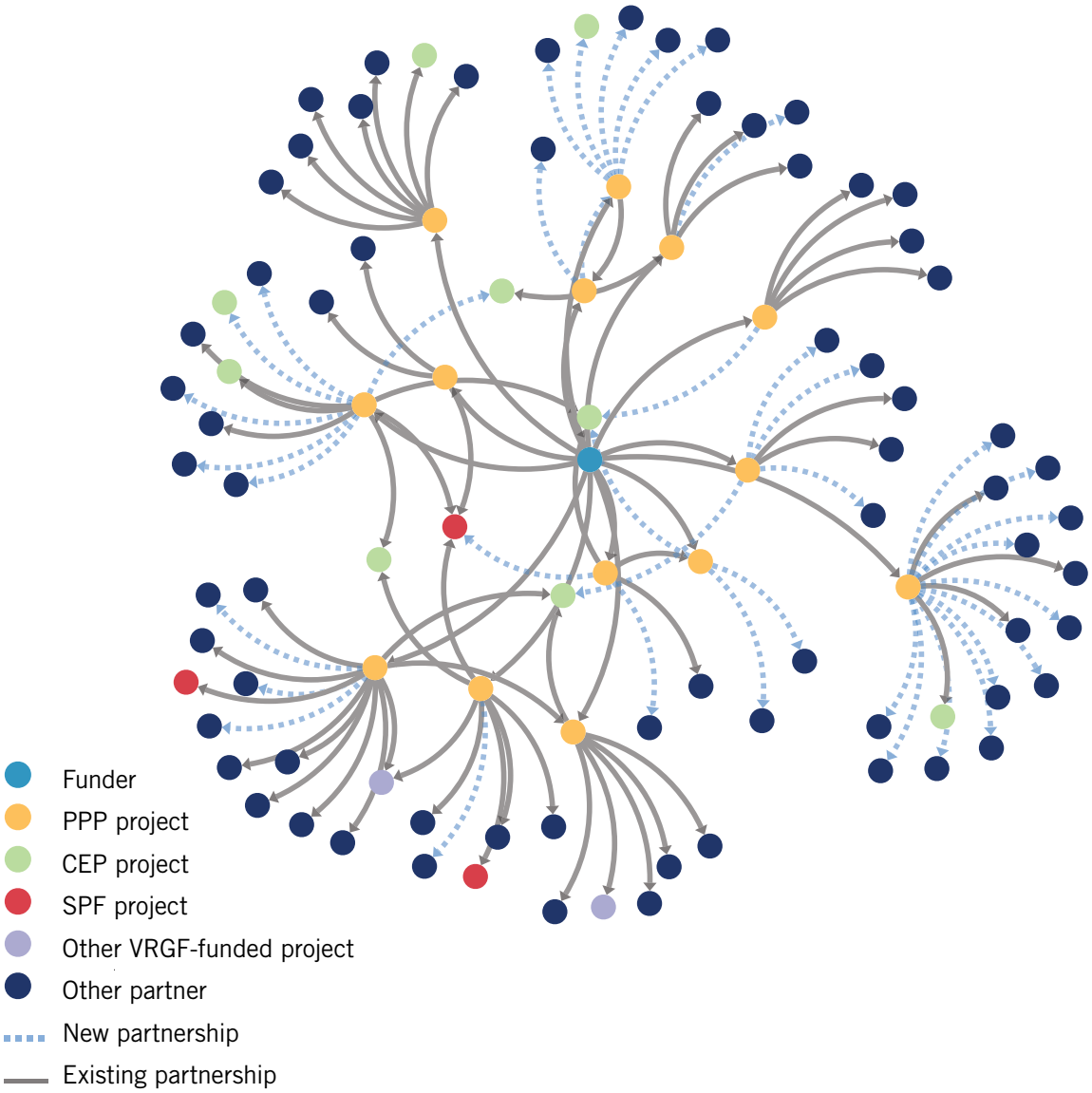


Figure 3: Network map of the Prevention Partnerships Program (n=14 project reports)

Program delivery and reach

- Target groups of the 14 funded projects included people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (nine projects), children and young people (four projects), regional communities (three projects) and First Nations communities (two projects).[3]
- Staff within funded organisations noted that involvement in the PPP improved their capabilities to design prevention activities, establish partnerships, and engage community members.

[3] Several projects focused on more than one target group.

Learnings and recommendations

Key learnings

Communications and messaging are crucial, as shame and stigma associated with gambling remain major obstacles in reaching many communities. Framing gambling content as social and health issues (e.g. gaming and gambling, or mental health) or through alternative recreation activities, were felt to be effective approaches in reaching communities.

Funded projects can achieve sustained impact beyond their funding period through investment in:

- knowledge and confidence of professionals and community members to respond to gambling harm (e.g. through sharing information or referring to Gambler's Help services)
- resources that can be made available on organisational and council websites, in Neighbourhood Houses and via the VRGF, including videos, training materials, posters, banners and brochures that are appropriate/specific to target communities
- continued promotion and cross-promotion of key messages and resources through councils, project partners and community groups.

When designing prevention programs, effective consultation with community members during different stages of the project establishes trust, creates strong engagement, and increases the likelihood that outcomes will be sustained. 'The right activity delivered in the right way' is a key principle found in health promotion literature.

Recommendations

The evaluation report provided the following recommendations:

1. The Foundation continue investing in organisations and activities that can reach and engage communities at the greatest risk of harm
2. Future prevention programming should continue funding activities across a range of levels of engagement
3. Prevention programs should maintain partnership development as a fundamental feature of their design.

Foundation response to recommendations

The Foundation's strategic priorities 2021–24 outline our continued work to invest in gambling harm prevention and better integrate evidence with program/activity design, communicate evidence to stakeholders, and measure outcomes. Additionally, the Foundation released an Outcomes Framework in 2022 – the first of its kind – which comprises seven outcomes against which to measure progress towards achieving our purpose to prevent and reduce gambling harm for all Victorians.

The funded projects

Fourteen organisations were funded through the Prevention Partnerships Program (2019–2022). The Foundation would like to thank funded partners for their outstanding work in reducing and preventing gambling harm in their communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Capacity building grants

All-In

Ballarat Community Health (BCH)

BCH engaged 16 local organisations, businesses and sporting groups who committed to take action to prevent and reduce gambling harm. Key project activities included two stakeholder forums, the development of an action guide, and 10 key questions for organisations to consider in preventing gambling harm. BCH also delivered a local marketing campaign that encouraged people to take a break from gambling and spend their time in new ways.

"All-in" campaign, Ballarat Community Health

Engaging Cambodian Buddhist Temples in gambling prevention partnerships

Cambodian Association of Victoria (CAV)

Through training sessions and community events, CAV aimed to build the capacity of Cambodian community leaders in Melbourne's south-east to raise awareness of gambling harm and engage community members on the issue.

Preventing gambling harm within refugee communities

Bendigo Community Health Services

This project involved bilingual workers trialling a program to raise awareness about the risks and harms associated with gambling in local refugee communities including Karen, Afghan and South Sudanese. Activities included education sessions delivered by bicultural workers, as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate resources incorporating written material and audio-visual components.

Gambling harm booklet in Dari,
Bendigo Community Health Services

Gambling harm prevention through education and engagement

Somali Australian Council of Victoria

This project sought to engage leaders in the Somali community in prevention strategies that empower community members to take ownership of the conversation about gambling harm. The project aimed to break down cultural barriers to reducing gambling harm and included the development of audio-visual resources.

Soccer program

Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC)

WCC aimed to reduce gambling harm through an alternative recreation activity (soccer program) for young people with migrant and refugee backgrounds (Arabic, Vietnamese and Hindi). Although some sessions were held face to face, the majority were delivered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Young participants were linked to online videos from Melbourne City Football Club and provided with a soccer ball to work on their skills at home. Gambling harm information sessions and resource packs were incorporated into the program.

Stepping out! Building stronger social connections for older people, free from gambling harm

Wyndham City Council

Wyndham City Council designed and delivered 12 workshops for older adults, activity planners and providers to increase awareness of gambling harm and support social connection through participation in activities other than gambling. A mixture of face-to-face and online workshops were delivered to 44 community members and 25 professionals across the course of the project. A facilitator's guide and program materials including short videos were developed and are available on the Wyndham City Council website.

Innovation grants

Invest In You – Changing the Brimbank story

Brimbank City Council

Brimbank City Council worked with local community groups (Pasifika, Vietnamese and African) to design and deliver activities and resources to increase awareness of gambling harm, promote help seeking, and encourage participation in non-gambling activities. Gambling harm information sessions and learning/skills workshops were delivered, culturally appropriate resources were co-designed with those community groups, with some resources translated. An online launch event held in September 2021 had 300 attendees.

AIRwaves – Assistance, Information, Resources

Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)

SHARC provided assistance, information and resources to communities to raise awareness about the potential impact of gambling on families and how to prevent harm. Delivered via radio, podcasts, and community events, the program reached regional communities, and Arabic, Muslim and First Nations communities. The program incorporated principles of community involvement, co-design and a strength-based approach.

Behind the scenes at the Neighbourhood House

Upper Murray Regional Neighbourhood House Network

This project involved Neighbourhood House members and other partners supporting the delivery of alternative recreation activities to gambling, developing referral pathways to support services, and upskilling staff and volunteers to consider new and existing opportunities for reducing gambling harm.

The Bridge

Kids Thrive

This project involved working with students from Altona North Primary School to design a creative education program for Years 5 and 6. The Bridge program uses animation, conversation starters, drama and visual arts activities to explore the risks of online games, which often feature gambling or gambling-like elements, and provides strategies for harm prevention and reduction. The age-appropriate and curriculum-aligned resources were made available to teachers, parents and community educators in 2023.

Connecting Cultures

Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation (MAC)

In partnership with Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council and Gateway Health Gambler's Help, MAC worked with local First Nations and migrant and refugee communities to build a sense of belonging to traditional culture, restore cultural and social capital, and identify community resources. Key activities included a cultural induction program, cultural exchange sessions and two festivals, one face to face and the other online.

Reducing gambling-related harm in CALD communities

South East Community Links

South East Community Links designed and implemented a community-led prevention strategy with CALD communities and associations to reduce the level of gambling-related harm in the City of Greater Dandenong. Activities included community events and the development of print and audio-visual resources for Burmese, Vietnamese and Afghan communities.

A Kids Thrive workshop, The Bridge

SHIFT: The Work Life Balance

South Gippsland Shire Council

This project involved working with shift workers, dairy and agricultural businesses and the local community to design and promote appropriate and accessible gambling-free activities. Council facilitated several workshops across the region, distributed a Gambling Harm Awareness Week morning tea pack with a gambling harm quiz, created two short videos showcasing gambling-free activities (Rusty Cricket and BooFit) and held a family-friendly 'Day on the course' music event in February 2022.

Whittlesea youth gambling harm awareness initiative

City of Whittlesea

The project took a co-design approach to designing and delivering a social media campaign that aimed to increase understanding of gambling harm, particularly among young people from a CALD background who make up a significant proportion of the Whittlesea community. Fifteen young people from diverse backgrounds participated in 11 co-design sessions and developed the *Be the Boss* campaign, which encouraged young people to be in charge of their own betting.

The 'Day on the course' event – SHIFT: The Work Life Balance project, South Gippsland Shire Council

'Be the Boss' campaign, youth initiative, City of Whittlesea

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