

Building Community Water Literacy: From Research to Action

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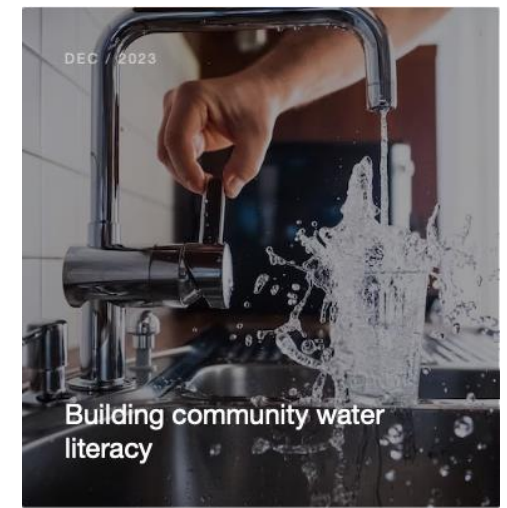


Why Water Literacy and Community Engagement Matters

Only 1/3 of Australians understand basic facts

- *Water literacy = "the water-related knowledge" (Fielding et al., 2015)*
- *Water sensitive communities - one of three pillars of "water sensitive city" (Wong & Brown, 2009)*
 - *people feel a greater sense of responsibility and are more likely to demonstrate water sensitive behaviours if they have a good understanding of water management issues.*
- **Challenges:**
 - Current literacy levels in Australian cities are *low*
 - Past methods of community engagement employed ineffective strategies (e.g., the use of jargon)
- **Action:**
 - *Change the approach to engagement and lift basic water literacy levels*

Project objectives



34 projects on water sensitive urbanism by the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC) in 4 years

1. Consolidate CRCWSC research

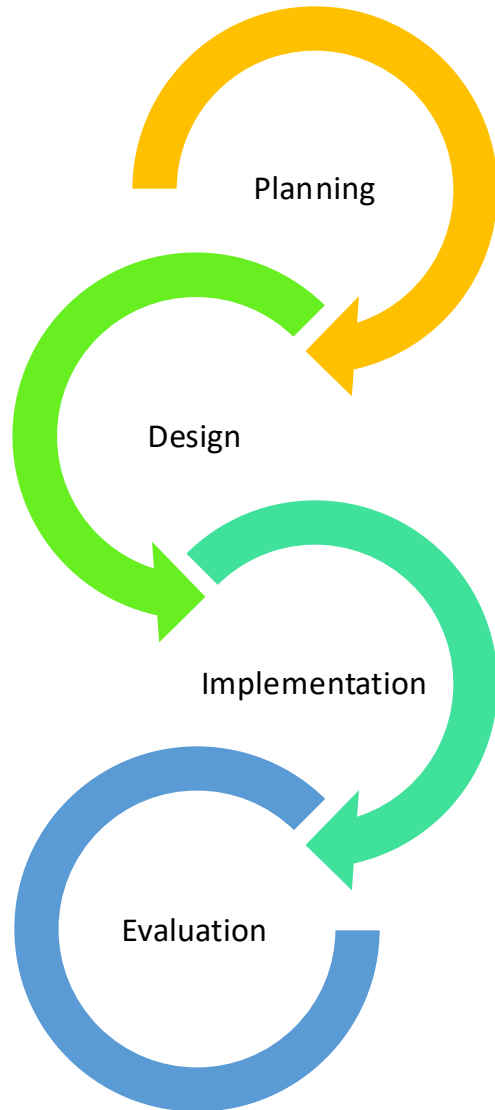
2. Identify practical actions for agencies

3. Pilot selected actions

4. Develop evaluation metrics

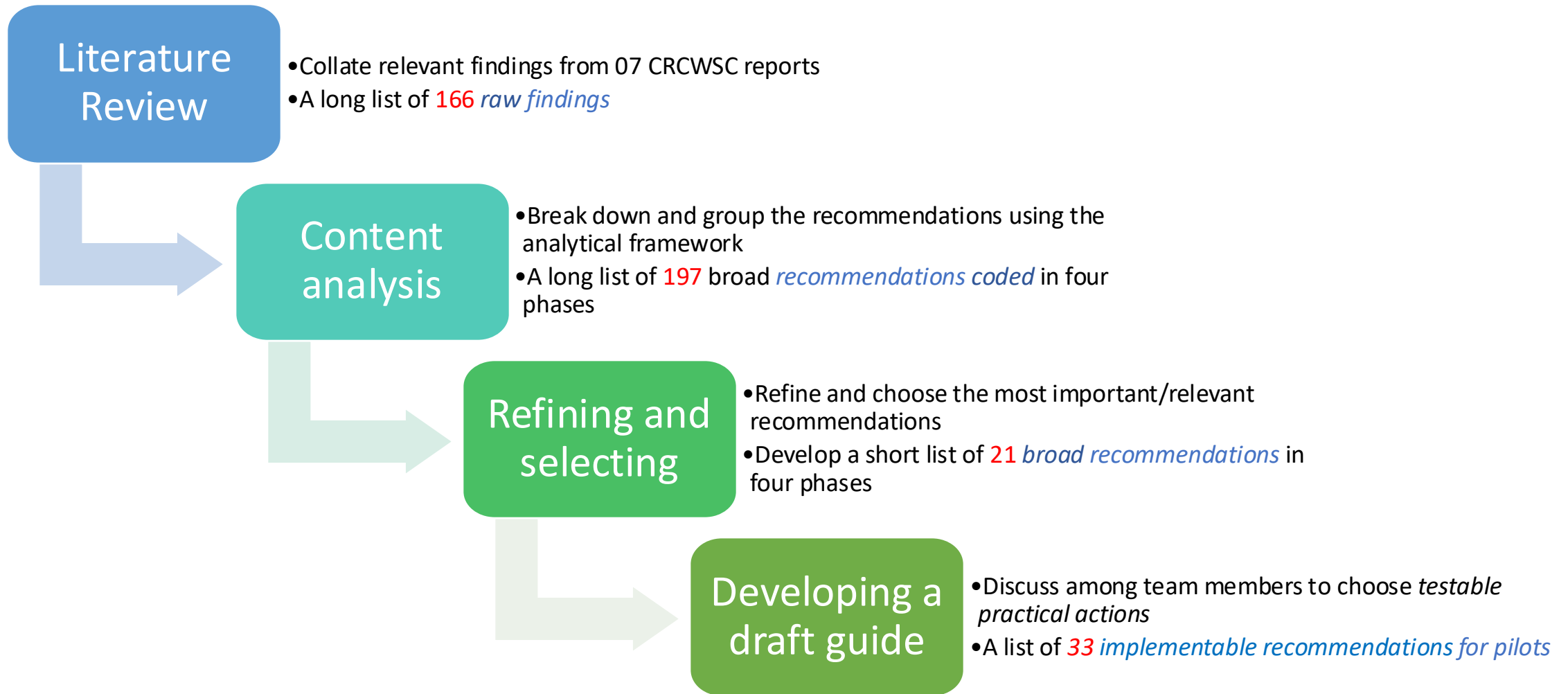
5. Document transferrable lessons

Analytic framework for community engagement



- Set the direction and scope of the engagement
- identify audiences
- set objectives for engagement
- Prepare & design the materials, messages, and resources for the engagement
- Conduct, organise, deliver the engagement activities according to the plan
- Ensure the inclusivity, accessibility, transparency, and respect
- Evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the engagement activities

Review and content analysis



Planning phase: Know your audience

"Identify factors that influence current levels of water literacy, including the impact of income, gender, waterway use, and length of residence"

(Dean and Smith, 2016; Dean et al., 2015)



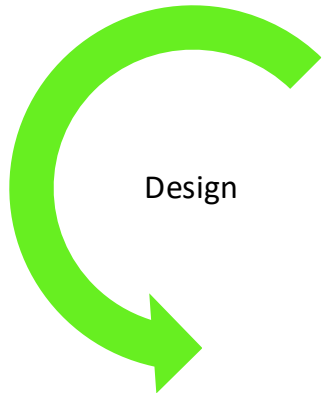
7 recommendations

- *Audience identification*
- *Water literacy goals*
- *Resource allocation*

Key Demographics to Consider:

- Education level: Higher water knowledge associated with higher education
- Age groups: Older residents show higher water literacy levels
- Cultural background: Language barriers and cultural experiences impact understanding
- Residential factors: Garden ownership and length of residence affect engagement

Design Phase: Message Creation



15 recommendations

- *Message development*
- *Activity planning*
- *Resource creation*

"Use simple or familiar language. A key part of 'getting the message right' is ensuring that the language used allows the reader to understand the content"

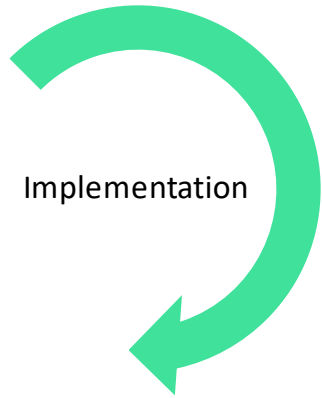
(Schultz et al., 2017)

Language Guidelines:

- Avoid industry jargon: Terms to avoid such as potable water, alternative water, fit for purpose
- Use community-friendly alternatives: Example: "drinking water" instead of "potable water"
- Consider cultural context: Adapt terminology for different cultural backgrounds

Implementation Phase: Delivery Methods

Visual communication is key (Webb et al., 2009; Dean et al., 2016)



9 recommendations

- *Delivery methods*
- *Channel selection*
- *Engagement tracking*

Implementation Strategies:

- Use local images and include people in visuals
 - *Move away from 'talking heads' approach and use more visual imagery that allows people 'to see' practical examples"*
- Multiple Channels: Utilise utility bills, TV, newspapers, and social media
- Community Leaders: Engage recognised community figures as advocates

Evaluation Phase: Measurement Approach



2 recommendations

- *Success metrics*
- *Impact assessment*
- *Feedback integration*

“Evaluations benefit from including a diverse mix of indicators of success, including processes, outcomes and impacts”

(Dean et al., 2016)

Evaluation Framework:

- Process indicators: Number of people reached, representativeness of target groups
- Immediate outcomes: Changes in understanding, and perceptions
- Intermediate outcomes: Changes in behaviours
- Long-term impact: Changes in water quality, environmental stewardship and policies.

Implications

What practical actions are implementable and feasible for water managers across Australia?

Thank you for your interest

