# STRATEGIC PLAN
## Kensington Neighbourhood House
## 2019 - 2021

**1 May 2019**

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## Why a strategic plan?

Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) is a vibrant and vital part of the Kensington community. Since its establishment in 1975, KNH has worked hard to meet the needs of the local community by providing a place to meet, talk, make new friends, learn and support each other.

Today, men, women and children from over fifty countries join in classes, activities and projects that take place at KNH. They come to learn English, undertake personal development or vocational training, access occasional care for their children, share information and form friendships through being part of the wide variety of classes and groups at the House such as art classes, weekend workshops and social groups.

KNH has a strong track record of being proactive and strategic in its approach, and this is demonstrated through its commitment to developing and implementing a new strategic plan every three years. This new Strategic Plan (the Plan) aims to position the Neighbourhood House to continue responding effectively to the needs of the community and to remain a vibrant, proactive and sustainable organisation.

## The Plan

Thorough research and consultation underpins the Plan, ensuring it reflects community needs and aspirations and the resourcing capacity of KNH. Key areas of research include assessing the demographic profile of the community and users of KNH, an analysis of KNH's programs and enrolments, an analysis of other providers in the area, an assessment of the general operations of KNH, and the results from an extensive program of consultation and engagement with the community, staff and partners. A summary of the research outcomes is provided as part of this document, with a Discussion Paper available separately.

The Plan identifies key areas of focus for KNH over the next three years and priority actions. The actions will be reported upon and updated each year, to ensure that KNH responds to emerging issues and opportunities.

# The value of neighbourhood houses

A 2011 report[1] developed by the Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association sought to identify the scale and impact of neighbourhood houses and centres revealing the following.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Number of people participating in activities per week** | **320,000** |
| **Number of volunteers** | **21,300** |
| **Number of students, participants & volunteers assisted to transition to paid work or further education** | **67,300** |
| **Number of people serving on committees and boards of governance** | **8,500** |
| **Number of paid employees includes full time, part time, tutors & casuals** | **14,500** |

These numbers alone demonstrate the value of organisations like KNH to individuals and communities, but perhaps even more telling is the government policy and funding support for neighbourhood houses in the pursuit of community capacity building and community strengthening objectives.  Key objectives of the Victorian State Government funding program for neighbourhood houses are:

> *To support the provision of community development programs and activities which lead to community strengthening outcomes*

> *To support community development processes to address locally identified priorities and needs.[2]*

Organisations like KNH are central to identifying and responding to community needs and by extension strengthening communities. While there has been enormous change in Kensington's population over the past forty years, KNH has always kept its doors open to all residents and it has continued to adapt its services to meet the ever-changing needs of the local community.

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[1] Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association, (May 2011), Strengthening Local Communities: Who we are and What we do. Available online: https://www.nhvic.org.au/documents/item/559
[2] Victorian State Government, (2018), Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program. Available online: https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/neighbourhood-house-coordination-program

# Our Community

The primary catchment of KNH is residents of Kensington however, the house also attracts residents from surrounding suburbs (North Melbourne and Flemington) and further afield. At any one time, around 50 per cent of people enrolled in programs at KNH are from Kensington with the remaining participants largely living in a 5 to 10km radius of the House.

## Key Characteristics of the Kensington Population

> **Steady population growth** as a result of recent local development and the urban renewal of industrial areas located close to KNH. The current population is 10,890 and this is projected to grow by around eight per cent or 200 people each year. (note: KNH enrolments are growing faster than the population is growing).

> **Nearly half of all residents are aged 25 to 45 years of age**.

> **Nearly one third of residents were born overseas** and 26 per cent do not speak English at home. By comparison, 53 per cent of people accessing Kensington Neighbourhood House were born overseas.

> **Increasing levels of affluence**, however there is still significant social disadvantage with a large percentage of households on low incomes (17.8 per cent) and the majority of public housing tenants in the area in receipt of government benefits (88 per cent).

> **A high proportion of family households** - nearly 60 per cent are family households and 32 per cent of families with children are single parent families.

> **A high and increasing number of single person households.**

## Key Characteristics of Users of the Kensington Neighbourhood House

> **A high number of people are aged 65 years and older and on low incomes**. In 2017, 29 per cent of participants were aged 65 years or older. This reflects the current focus and timing of programs.

> **Low participation by males in programs** but relatively good levels of involvement in volunteer initiatives.

> **Community members from the Horn of Africa are key users of KNH** but are largely invisible in the Census data.

> **A high number of users are from a non-English speaking background.**

# Programs and Enrolments

KNH offers a range of programs and activities that consist of:

- **Further education** such as pre-accredited language classes, employment programs and digital literacy programs.

- **Children's programs** including occasional care, playgroups, creative arts programs, literacy and language programs and digital technology programs.

- **Community development** programs such as movie nights, social groups, cooking classes.

- **Recreational / health and wellbeing** activities such as gentle exercise classes, meditation, workshops with an environmental focus.
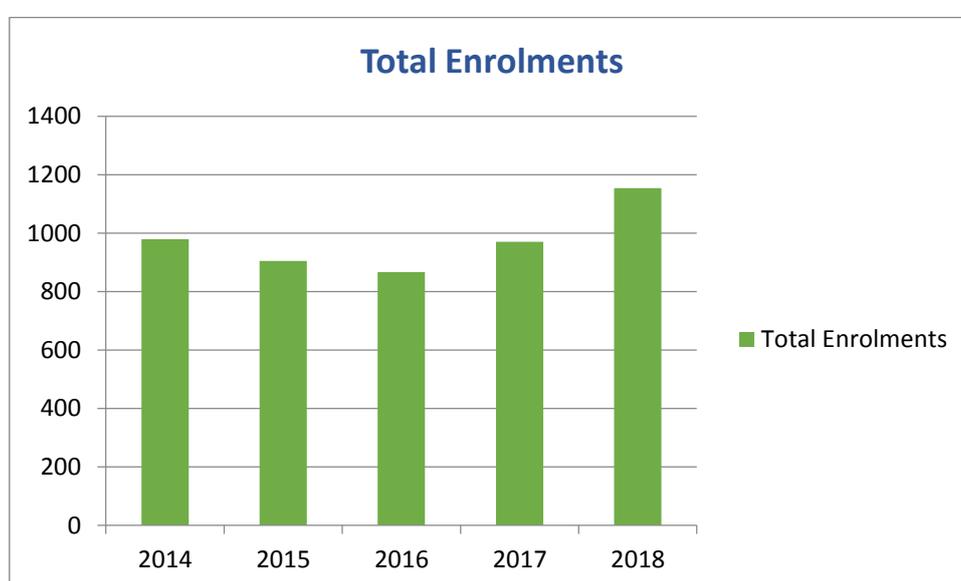


*Chart 1: Total program enrolments Kensington Neighbourhood House 2014 - 2018*

Overall, enrolments in programs and activities increased from 979 to 1,154 between 2014 and 2018 (see chart 1 above). While a decrease occurred in 2015 and 2016, enrolments increased by over 10 percent each year in 2017 and 2018, with key areas of growth including:

- Childcare (occasional care)

- Health and wellbeing programs

- Support services

- Hobby and recreation programs. Growth is this area can partly be attributed to a series of large "event" type weekend activities. Called "Sharing Traditions", this consisted of three free weekend workshops that involved sharing cultural traditions.

The commencement of 2019 has however seen very low enrolments for childcare. While more research is needed to understand why enrolments have declined so rapidly, possible factors include:

- changing demographics;
- less demand for occasional care services with more families living in the Kensington area requiring long day childcare services;
- a large number of children who have been enrolled in the service moving onto kindergarten and school;
- insufficient marketing of the program to the local community and other service providers in the area; and
- the service not being registered as a provider for the childcare subsidy.

KNH is currently applying to be a registered childcare subsidy provider, however there is a need to review the childcare service model to ensure the service remains sustainable and responsive to community needs.
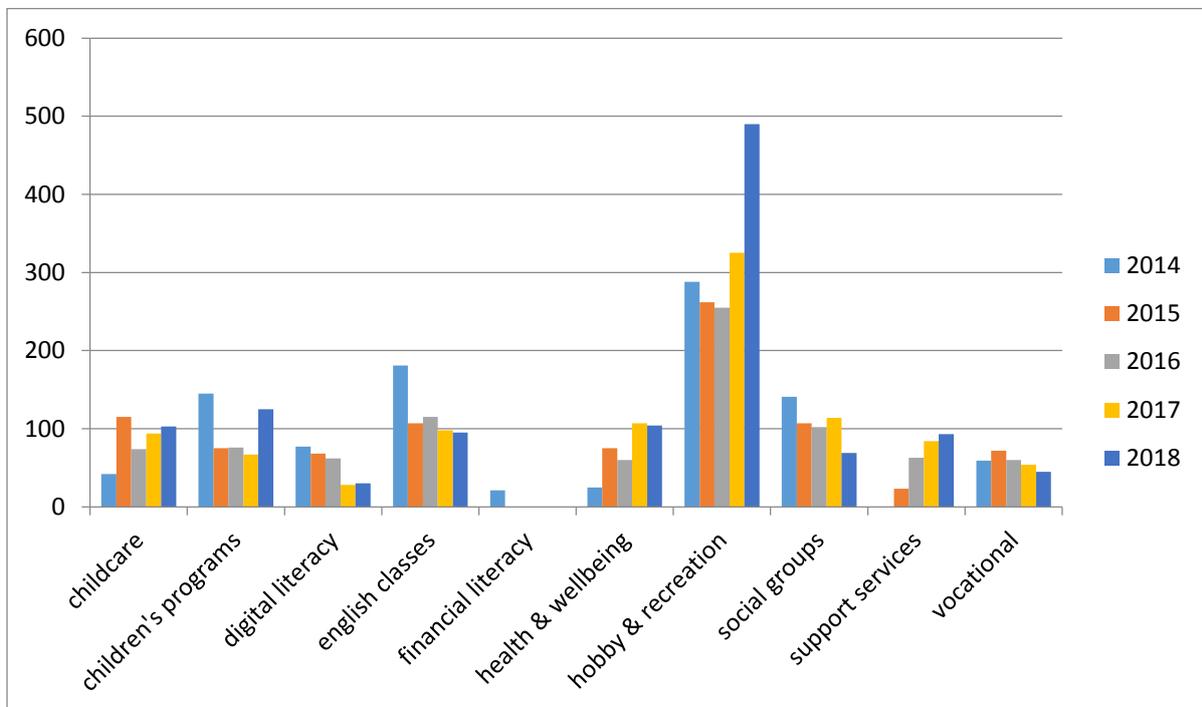


*Chart 2: Total program enrolments Kensington Neighbourhood House 2014 - 2018*

Other programs and activities experiencing some decline in enrolments include:

- Digital literacy programs falling from an average of 69 between 2014 and 2016, to only 28 in 2017 and 30 in 2018.

- Social groups declining from around 100 participants each year to 69 in 2018. The social groups are largely targeted towards seniors. Through consultation it has been identified the reducing participation is partly occurring because of the cost of accessing activities.

- Vocational programs which have declined steadily from 72 in 2015 to 45 in 2018.

- English language classes which have declined from a high of 181 in 2014 to 95 in 2018. Despite this, there is a perception that the demand for classes outstrips the service provided.

The programs and activities offered by KNH cover a wide range of subject areas and provide the community with a diversity of opportunities and experiences. Programs offered are shaped in response to community needs and interests. The ongoing challenge for KNH is to ensure that the programs and activities on offer are kept under constant review to ensure they meet the needs of a changing community.

# What are other nearby neighbourhood houses offering?

There are several other neighbourhood houses or community centres operating close to KNH. These include:

- Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre (5.3km)

- The Centre, North Melbourne (2.7km)

- Wingate Avenue Community Centre (2.4km)

- North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre (2km)

- Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre (1.6km).

Generally, all of these organisations aim to deliver programs that respond to the needs of the communities in which they are located. In particular they focus upon supporting members of the community experiencing disadvantage, and often work very closely with people living in public housing areas.

Many of these organisations offer similar types of programs and activities, although the specific nature of them varies from one organisation to the next. For example, KNH offers a number of different digital literacy programs, whereas Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre offers only one.

Table 1 below outlines the types of programs offered by the six neighbourhood houses or community centres, (including KNH). In summary:

- Four offer accredited language classes

- Four offer pre-accredited / not accredited language classes including KNH (three offer English language courses)

- Five offer social programs (these vary significantly)

- All six offer digital literacy programs (these vary significantly)

- Three offer art and craft programs

- Five offer employment programs

- Five offer health and wellbeing / environmental programs

- Four offer food programs.

While there is good collaboration between the neighbourhood houses and community centres, consultation with KNH staff identified there is opportunity for increased collaboration in relation to program planning and delivery.

| | Accredited Language Classes | Pre-accredited classes/not accredited language classes | Social Programs | Digital Literacy | Art and Craft | Employ't Programs | Health and Wellbeing / Enviro | Food | Children | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **KNH** | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **The Centre** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Wingate Avenue Community Centre** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **North Melbourne Language and Learning** | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | |
| **Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |

*Table 1: Programs offered by neighbourhood houses and community centres close to Kensington Neighbourhood House, December 2018*

# Consultation Findings

An extensive program of consultation and engagement was undertaken with agencies, resident and community groups, KNH users, staff and member of the Board of Management (the Board) between August 2018 and February 2019. The consultation sought to understand views about the quality and appropriateness of programs offered by KNH, how they relate to community needs, key challenges and possible areas of focus for the new Plan.

Key themes identified in relation to community need were:

- There are inherent challenges engaging some members of the community and connecting them to support programs and initiatives, particularly people living in the public housing communities and socially isolated individuals.

- The needs of recent arrivals and multicultural communities differ quite significantly from the broader community, particularly in relation to English language skills which are a major barrier to employment and volunteerism. Related to this, there is some suggestion the demand for English language courses exceeds what is currently available, however enrolments in these programs declined between 2014 and 2018.

- Capacity to pay impacts upon participation in KNH programs and activities. Specific examples raised included participation in adult and educational programs being influenced by eligibility for funding from the welfare system, the link between declining participation in seniors' programs and the cost of accessing activities, and some suggestion that concession pricing for KNH needs to be reviewed. By contrast the range of programs offered and the price comparison with other providers such as CAE (Centre for Adult Education) are highly valued.

- There are major challenges for youth programs in the Kensington area and these restrict participation. These include a lack of suitable spaces, negative perceptions about young people, a lack of programs at times when young people need them e.g: afterschool and evenings and disconnection of Australian born teenagers from African born parents. This suggests there may be opportunity for KNH take an active role in the youth space, however it was also identified programs and services are duplicated in the area and there are a number of specialist providers who are better placed to deliver services and supports for young people. One of those specialist services, The Drum, are contracted by City of Melbourne to provide youth services to the whole municipality. They are not currently delivering any services in Kensington so are actively looking for organisations to partner with.

- Attracting and retaining a suitable volunteer base is an ongoing challenge for services and agencies working in the Kensington area.

- Programs that support parents of pre-school and school aged children are highly valued and in demand. Specific issues for parents include a lack of engagement with schools, drug use

by young people, social media use and complexity of government funding and support programs (eligibility, filling out forms, language barriers and dealing with bureaucracies).

- Support for people experiencing mental health issues or with complex needs is critical. This is typically a difficult group to engage with but there are opportunities for collaboration on this.

- Access to affordable and appropriate housing continues to be a major challenge.

The consultation also highlighted a number of issues and opportunities about the operation and role of KNH.

- There is significant diversity in the socio-economic circumstances of the community KNH serves, and it is an ongoing challenge for KNH to meet the needs of both affluent and disadvantaged members of the community.

- The Board and staff have an aspiration to access additional space to deliver an increased number and range of programs.

- There is opportunity and a need to increase the promotion of KNH to inform the community about all KNH has to offer.

- Alternate program delivery methods for example, out of hours and one on one home tutors, should be considered to extend the reach and capacity of KNH.

- Community members have suggestions about programs that are not currently offered and may be supported by the community. Further targeted engagement is needed to understand whether there is demand and need for new program initiatives.

- Whether there is a role for KNH in bridging the gap between affluent and disadvantaged communities through initiatives such as volunteering and families adopting families.

- The atmosphere of KNH and welcoming approach of staff is recognised and valued.

- As a community leader, KNH can play a role in strengthening the Kensington Community Network, supporting smaller organisations and encouraging collaboration between organisations.

# Operation of the Organisation

KNH is a stable organisation, well regarded for is works with the community, its willingness to work cooperatively with other organisations, and its ability to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Key strengths of the organisation are:

- It's stable financial position, although the need to diversify funding sources has been identified as an area for improvement, particularly to attract funding from the philanthropic sector. The organisation has a relatively high reliance upon government funding, but this is spread across multiple sources including the City of Melbourne, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education and Training, and Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

- The clear understanding of the importance of good governance and the consistency in the size and make-up of the Board, along with the strong representation from the local community.

- The extended and varied partnerships KNH is involved in, including most importantly the INC Partnership which sees six neighbourhood houses working together to find efficiencies and economies of scale for each participating organisations that will strengthen service delivery.

- How valued the contribution of staff and volunteers alike is, and the strong volunteer involvement in programs and activities.

## Board of Management

The Board of KNH oversees the operations and activities of the organisation to ensure the services provided deliver on our mission. The Board also provides a critical link between KNH and the community which it serves.

The Board is the legal authority of KNH and has a range of responsibilities, including:

- **Legal** – meeting the requirements of relevant federal, state and local government laws and regulations.

- **Financial** – ensuring that there are adequate funds for the operation of the House, that it works within the limits of these funds and that records are kept, and funds are accounted for.

- **Staffing** – recruiting and managing the KNH Manager.

- **Resources** – ensuring that the KNH property, facilities and resources are provided and maintained so that services can be provided properly and safely, and staff are appropriately trained and supported.

- **Strategic directions** – setting and overseeing a plan that informs everybody where the KNH is headed and what needs to be done to get there.

- **Promotion and marketing** - to represent and advocate for the KNH, its aims, services and achievements

- **Reporting and accountability** – for KNH users, members, funding bodies and the wider community.

## Staff

The Manager is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the strategic plan and all operational activities. Other responsibilities of the Manager include seeking funding sources and opportunities, networking and developing partnerships, funding body compliance, managing KNH's community development programs, ensuring that its' property and facilities are well maintained, safe and effectively used. The Manager is also responsible for day-to-day financial management.

The Adult Community Education (ACE) programs are overseen by the Further Education Coordinator position. The Further Education Coordinator role is a part time position, responsible for compliance and the management of the education programs and projects which are primarily Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) funded.

The Board, Manager and Further Education Coordinator are supported by a range of part time and sessional staffing positions (including a Community Development Worker, tutors, childcare workers and administrators) and volunteers.

**Kensington Neighbourhood House Organisational Chart**
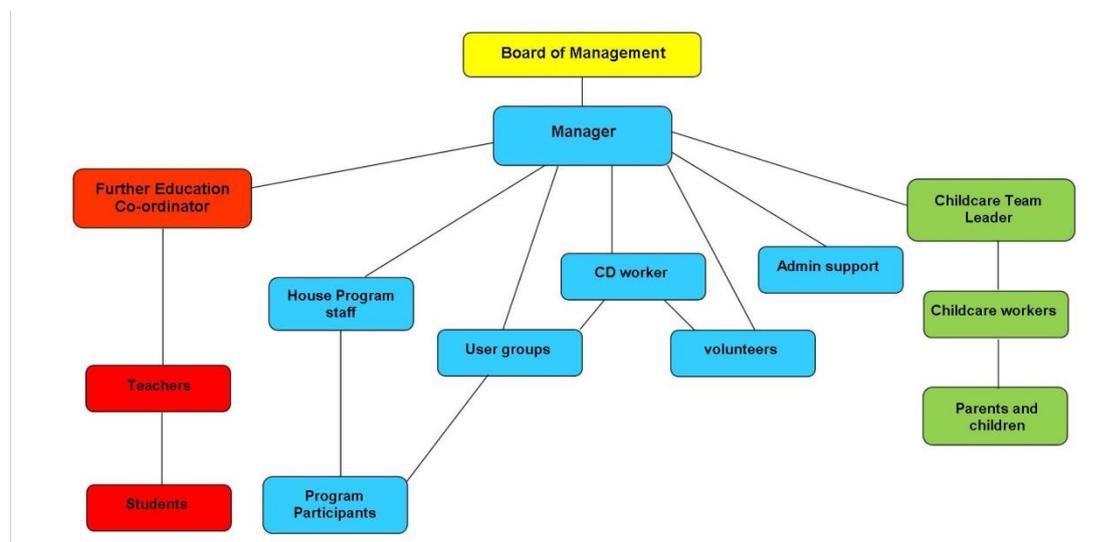
## Operating Policies

The KNH operates in accordance with a range of operating policies, which include:

1. Certificate of Incorporation

2. Statement of Business Viability (as measured against ACFE guidelines)

3. Model Rules for Kensington Neighbourhood House Inc.

4. Annual Business Plan

5. Annual Report

6. Insurance policies

7. Organisational Policy Manual.

# Our Focus for the Future

**Our Vision**      Kensington Neighbourhood House is a place where people of all abilities, backgrounds and ages can come to participate in a range of inclusive social, educational and recreational programs.

**Our Community**      Our programs and marketing strategies are targeted and developed for people living in Kensington, but we also welcome people from the broader local community to participate in all of our programs.

**Our Principles**      **Equity**: ensuring that individuals are treated in a fair, just and equitable manner.

**Access**: providing access to all individuals who wish to participate.

**Participation**: seeking to maximise opportunities for people to engage in their own personal development and in the local community.

**Rights**: ensuring that the rights of individuals are respected regardless of their background. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people accessing our service

**Excellence and Innovation**: providing the highest quality in service provision and embracing new and efficient processes and practices.

**Sustainability**: incorporating sustainable practices across our organisation.

**Connections**: collaborating and partnering with other organisations to enhance outcomes for the local community.

**Community cohesion**: value diversity and encourage a sense of belonging for all.

**Key Pillars**      **A Place for Community**

We demonstrate we are a place for community:

- By being supportive, welcoming and open to all.

- Through being a place for learning, creativity and social support.

- By focusing upon empowering individuals and having a positive impact upon people's lives.

- By telling the community about what we offer and how they can become involved.

### A Community Leader

We demonstrate leadership:

- Through our partnerships with the individuals and organisations.

- By bringing people together to find solutions and drive positive change.

- By advocating on behalf of the communities we support.

- By sharing our knowledge, experience and successes across the neighbourhood house sector and with like-minded organisations.

### Responsive, Adaptable and Sustainable

We demonstrate we are responsive, adaptable and sustainable:

- By regularly reviewing the mix of programs and services we offer to ensure they are viable and responsive to community needs.

- By working hard and smart to make things happen.

- By being ambitious and taking advantage of opportunities to strengthen KNH and the communities we support.

- By having strong governance, policies and systems.

## Priority actions

The priority actions have been developed to respond to the issues and opportunities identified through the background research and consultation outcomes. These actions will be reviewed annually to ensure they continue to remain relevant and reflect new opportunities or issues that emerge each year.

| A Place for Community | Strengthen the branding and marketing collateral for KNH. This will include reviewing and updating the existing Marketing Plan. |
| --- | --- |
| | Deliver targeted programs that support community members who are the most vulnerable and in need of support. |
| | Provide opportunities for community members to contribute to the direction, decision-making processes and operations of KNH. |

| A Community Leader | Build the skill and capacity of the Kensington Community Network with a focus upon growing the level of participation and encouraging organisations to work together more effectively. |
|---|---|
| | Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan in partnership with other community organisations in Kensington, perhaps through the Kensington Community Network. |
| | Strengthen partnerships with other neighbourhood houses and community centres in relation to program development and delivery. |
| | Actively pursue initiatives that will help to bridge the gap between affluent and disadvantaged members of the community. |
| Responsive, Adaptable and Sustainable | Explore options to access more space to deliver programs and initiatives. |
| | Diversifying funding sources, with a focus upon targeting non-government funding. |
| | Implement investment logic mapping to assess and confirm the rationale for pursuing initiatives or programs. |
| | Explore options for implementing a consistent and longitudinal evaluation framework to assess the long-term impact KNH has upon the lives of people it supports. |
| | Review the operating model for the childcare program and position it to respond more effectively to community needs. |
| | Look for strategic opportunities for KNH to respond to the residential development occurring in the Kensington area. |
| | Assess the digital literacy programs offered by KNH including examining the need for programs to support access to online government services, and how these initiatives can be funded. |

# Monitoring and review

## Business performance

There are a wide range of business performance indicators measured by KNH in order to meet the requirements of various funding agencies as well as ensure the ongoing viability of KNH. Business performance indicators measured annually include:

- Compliance with statutory reporting requirements

- Operating results

- Liquidity

- Solvency

- Economic dependency

- Achievement of funding body outcomes

- Governance systems in place

- Accounting systems and processes

- Policies and operational guidelines

- Fraud prevention and fraud management

- Budgetary

- Financial diversification strategy.

## Monitoring the Plan

The priority actions outlined in the Plan will be monitored annually, with new actions agreed to by the Board and relevant actions imbedded in the organisation's annual business plans. As a whole, the Plan will be reviewed and updated in the second half of 2021. Performance measures have been developed to assess and monitor delivery against the Plan. The measures are grouped under the key pillars to reinforce the strategic intent of the Plan.

The following measures will be used to assess the performance of the Plan:

| Pillar | Measures |
|---|---|
| **A Place for Community** | <ul><li>Client / user satisfaction conducted through surveys and feedback mechanisms.</li><li>Course and program viability, including levels of enrolments, numbers of courses that have to be cancelled and student retention rates.</li><li>Numbers of first time users visiting the House or accessing services.</li><li>Enrolments reflect the cultural and economic diversity of Kensington's population.</li></ul> |
| **A Community Leader** | <ul><li>Demonstrated co-operation and partnering with other neighbourhood houses and community centres.</li><li>Level of involvement in the Kensington Community Network by other organisations and co-operation between organisations.</li><li>Level of access to childcare by Adult Community Education families.</li><li>Childcare enrolments and management of waiting list.</li><li>Demonstrated support of local agencies and residents groups to plan, co-ordinate and deliver community building activities.</li></ul> |
| **Responsive, Adaptable and Sustainable** | <ul><li>Staff satisfaction conducted through surveys and feedback mechanisms.</li><li>Funding body satisfaction and feedback.</li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | - Assets well maintained. |
| | - Computer, equipment and resources are adequate for staff and program needs. |
| | - Compliance with regulating and funding body requirements. |
| | - Funding secured to undertake new initiatives. |
| | - Board conduct self-assessment to measure effectiveness of performance. |