



Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

2021 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

This 2021-25 Strategic Plan coincides with two significant milestones for HMSTrust.

2021 marks the 70th anniversary of the death of our benefactress, Helen Macpherson Smith, a lifelong philanthropist with a commitment to supporting disadvantaged sectors of Victoria's communities. Helen's legacy is the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, a testamentary trust with a proud history of astute stewardship and grantmaking. Our work is guided by the terms of Helen's Will, her philanthropy, her courage, and the source of her bequest.

The second milestone for 2021 is the passing of the baton from our Chair, Philip Moors AO, who retires in November 2020, to Catherine Walter AM, our first woman Chair.

HMSTrust's core purpose is to advance equity of opportunity for all Victorians. As a medium-sized funder we also work as an advisor, convener, thought leader, and investor in accordance with that purpose. This five-year Strategic Plan represents the outcome of the Trust's review into our grantmaking, our place in the funding ecosystem, our strengths and weaknesses, and what we need to change to be a better funder. The result is a plan that honours the principles that have guided 65 years of proud grantmaking; responds to the escalating social, economic and environmental challenges of today; and provides the flexibility necessary for the Trust to remain relevant in an uncertain future.

STRATEGIC IMPACT

We are a patient funder, and understand that long-term impact takes time to realise and will not necessarily be evident at the conclusion of a grant cycle. The Trust seeks to shift the dial on three key impact goals: 'Contributing to systems change', 'Changing sector practice'; and 'Building organisational capability and sustainability'.

RURAL & REGIONAL VICTORIA

Rural and regional Victoria is a priority focus for the Trust, reflecting one of the primary sources of Helen's bequest. For the first time, a minimum 35% annual distribution target, averaged over rolling three-year periods, has been allocated to initiatives that directly benefit rural and regional Victorian communities.

DISASTER RESPONSE

The Trust has a proud history of responding to natural disasters, and this Strategic Plan is designed to enable us to respond to communities in need. Disaster recovery takes time, and we fully expect that the impacts of the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires and COVID-19 will extend well beyond 2025.

FLEXIBILITY

We live in a complex and unpredictable world, and our funding needs to be flexible enough to ensure relevance while staying true to our purpose. This five-year strategic plan enables us to adapt to changing social and environmental needs, to continuously learn from our actions, and to act on our learnings.

FACTS AND KNOWLEDGE

We value evidence, support fact-based analysis, and examine independent data to help inform our strategies and grantmaking. The logic of the Grants Framework underpins the evaluation and reporting structure, which will enable us to better understand, learn from and respond to the complex social, economic and environmental issues that we seek to improve.

This five-year strategy is timely as we all adjust to the impacts of unprecedented global disruptions. We are a trust in perpetuity and we will continue to reflect, listen, learn, and adjust our practice accordingly.

WHAT DEFINES US

OUR VISION

A strong, just and sustainable Victoria | *Balit, noogee ba kangooeit biik*

We proudly feature our vision statement in Woiwurrung, the language of the traditional owners of the land on which we work, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

OUR PURPOSE

HMSTrust works to advance equity of opportunity for all Victorians.

OUR VALUES

Respect. Integrity. Stewardship. Collaboration. Accountability.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HMSTrust's grantmaking is based on Helen's Will which defines our legal remit and provides an insight into Helen's legacy.

- The Trust's legal remit is to fund charitable institutions and purposes in 'Victoria only'.
- The original corpus was largely built on the landholdings of Helen's pioneering forebears, which is recognised by an ongoing commitment to rural and regional Victoria.
- Our grantmaking is informed by Helen's own philanthropy, which remained largely unchanged until her death in 1951. She was committed to relieving disadvantage through her annual support of: children's health and wellbeing; disability; access to health care; welcoming strangers to our shores; animal welfare; and communities impacted by natural disasters. Helen's philanthropy reflects a generous, determined and committed woman who sought no fuss or fanfare. Her choice in establishing a trust in perpetuity for the benefit of Victoria reflects a bold and visionary woman for her time.

Since its establishment in 1951, HMSTrust has distributed over \$130m in grants. Over the course of this 2021-25 Strategic Plan, we estimate 155 grants will be approved for a total of \$21m to initiatives that address our purpose of equity of opportunity, and deliver on our vision for a strong, just and sustainable Victoria.

GRANTS FRAMEWORK

'Equity' sits at the centre of the framework, because we believe that all Victorians, now and into the future, should have an equal opportunity to live a full and healthy life in a sustainable environment; they should be able to participate in their community, engage in education and work, and have affordable access to relevant services and supports that will help them reach their full potential.

The framework identifies the target beneficiaries, focus areas and levers for change that we want to support, in order to reach our three long-term impact goals to:

- build sustainable and capable organisations that are well-positioned to respond to the needs of Victorians;
- support solutions that have the potential to change sector practice across the Trust's areas of interest; and
- address the root causes of the social problems that impact the communities we choose to support, by focusing our resources on the components and structures of the systems that drive social change.

The Grants Framework responds to four key questions:

- **Who** *Five target beneficiary groups we want to support.*
- **What** *Six focus areas reflecting current social, economic and environmental issues.*
- **How** *Five levers that will enable positive change.*
- **Why** *To shift the dial across our three impact goals, which will enable us to deliver on our vision for 'a strong, just and sustainable Victoria'.*

Our six focus areas align with the Trust's legacy, are based on key social and environmental issues that are front and centre of public discourse, and reflect our response to the circumstances of Victorians reeling from COVID-19 and its long-term impacts.

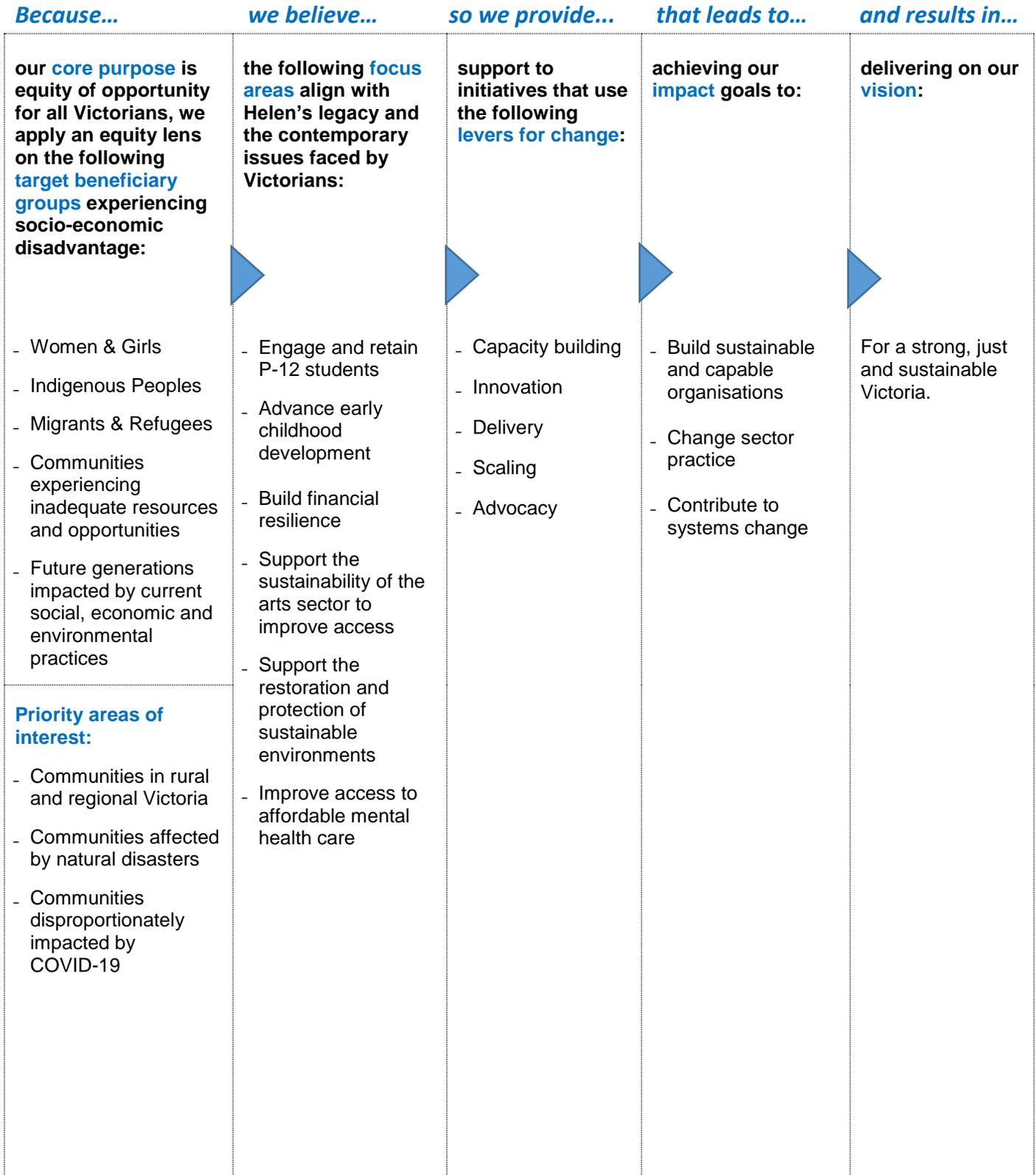
The framework builds on our strengths, and provides a flexible model that can adapt to social, economic or environmental changes that impact our priority beneficiaries and focus areas. Every aspect of the framework can be applied to specific areas of interest, from the Trust's ongoing commitment to rural and regional Victoria, to disaster response, or a rolling special interest as identified by Trustees.

We know that shifting the dial on any of our three key impact goals takes time to manifest. Even then, we can only ever claim contribution not attribution.

Each focus area can stand alone, but increasingly they are interrelated. The framework enables us to work across focus areas and programs as we respond to an increase in the number of organisations collaborating across sectors to address complex social issues in local communities.

STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

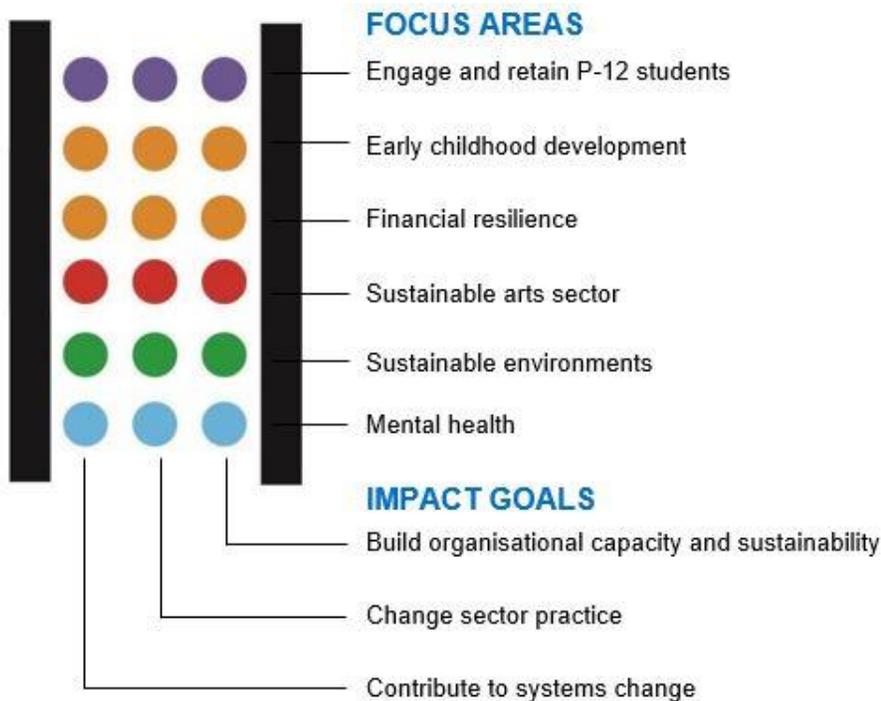
The strategic narrative represents an overview of the logic model across the framework. The framework enables changing priorities to be introduced in response to changing social need, highlighting the flexibility of the model to adapt to beneficiary, place, or issue while staying true to purpose and vision.



HMSTrust MATRIX

The HMSTrust matrix provides a simple graphic representation of our two primary funding criteria: focus areas and impact goals.

Grant opportunities will be considered if they strongly align with at least one of the six focus areas and aims to deliver on at least one of the three impact goals.



In addition to addressing Focus areas and Impact goals, we look for an alignment of vision, purpose and values, and expect the funding opportunities to address the other three key elements of our Grants Framework: Purpose, Target beneficiaries, and Levers for change.

We expect the funding opportunity to be community led, fully scoped, and not replicating or duplicating an existing service or model. We encourage collaboration and partnership and carefully consider the potential for long-term impact against risk. We look for the potential for: leverage; sustainability beyond the funding period; and a commitment to evaluation and dissemination of findings.

'Equity of opportunity' is the core purpose that underpins every funding decision.

WHERE WE GRANT

HMSTrust funds only in Victoria, and has an ongoing commitment to support rural and regional Victoria. Trustees have determined that a minimum of 35% of our annual distributions, on a rolling three-year basis, will directly benefit rural and regional communities. Priority will be given to grants that are community led, delivered by a community provider or in partnership with a local provider.

Up to 65% of our annual distribution will benefit the communities of Greater Melbourne and for projects that have a statewide impact.

HMSTrust has an enduring commitment to strengthening rural and regional Victoria, one of the primary sources of the Trust's legacy.

HOW WE GRANT

Our four funding tiers reflect the needs of grantees so that they can best serve their communities.

Tier 1: Capacity Building Grants (rolling grants round \$20,000 - \$50,000)

Tier 2: Special Interest Grants (multi-year grants round up to \$150,000)
A rotating focus reviewed annually by Trustees

Tier 3: Major Grants (multi-year grants round up to \$400,000)

Tier 4: Partnership Grants (over \$400,000 by invitation only)

Our website is our window to the world, providing detailed guidance to grantseekers on who, what, where, how and why we grant. Our intention is to connect with the initiatives that best match our impact goals.

Eligibility is a key funding criteria, and a full list of eligibility criteria, including what HMSTrust does not fund, is listed on our website: <https://hmstrust.org.au/grantseekers/eligibility/>

We maintain our open door policy and we will continue to connect, convene, collaborate, and be a sounding board across the sectors we support.