



University of
South Australia

The 2025 Placemaking Benchmark Project

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Placemaking

- Quality public spaces encourage livable and healthy neighbourhoods by promoting healthy, happy and resilient communities, and generate positive social, economic cultural and environmental outcomes.
- Placemaking is a movement that seeks to improve public spaces in towns and cities, aiming to create well-connected, welcoming and socially engaging places.
- With a primary focus on people, behaviours and experience, the goal of placemaking is to transform spaces into meaningful places where people want to visit and spend time.
- Community development; Economic benefits; Environmental benefits



Placemaking Frameworks & Toolkits

- A framework for evaluating public spaces by the Project for Public Spaces (2014)
- The NSW government (2019):
 - - The Great Places Toolkit
 - - The Great Public Spaces Guide
 - - The Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life



The Placemaking Benchmark Project

- National perspectives/snapshots on placemaking best practices within local governments
- Annual national benchmarking survey provides robust industry indicators for effective measurement of place management and placemaking initiatives
- Comparison of your Council's results with academically established, industry relevant benchmarks
- Benchmarks reported for key aspects of place management, operational budget, HR, place governance, facilities, environmental sustainability, place activation (events), and place activation (public arts)



Placemaking

In this project, placemaking is defined as the process of enhancing the connection between places and people by making them more welcoming, sociable, usable and accessible. This enhancement may involve improvements in physical infrastructure and/or place activation through events and public arts.

Examples of public open spaces and streets included in this project are:

- Public open spaces: parks, gardens, playgrounds, public beaches, riverbanks and waterfronts, and outdoor playing fields and courts that are open for public access;
- Streets: mainstreets, avenues, squares and plazas



Quality Public Spaces: Placemaking Indicators and Benchmarks



The groundwork was undertaken in 2023:

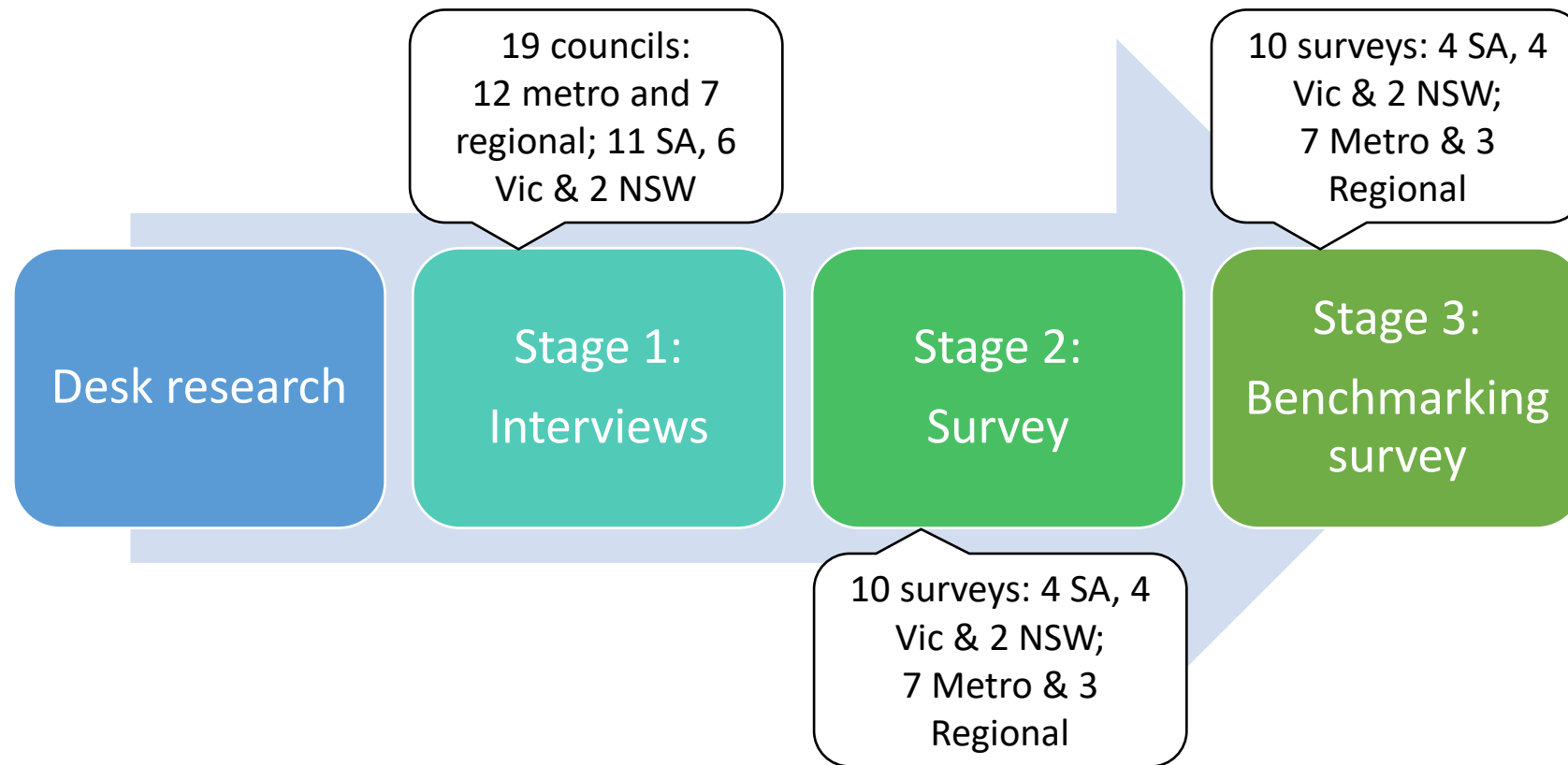
- to understand the important issues in the placemaking process and its implementation by local governments;
- to establish Placemaking Index and Indicators for local governments that covers the operational aspects of placemaking
- to establish Placemaking Benchmarks



* This project was supported by the Local Government Research & Development Scheme administered
by the Local Government Association of South Australia

Methodology

- Three mixed-method stages using a modified Delphi technique



Placemaking index and indicators

- 8 indicators and 32 associated metrics that are important to local governments' placemaking and place management



2024 Placemaking Benchmark Project

- N = 18

- 5 SA; 4 VIC; 4 NSW; 4 WA; and 1 QLD
- 8 small; 3 medium; and 7 large
- 10 Metro; 8 Regional & Rural



Small Councils
<50,000 residents



Medium Councils
50,000-100,000 residents



Large Councils
>100,000 residents

Placemaking Benchmarks

Indicators & Metrics		The 2024 Benchmark data
		All councils (N=18)
1. PLACE CHARACTER		
	Number of residents	57,019
	Walkability ² (Walk score of public space)	55.9
2. OPERATIONAL BUDGET³		
	Total operation budget for placemaking / place management	\$520,576
	Facility maintenance operational budget	\$6,300,000
	Operational budget on new assets or upgrades	\$9,000,000
3. HUMAN RESOURCES		
	The presence of a dedicated coordinator, unit or team within the council focusing on placemaking or place management	67% yes; 33% no
	Number of units/teams engaged in activities/projects of place management and placemaking within the council	2.5 units/teams
	Number of FTE (full-time equivalent) employees in the Festival and Events team per 10,000 residents	0.64/ 10,000 residents
4. PLACEMAKING GOVERNANCE		
	The focus of placemaking in the council (a community development focus vs an economic development focus)	16.7% having a community development focus; 38.9% with an economic development focus; 5.6% having an even split between community and economic development; 27.8% varied depending on the project; and 11% others
	The presence of a council-endorsed placemaking strategy	28% yes; 33% no; and 39% having no specific placemaking strategy but relying on master/ precinct plans or open space management plans
	Number of formal community consultations regarding placemaking and place management in the last 3 years	2
	Number of Information intelligence used for place management evaluation	1

Placemaking Benchmarks (Cont.)

Indicators & Metrics		Benchmark data
		All councils (N=18)
5. FACILITIES		
	Number of public toilets	23
	Percentage (%) of public toilets with disabled access in public spaces	66.67%
	Length of bike network	80km
	Number of playgrounds per 10,000 residents aged under 15	71 / 10,000 residents under 15
6. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY		
	Number of trees (total)	52,500
	Percentage (%) of canopy coverage of public land	22.5%
	Percentage (%) of Heat Island to the total area (based on urban heat maps ⁴)	21.9%
7. PLACE ACTIVATION: EVENTS		
	Number of major events funded, managed and delivered in-house by the council	6
	Number of major events funded by Council, but contracted out for delivery	0
	Number of major events - Cultural events	5
	Number of major events - Sporting events	3.5
	Number of major events - Community events	10
	Number of placemaking activations on council-owned public space	22.5
	Number of event permits for public events on council-owned public space	48
	Number of public events on State or Federal land within the council area listed on the council event calendar	1
	Total funding allocation for major festival and event team	\$500,000
	Number of council grant recipient events	7
8. PLACE ACTIVATION: PUBLIC ARTS		
	Number of public arts commissioned by council in the last 5 years	10
	Number of public art collaboration projects in the last 5 years	5
	Total funding allocation for public arts	\$100,000

Objectives of Place Management and Placemaking

Community development

- Community wellbeing
- Community connectedness
- Promoting outdoor activities
- Empowering community
- Enhancing a sense of place
- Making a liveable place
- Change of perceptions in place

Economic development

- Building local economic resilience
- Supporting night-time economy
- Tourism development
- Enhancing a positive image of the place

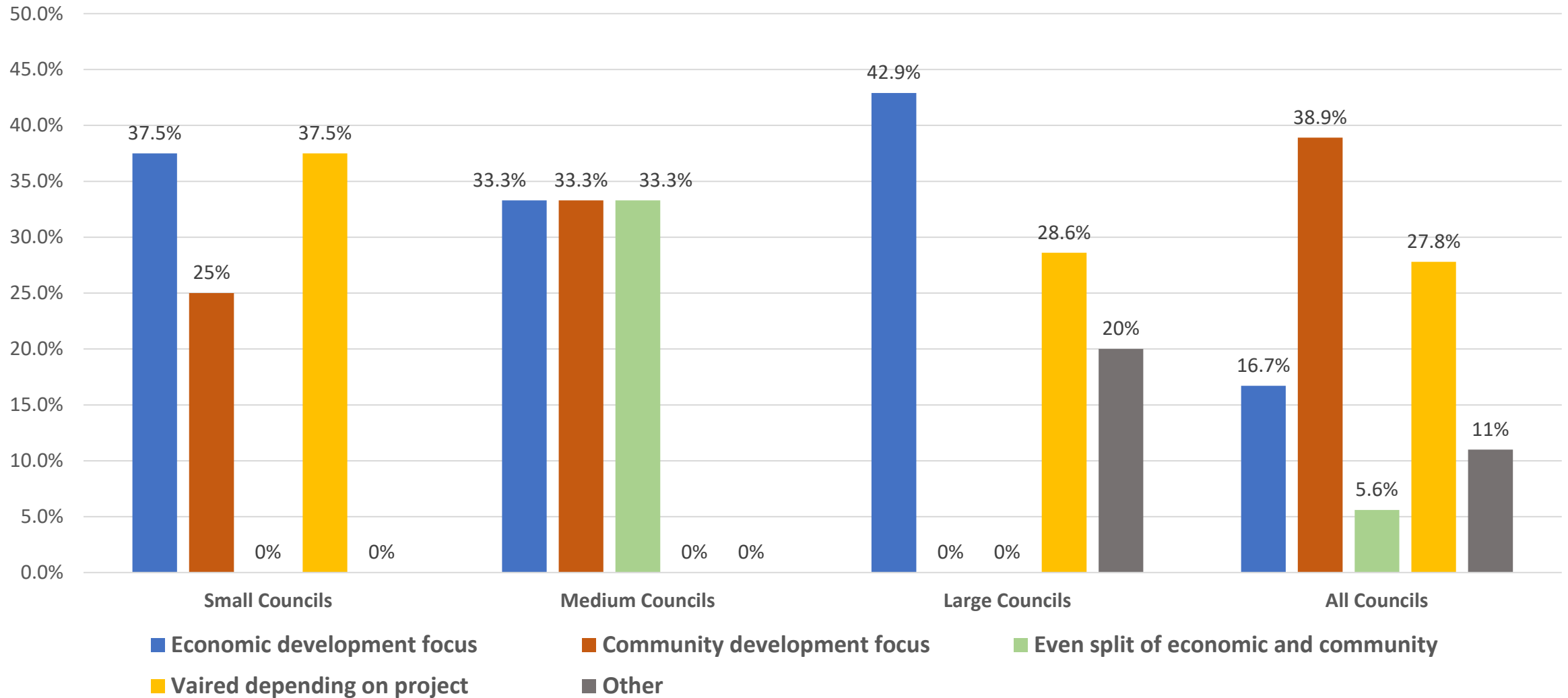
Accessibility, connectivity, inclusivity and walkability

- Maintenance and management of open space
- Renewal of facilities, assets
- Improving the quality and design of open spaces
- Safety
- Making more inviting and more accessible
- Better connectivity and flow through the town centre
- More walkability and cycling

Sustainability and environmental biodiversity

- Turf management
- Sustainable practices
- Environment resilience

The Focus of Placemaking in the Council



Key challenges



Managing community expectations and needs



Insufficient allocation of resources

(Open spaces, financial support, and human resources)



Coordination with various units, teams and departments within the council

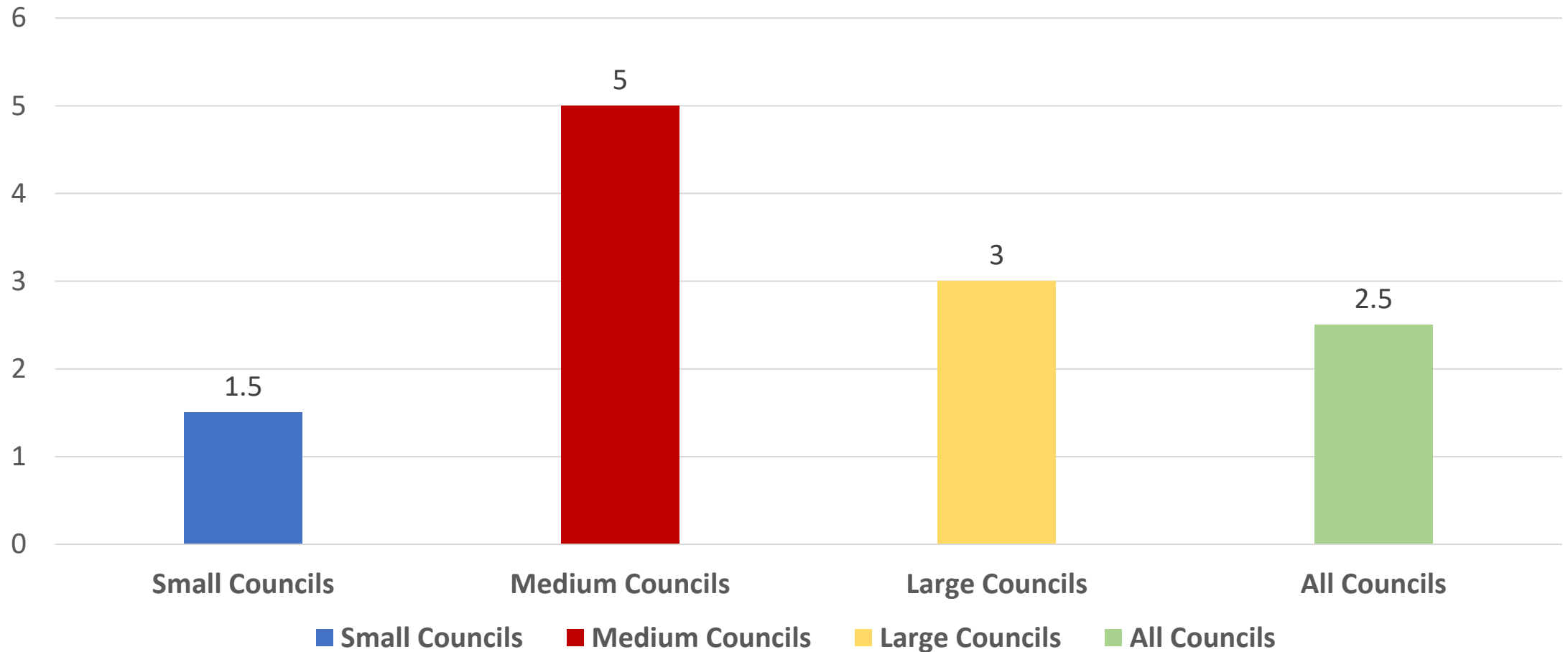
(lack of recognition for placemaking, conflicting priorities among different teams)



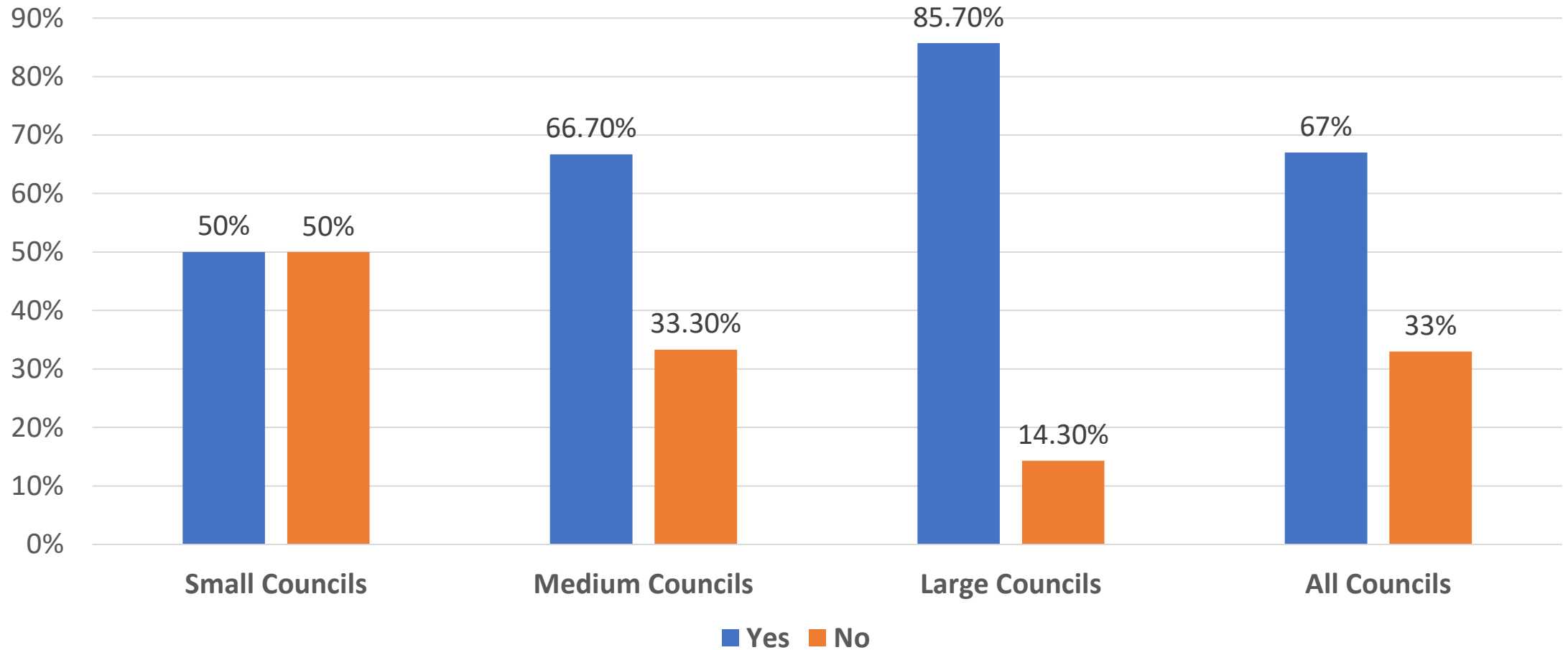
Post-project evaluation

(tangible and intangible impacts, immediate and long-term outcomes)

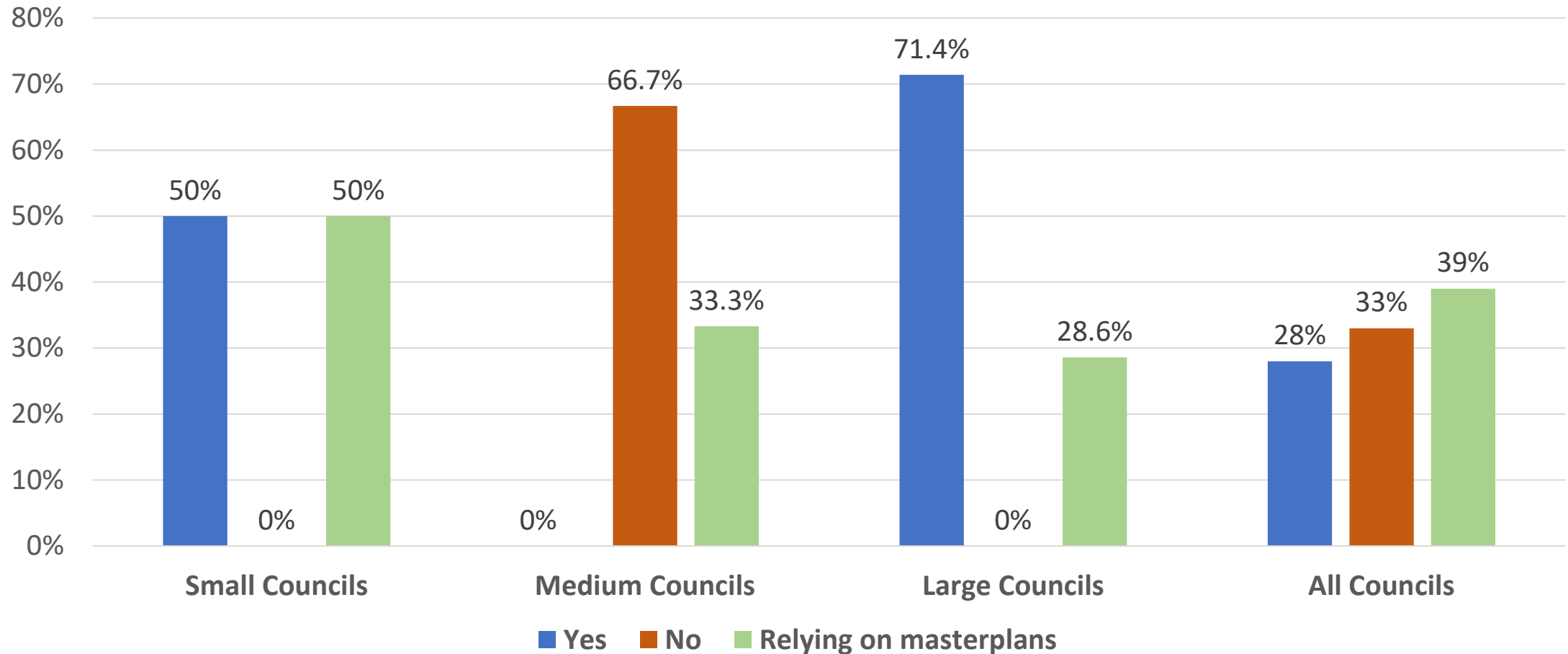
Number of units/team engaged within the council



The presence of a dedicated team for placemaking



Presence of a Council-Endorsed Placemaking Strategy



Feedback from the 2023 project

The benchmarking study further reinforces what is included in our placemaking framework. These findings help back up our work with research. Some of the benchmarks we are investigating whether they can be utilised as KPIs for our business plan.

Too early to determine but the results will be fed into a number of strategic planning activities

It will help with shaping the way we look at placemaking

Provides a guide of improvements that Council can undertake for greater place activation

Project prioritization and budget planning

It is proving useful to several different Council teams e.g. for supporting evidence to budget requests and/or additional other resources/staffing, to show comparisons to other staff and managers to show 'where we are at', to highlight strengths and areas that could be improved/expanded, to see what additional data might be worthwhile for us to collect, and to help guide a future Placemaking Strategy (or at the least to help show why we should have one).



2025 Placemaking Benchmark Project

How it works:

- Manager inputs operational management data
- Comparison data provided with CERM PI Placemaking Benchmarks

* All data received will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, will be non-identifiable and managed according to established University protocols and ethics. Participating councils will be the only recipients of their centre's survey results.

2025 Placemaking Benchmark Project

- Data submission date:
Friday 28 November 2025
- Cost: \$500 per council (excl gst)
- Contact: Olly Townson
Olly.Townson@unisa.edu.au
- Register for the 2025 survey:

https://doit.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1LeF3QAvzUzQiyi





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Thank you

Q&A

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