

Executive Summary



The ChangeFest25 evaluation focused on the National Gathering in Walyalup/Fremantle and the Learning Network sessions held throughout 2025. It explored how the ChangeFest principles were upheld throughout the movement; how participants experienced the movement; and what outcomes emerged from the Gathering and Learning Network.

ChangeFest is at the brink of a new horizon as it transitions from an annual event to a national movement, and as the field of community-led systems change continues to evolve. The findings from this and previous evaluations suggest that ChangeFest has played a vital role in building shared understandings and connections across the field of community-led systems change, and that the movement is now ready for a shift to action.

Key findings and insights

Principles

The ChangeFest principles are generally well supported and understood within the movement. This finding is strongest for those who have been most engaged with ChangeFest.

Some participants are recognising and upholding the principles in their work and within the movement. However, others struggle to understand what the principles mean in practice, and want more guidance on how to apply them.

Experience of the movement

National Gathering

53% over half of attendees were from Western Australia.

54% Just over half were from not-for-profit or community organisations.

71% had never attended a Learning Network session.

Most were between 30 and 59 years, with **the largest single age group being 40-49**. Ten attendees were 19 or younger.

3% identified as having a disability; **6%** preferred not to say.

Learning Network

26% of participants from Victoria.

25% of participants from New South Wales.

1% were from the Northern Territory or international.

Most were from community or service organisations and the ChangeFest backbone team.

63% joined to deepen knowledge about community-led systems change.

24% joined to connect with like-minded people.

10% joined to feel part of the broader ChangeFest movement.

Highlights and lowlights

For both the Gathering and the Learning Network, participants reported many more highlights than lowlights. The lowlights mentioned were mostly logistical, including session timing, scheduling, and descriptions. Some Gathering attendees also mentioned accessibility concerns, mostly relating to the opening ceremony. Participants generally felt safe, welcomed, and included; however, this finding was not quite as strong for First Nations respondents.

Top highlights:

National Gathering

- Network, meeting like-minded people
- Keynote speakers, plenary sessions, MCs
- First Nations leadership & culture

Learning Network

- Knowledge sharing, incl. learning through stories & practical examples
- Diverse sessions with thought provoking content
- Sense of comradery – not being alone in the work

The future of the movement

When asked about their hopes for the future of the movement five years from now, Gathering and Learning Network participants collectively described a more connected, accessible, action-oriented, and impactful movement that is celebrating and maintaining progress, centring and led by communities, and grounded in First Nations culture, lore, and languages.

Outcomes

National Gathering

The data indicates that many attendees experienced personal and professional changes because of their participation in CF25. Collectively, they:

- Deepened their knowledge of community-led work, systems change, and the policy environment
- Built valuable connections
- Felt more equipped and inspired generally to continue or grow their work in the space.

CF25 also created value for local host Imagined Futures and local partner the City of Fremantle in several ways. The most significant was developing and strengthening deep relationships locally and establishing new ways of working with First Nations Elders and leaders.

The table below gives a high-level of overview of the extent to which the intended outcomes for CF25 were likely to have been met

Outcome 1: Connection, hope & possibility for future agenda of community-led systems change	There is strong evidence that this outcome was met for many participants
Outcome 2: Inspiration & learning from Walyalup & Imagined Futures story of change	There is moderate evidence that this outcome was met for some participants
Outcome 3: Deeper understanding of opportunity & work for community-led truth-telling, peacebuilding, healing	There is moderate evidence that this outcome was met for many participants
Outcome 4: Feeling more connected to the ChangeFest statement & how this can be expressed in their work	There is moderate evidence that this outcome was met for many participants
Outcome 5: Deeper knowledge of policy, funding & political context & opportunities	There is moderate evidence that this outcome was met for some participants
Outcome 6: Growing sense of agency & belonging within ChangeFest movement	There is strong evidence that many participants experience a sense of agency and belonging, but insufficient evidence to say whether this is growing

Learning Network

For most survey respondents, the Learning Network has deepened their understanding of how to work for community-led systems change (81%) and helped them to stay connected with the ChangeFest movement in between national gatherings (72%).

However, while respondents generally felt a personal connection to the movement's purpose, could clearly articulate what it stands for, and saw themselves as part of it, they were less clear about how to translate that into action. This was particularly challenging for those who participated in ChangeFest for the first time in 2025, and those from community organisations.

The evidence also suggests that the Learning Network was less likely to have achieved the outcome 'building relationships and catalysing collaboration'.

Overall, while the Learning Network is likely to support shared understanding and depth of practice for community led systems change, additional actions may be needed if the Network is to play a strong role in supporting collaborative action across the movement and mobilisation on shared system barriers.

