



NSW Environment Protection Authority

Own it and Act: strategic framework



Empowering new leaders in litter prevention in NSW



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The Own it and Act framework recognises that litter prevention is not merely an individual's responsibility. Best practice requires organisations to embed litter prevention principles, policies and practices into business-as-usual operations.

Best practice also calls for networks to build supportive conditions for litter prevention and for collaboration across sectors to make sure anti-litter behaviour is sustained for the long term.

Own it and Act – overview



1. Background

We want New South Wales to be a clean, safe and healthy environment that we can all share and enjoy.

Through an enormous collaborative effort, we have achieved our state target of reducing litter in NSW by 40% by 2020.

Building on this success, ambitious new targets have been set in the Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 (WASM) and NSW Plastics Action Plan. These are:

Target 1: 30% reduction in plastic litter items by 2025

Target 2: 60% reduction in all litter items by 2030.

To achieve this the NSW Government has invested \$38 million in litter prevention programs between 2022 and 2027 under Stage 1 of the WASM. Under the Strategy, the NSW EPA Litter Prevention Unit has been responsible for delivering the government's Litter Prevention Program.

2. The story until recently

The NSW Litter Prevention Grants program has used an evidence-based approach to strengthen local knowledge and empower organisations – including community members, local government staff and regional bodies – to establish a solid foundation for engaging in litter prevention across the state.

The program has been highly successful in contributing to the 40% litter reduction target but we want to make sure it does not inadvertently create dependence on future EPA funding to deliver litter prevention outcomes. Avoiding such dependence will contribute to long-term, sustainable litter prevention outcomes for NSW.

Some stakeholders equate sustainable programs to finding ongoing funding sources. The chase for dollars to support programs can create a cycle of dependence, which may undermine the establishment of independent action and organisational ownership of litter prevention as part of 'business as usual'.

The EPA has identified opportunities for key stakeholders to extend the life cycle of litter prevention programs and organisational ability so they can build independence from EPA funding. These include establishing:

- a strategic vision for legacy outcomes across NSW
- a systemic approach and access to transparent litter data to set organisational targets for long-term litter prevention
- a capacity-building framework for embedding key litter prevention principles into organisations.

To achieve this, the EPA has developed the Own it and Act Strategic Framework (the Framework), which forms the basis of future strategic litter grant programs.

3. Vision for litter prevention

With the introduction in 2021 of the **Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041** and **The NSW Plastics Action Plan**, the EPA aims to be bold and innovative as we enter a new phase of litter prevention. As part of our transition towards becoming a world class regulator, the EPA's Own it and Act Strategic Framework provides a foundation to improve two-way learning and shared litter prevention outcomes with key stakeholders across the state. The Framework also provides business management tools, access to leading EPA resources and strategic funding opportunities. These measures support organisations that want to take a holistic approach to litter prevention and increase their capacity to take ownership and action over the long term.

The NSW EPA's vision is that the Framework will help develop new leaders in litter prevention and help the EPA to establish strong relationships with key stakeholders, working collaboratively towards a common goal.

Organisations wanting to apply for NSW EPA litter prevention strategic grants must engage in the Own it and Act tools and framework, including a compelling case for future action.

4. Why get involved in the Own it and Act Framework?

This framework will help you identify where litter prevention sits within your organisation. It will help build a clear idea about what you can do (capacity), and your value-add – along with where you envisage your involvement in litter prevention in the future. It will help identify how you can work as independently as possible in collaboration with the NSW EPA to achieve your litter prevention goals and protect our environment and communities from the harm caused by litter.

5. Own it and Act Framework objectives

The framework objectives aim to:

- provide a vision for stakeholders to create a legacy of litter prevention outcomes across NSW under the **Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041** specifically:
 - 60% reduction in litter items by 2030
 - 30% reduction in plastic litter items by 2025.
- provide a capacity-building framework for organisations to embed key litter prevention principles in their organisation using the four key enablers (leadership, commitment, permission, processes)
- provide tools to establish, monitor and evaluate organisational capacity in managing litter prevention
- assist organisations to set litter prevention targets using the new Key Littered Items Study (KLIS) interactive dashboard
- assist organisations to track litter prevention efforts, including training and development in the Local Litter Check, Butt Litter Check and Australian Litter Measure (ALM) methodologies
- consolidate achievements across the state, build on existing organisational capacities and expand networks to encourage cross-sector collaboration to achieve new litter prevention targets.

We believe the Own it and Act Framework provides the best foundation for councils, regional bodies and well-established community-based organisations to establish long-term regional and state-wide ownership and action on litter prevention.

With litter prevention firmly on the agenda and targets set until 2030, the Litter Prevention Unit invites you and your organisation to engage in the Own it and Act Framework.

6. Own it and Act – delivery space

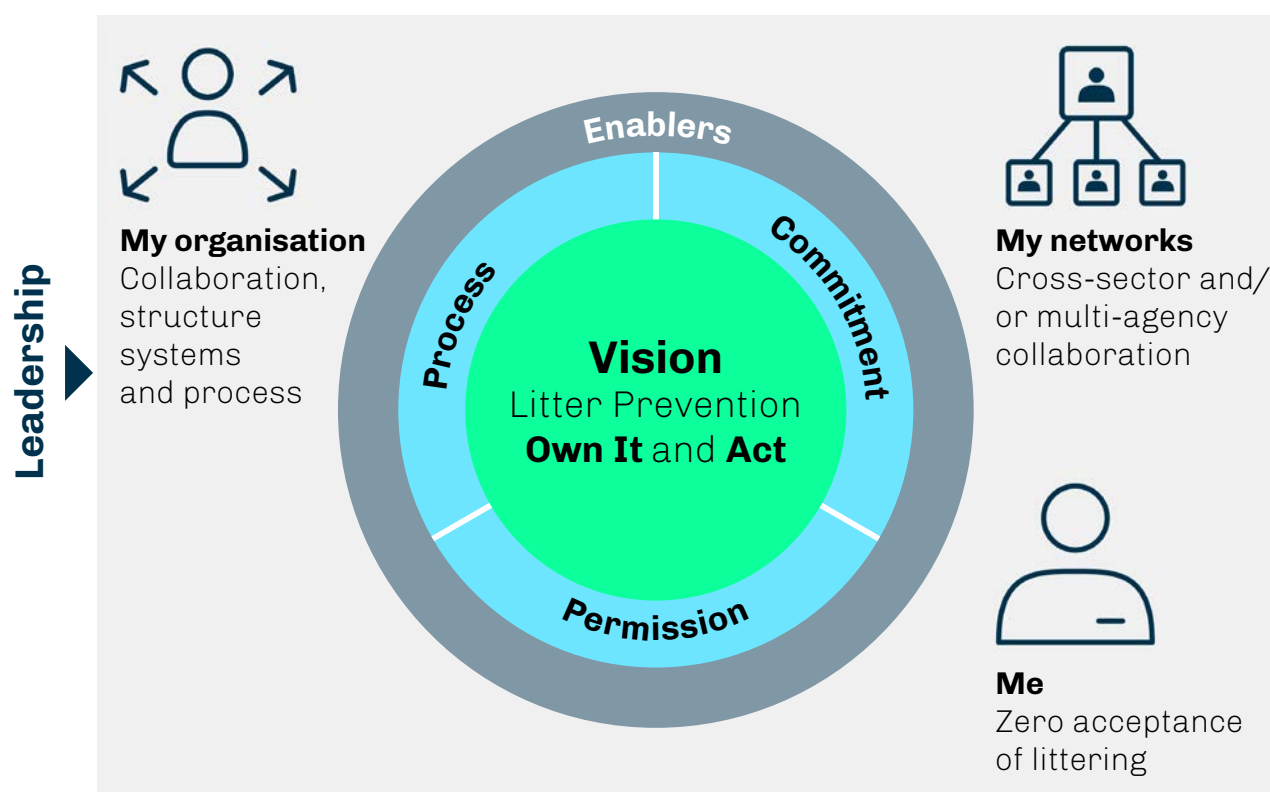


Figure 1 Delivery Space

Litter Prevention Grants 2021–22

All Strategic Litter Prevention Grant applicants must familiarise themselves with the Own it and Act framework and complete a **Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check as part of the application process. The Status Check will be provided once an EOI is submitted or upon request.**

Applicants engaging in strategic projects should also familiarise themselves with the following Own it and Act tools and resources and contact litter grant managers to discuss which tools are appropriate for their project.

Own it and Act – legacy framework

The proposed legacy framework has three delivery champions:



Me

Each individual is responsible for litter prevention – at home, at work, at play. At the individual level, we must ensure that we practise zero tolerance towards littering and champion litter prevention.



My organisation

Organisations must have systems in place to embed litter prevention as 'business as usual'. We must collaborate with our colleagues and leaders to ensure litter prevention is a focus across internal departments and jurisdictions.



My network

We must work across sectors to create shared visions and goals to prevent litter and realise a clean, safe and healthy environment.

The key enablers for long-term involvement in litter prevention

Leadership

Leaders are supported to understand the issues of litter in the environment and the importance of their organisation's role in preventing litter. Once understood, leaders have a clear vision for including litter prevention in activities. Leaders then communicate that vision internally in order to design processes, allocate resources and provide permission for staff and the organisation as a whole to take action on long-term litter prevention.

Commitment

Organisations identify what value they get from being involved in litter prevention. Understanding the benefits and reasons behind involvement in litter prevention ensures transparency for the organisation and its networks. Clarity about the organisation's intent, along with making formal and public commitments, establishes the foundation for long-term involvement in litter prevention.

Permission

Organisations include the scope for litter prevention in policies and plans so that staff have permission (i.e. time, resources and support) to make decisions and engage in litter prevention initiatives as part of their duties and responsibilities.

Process

Organisations understand and use the key strategies for preventing litter – clean-up, infrastructure, education and awareness, enforcement and regulation, rewarding responsible behaviour – and are aware of the need for evidence-based, integrated approaches. Organisations then integrate monitoring and evaluation as part of their growth and development in tracking litter prevention efforts.

Own it and Act – establishing a baseline

Own it and Act baseline journey map

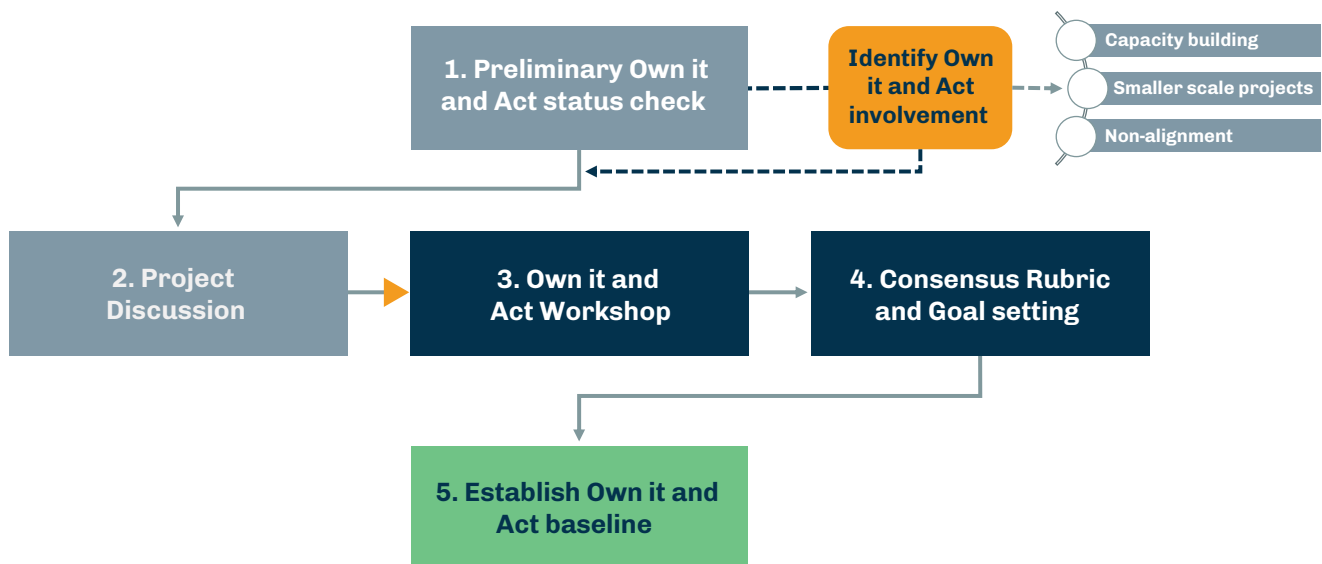


Figure 2 Baseline journey map

1. Preliminary Status Check

The purpose of the Preliminary Status Check is to introduce organisations to the Own it and Act legacy framework. It provides a tool for managers to take a preliminary snapshot of their organisation's capacity to engage in litter prevention. The Preliminary Status Check should be used to reflect on high-level organisational strengths and capacity-building opportunities which, in turn, should inform organisational needs and decisions. The Preliminary Status Check is a requirement for NSW EPA litter grants but it could also be used as a tool for regional organisations or catchment groups to better understand capacity in member councils. It could also help various members within an organisation to see opportunities for improvement outside the grants program.

1.1 Identify Own it and Act involvement

Once you have completed a Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check, you should have a clearer view of the enablers needed for long-term involvement in litter prevention and where litter prevention currently sits within your organisation.

The next step is to consider what level of involvement in the Own it and Act framework aligns best with your organisation's current capacity and needs. This may be to set an ambitious litter prevention scope or perhaps a modest but well-targeted one. It may lead to the decision not to proceed with strategic action on litter prevention at all. However, if litter prevention becomes a long-term commitment, then the Own it and Act framework can guide a staged and sustainable approach to your organisation's or network's growth in the field.

1.2 Options for organisations may include:

- committing to establishing an Own it and Act baseline and strategic development using the Own it and Act tools and resources to build capacity for long-term involvement in litter prevention
- identifying whether you are better placed to focus on building organisational capacity in key areas first, including developing a business case, research or expanding your network
- identifying that you do not have the current capacity to engage in long-term strategic development and instead focus on smaller-scale projects
- identifying that your organisation does not align with litter prevention objectives and outcomes and is better suited to other NSW EPA grant programs such as illegal dumping.

2. Project discussion

Once a preliminary Status Check has been completed and you have considered your involvement, you are in a position to discuss options with either the NSW EPA or leading organisation (e.g. a grantee engaged in the Own it and Act framework who is engaging with their network).

Note: The Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check is mandatory for all organisations applying for NSW EPA Strategic Litter Grants (Stream 2 and Stream 3). Referring to completed **Preliminary Status Checks**, organisations should engage with grant managers to discuss the Own it and Act options under the current grant funding rounds.

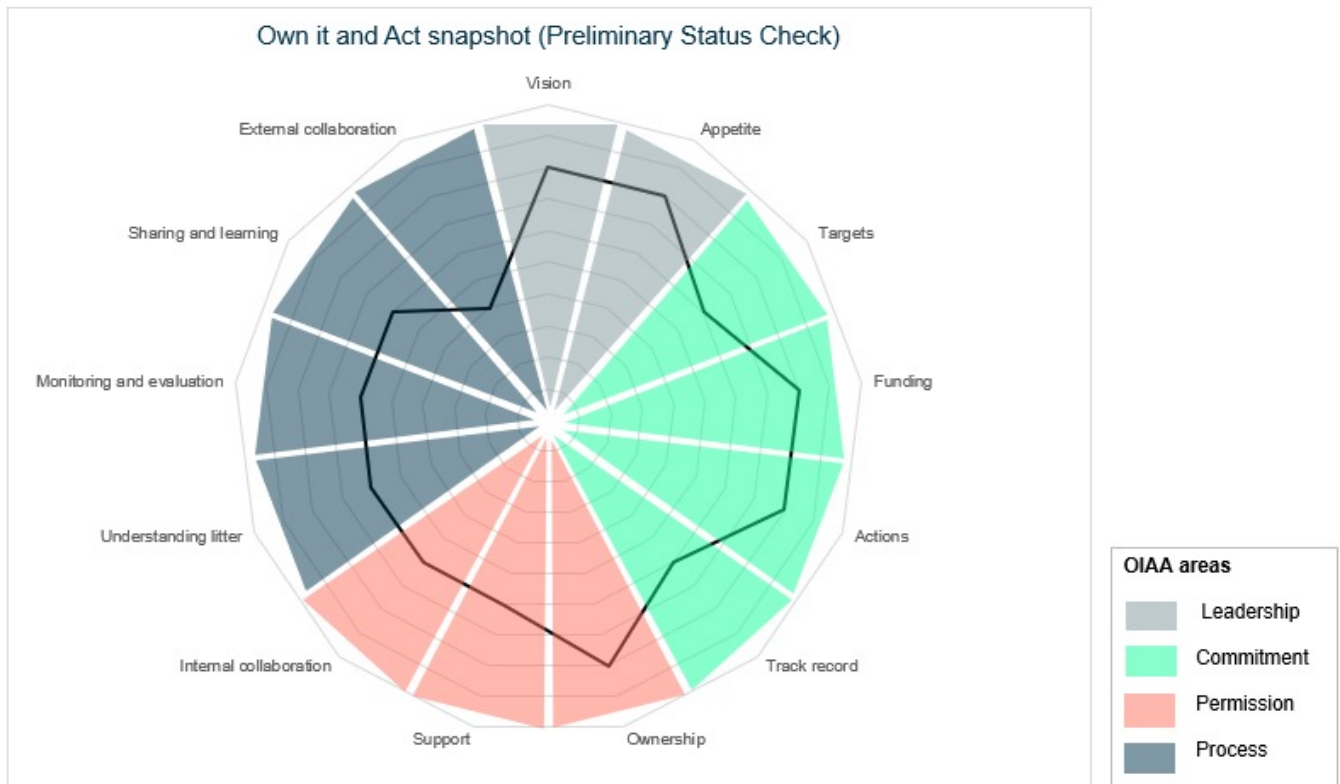


Figure 3 Snapshot example of a Council's OIAA Capacity

3. Own it and Act workshop

The Own it and Act workshop is the first step in establishing an Own it and Act baseline. This is a requirement for successful grantees beginning their strategic litter prevention journey. The purpose of the workshop is to build on the Preliminary Status Check by introducing the rubric tool and discussing responses in an open and transparent manner. The goal of the workshop is to come to a shared understanding of organisational capacity and to introduce monitoring and evaluation. Prior to the workshop the Litter Prevention Prevention Unit will review and provide strategic input based on the completed preliminary Own it and Act tool.

4. Consensus rubric and goal setting

The consensus rubric is a tool that is tailored to establish an organisational baseline for litter prevention capacity. Organisations are guided on how to use the consensus rubric and are empowered to complete it in good faith, reflecting on shared understandings from the discussion. Organisations are also encouraged to establish Own it and Act goals that leverage organisational strengths and build capacity in areas identified as capacity-building opportunities..

5. Establish an Own it and Act baseline for your organisation

Once the consensus rubric and Own it and Act goals have been completed, organisations will have established their baseline of capacity to engage in long-term litter prevention. The purpose and benefits of establishing a baseline are as follows:

- to formalise where litter prevention sits internally within an organisation at a certain point in time, and to better inform what benefits a commitment to litter prevention means for your organisation
- to refine the Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check to better understand the scope, needs and organisational fit of engaging in strategic litter prevention projects for your organisation (including refining funded litter prevention strategies)
- to incorporate formal Own it and Act goals into project deliverables and timeframes to increase organisational capacity
- to establish a litter prevention foundation and reference point to monitor and evaluate ongoing capacity-building efforts to engage in long-term litter prevention.

6. Establishing Own it and Act baselines across a network

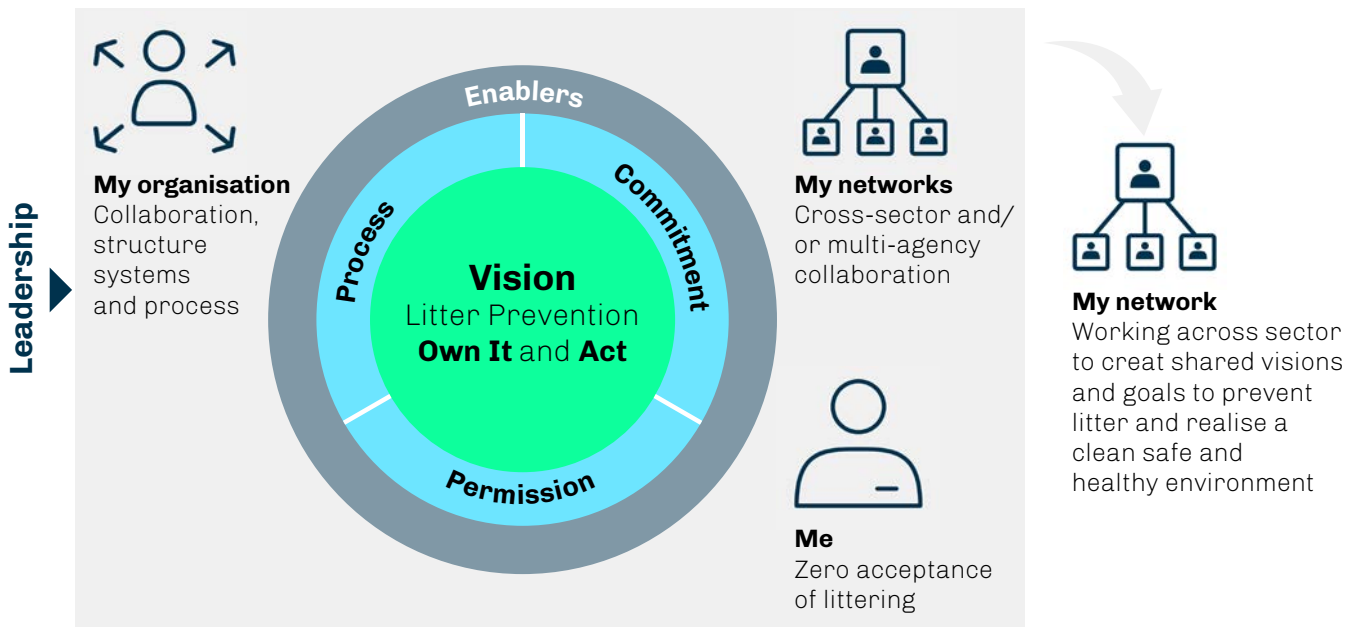


Figure 4 Delivery space

For regional bodies that have a defined network (e.g. a set number of councils or community-based organisations that are members of your organisation) you may wish to conduct an Own it and Act baseline for your entire network.

The purpose of this network approach is to understand what capacity and willingness exists across a region to engage in litter prevention, and to inform regional litter prevention strategies or capacity building opportunities. Key benefits of adopting a network approach include:

- identifying key strengths and resources within an existing network
- communicating existing capacities in the network to make sure each organisation is aware of regional litter prevention activities
- identifying common gaps across your network to better understand and prioritise litter prevention capacity-building opportunities
- leveraging the different capabilities of network member organisations to allow them to 'play to their strength' in support of the overall effort in litter prevention
- setting and aligning Own it and Act goals across the network to provide guidance and a clear vision for progressing coordinated long-term litter prevention outcomes
- establishing the foundations for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of litter prevention organisational capacity building efforts.

Own it and Act – resources

1. Developing a Litter Prevention strategy

Once organisations have established an Own it and Act baseline, either for their individual organisation or network, action should be taken to progress the Own it and Act goals in a strategic way.

Organisations may be at different stages in their respective litter prevention journeys and may not consider themselves ready to develop an entire litter prevention strategy. As a reference, however, the EPA has developed the following structure. It shows the elements that could be included in developing an entire strategy for engagement in long-term litter prevention.

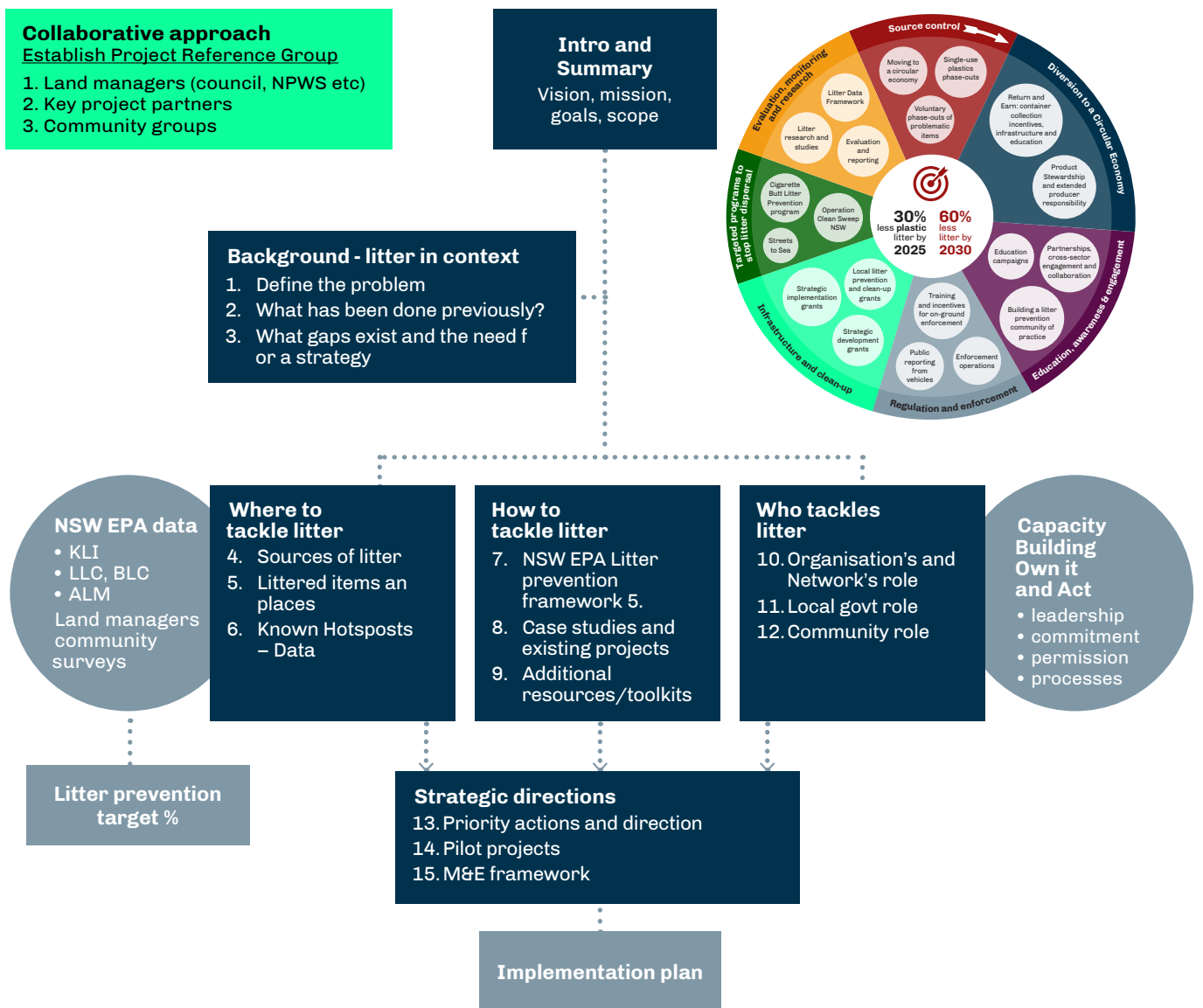


Figure 5 Example litter prevention strategy structure

While it is important not to be too prescriptive about what a strategy should contain, this is a good example of how to develop a regional litter prevention strategy. It has been modelled on the strategy developed by the River Canoe Club of NSW and Cooks River Alliance under the NSW EPA Community Litter Grants Round 6, Stream 2.

Every strategy will be different depending on the operating context, the intended audience, and what change the strategy aims to introduce to the situation. Other examples of strategies that should be considered for their ideas, themes and structures are the **NSW Litter Prevention Strategy** and the **NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy**. Both of these strategies should be referenced in any litter prevention strategy in NSW.

Strategic Litter Grant funding is available under the new WASM Litter Prevention Grant Program for organisations that wish to develop a litter prevention strategy.

2. Using EPA Data

Organisations that have successfully applied for strategic funding can be helped to understand litter by using data from the **EPA Litter Data Framework**. This framework covers the use of data according to where you want to measure litter, what kind of litter you are interested in and what scale you are considering – local, regional, or state-wide.

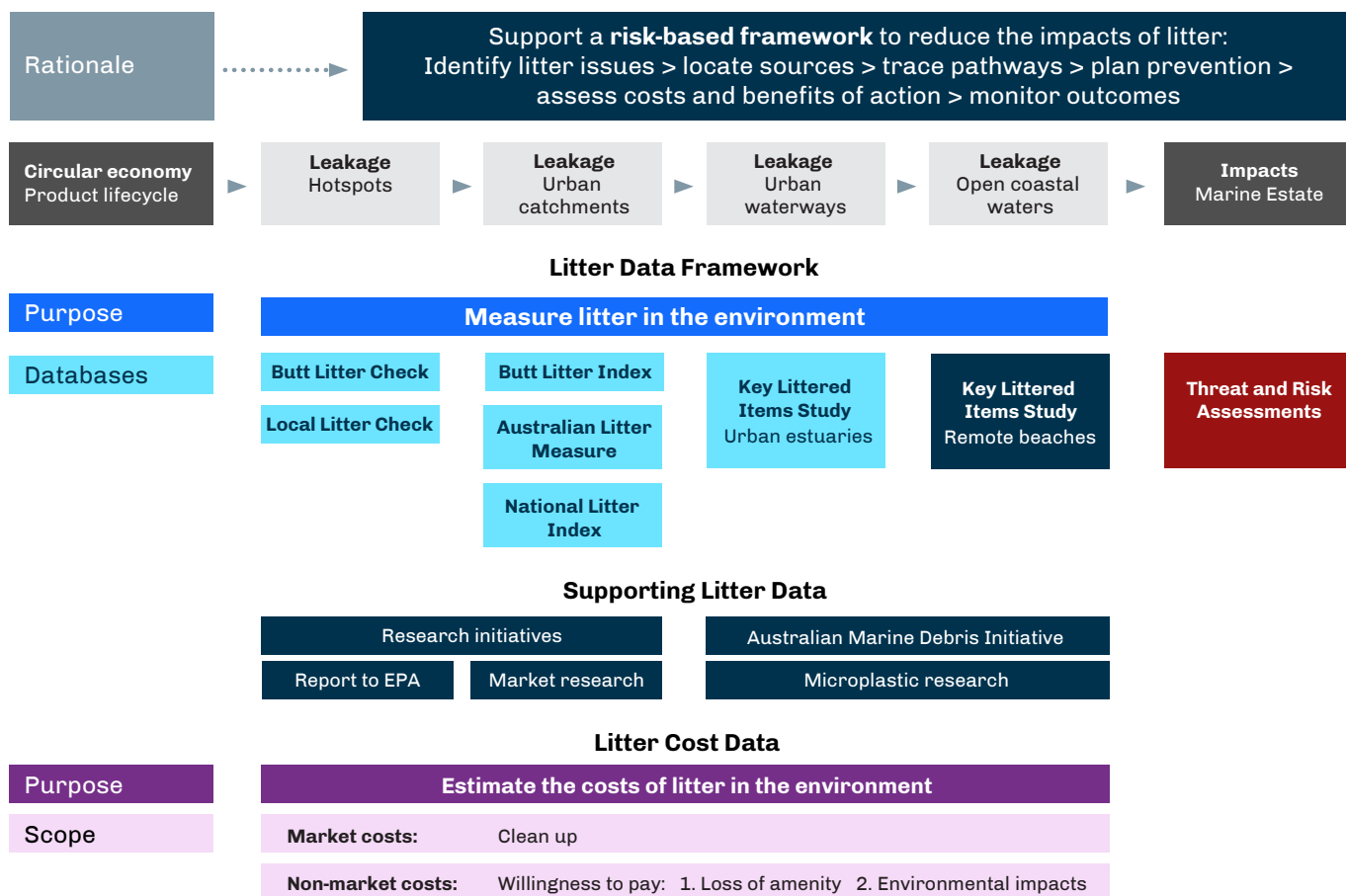


Figure 6 The EPA Litter Data Framework

The litter data framework draws on different databases, including:

- the **Local Litter Check** for investigating local litter hotspots
- the **Butt Litter Check** for investigating cigarette butt litter hotspots
- the **National Litter Index** for investigating historical state-wide litter trends
- the **Key Littered Items Study** for investigating litter in urban estuaries.

2.1 Local Litter Check (LLC)

The LLC is an online database with open, free access for any registered user. Users can enter their data in the system and use it to conduct investigations of litter hotspots, including litter counts, surveys or location users. The system provides a URL for every completed investigation, which can be shared and viewed by any other registered user.

2.2 Butt Litter Check (BLC)

The BLC is a paper-based database, with open access to the methodology and forms available on the EPA website. This uses a similar approach to the Local Litter Check, with elements that help to focus on butt littering behaviour. It also includes proven strategies for reducing such behaviour and increasing binning rates. Groups that are interested in focusing on cigarette butt litter should consider applying for a **Cigarette Butt Litter Prevention Grant**.

2.3 Key Littered Items Study (KLIS) and National Litter Index (NLI)

The KLIS and the NLI are both data sets that are collected and developed by organisations outside the NSW EPA.

The NSW EPA has developed dashboards for both the KLIS and NLI that can be made available to its partners on request.

Since 2017, the KLIS has been delivered first by the Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DPIE) and then by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) Coasts and Marine unit within its Science section. Their data is entered in a dashboard that is networked using Power BI. It allows users to investigate marine litter trends and the composition of different litter types and materials. The KLIS data can be analysed at the state, regional and local scales. The data relates to coastal zones, so organisations in inland areas will find it less useful.

The NLI is developed by Keep Australia Beautiful, which has provided all its data to the EPA, and this has been put in an Excel-based dashboard. It is available on request and covers litter on the land and looks at litter volume and litter count in different land uses, including industrial, residential, retail, beaches and roadsides. The data finishes in 2020, but provides long-range trends back to 2007.

2.4 Australian Litter Measure (ALM)

The NSW Government, along with other States and Territories, has developed a new litter measure – the Australian Litter Measure (ALM). Like the NLI, the ALM measures litter in different land uses. Over time, once trends can be considered, this data will provide critical insights about litter issues and will be able to inform planning, monitoring and setting of litter targets. In coastal zones, the ALM can be used alongside the KLIS to help understand how litter is moving from land to sea.

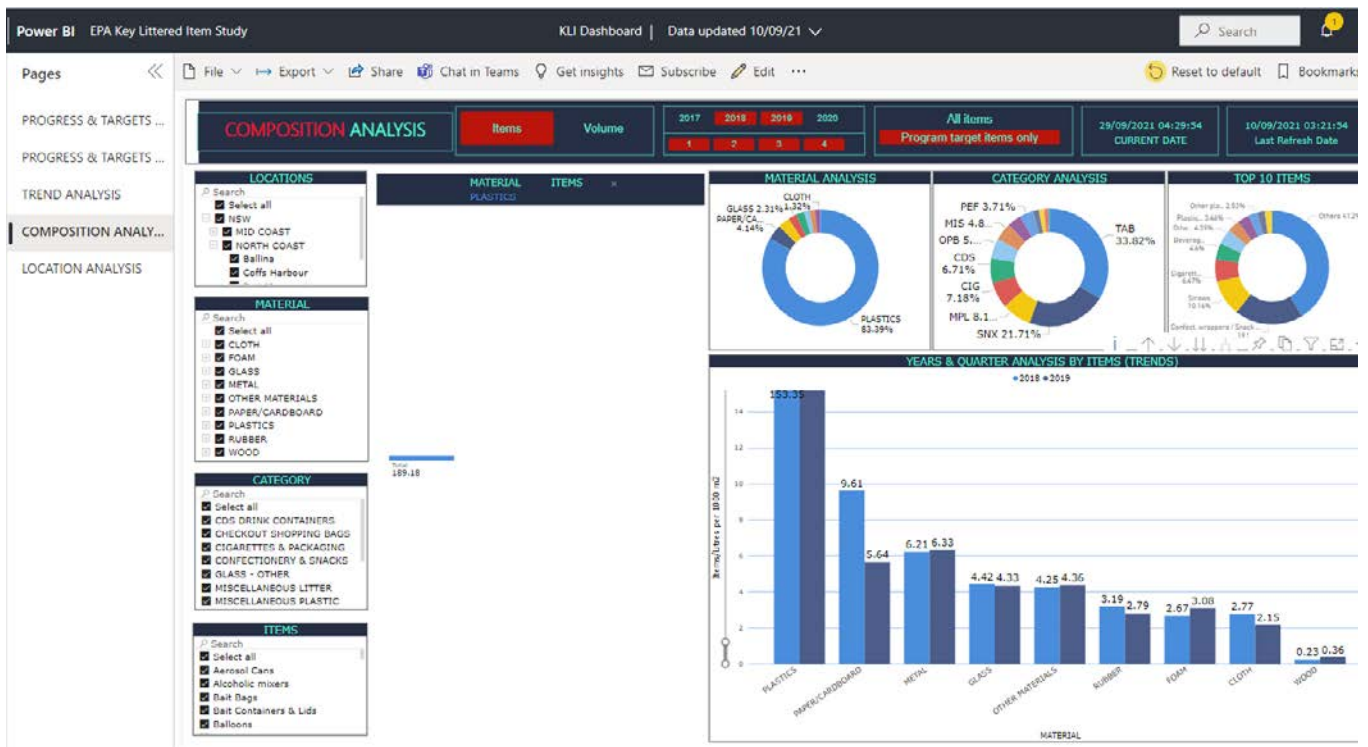


Figure 7 KLI dashboard

3. Using EPA data to set litter targets

The main benefit of the Litter Data framework will be to monitor trends, identify litter to prioritise and, potentially, establish baselines for local or regional litter reduction targets.

Setting a litter prevention target for a single location is relatively simple with the Butt Litter Check or Local Litter Check, as these cover litter in small areas where trends can become quickly established. Past grant projects have commonly achieved litter reductions by volume of 50% to 60% or more using the Butt and Local Litter Checks, meaning that it pays to be ambitious with local litter targets.

Setting targets for larger areas is more complex. The NSW EPA has used the KLIS and the NLI to set the NSW litter prevention targets of 30% reduction in plastic litter items by 2025 and 60% reduction of all litter items by 2030. This process took several months of statistical and scientific analysis and required multi-year litter trends being available to develop the final numbers.

Grantees who wish to set their own local or regional targets should understand that it may

not be feasible to do this in the first year of developing a strategy. The EPA recommends using the already existing 30% and 60% state targets, at the same time using Local Litter Check, Butt Litter Check, KLIS, and other data to monitor local or regional trends over time. Individual targets can be set once these long-term trends are understood. This approach can be written into a strategy as an ongoing action, at the same time starting on the research and development of individual targets.

4. Ongoing litter prevention implementation and Own it and Act status

For organisations that have developed a litter prevention strategy or other strategic litter prevention business case, it is time for implementation.

To monitor and evaluate increases in organisational capacity through the implementation of litter prevention strategies, organisations should refer to their Own it and Act baseline. If organisational capacity has increased, organisations should reflect this by engaging in subsequent self-assessments and establishing an updated Own it and Act status.

WASM Litter Prevention Grants

Funding is available for organisations ready to implement existing litter prevention strategies.

Organisations will be required to update their Own it and Act status at the beginning of the grant period and at the conclusion, to evaluate increases in organisational capacity to engage in long-term litter prevention.

Organisations engaging in strategic projects should think about how they might incorporate existing Own it and Act goals into the implementation plans and should engage with the NSW EPA Litter Prevention Unit to discuss before applying.

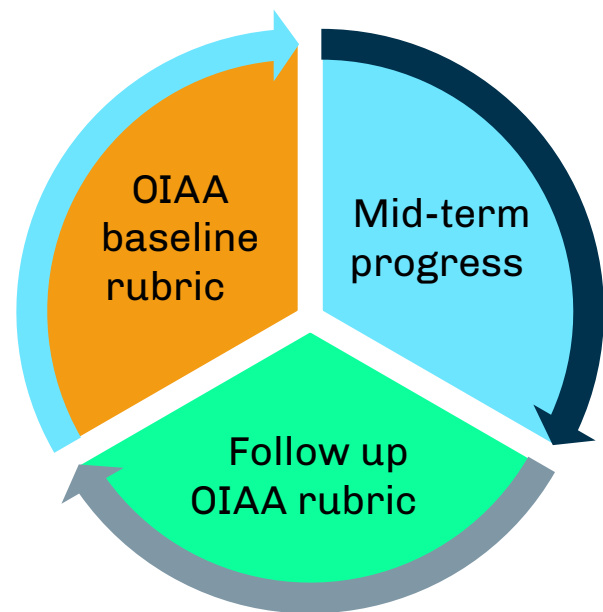


Figure 8 Implementation chart

5. Networking and collaboration

Finally, the last element under the Own it and Act strategic framework is to expand networks to encourage cross-sector collaboration to achieve new litter prevention targets.

The NSW EPA will be engaging with key stakeholders to identify how best to facilitate increased collaboration and networking opportunities to ensure there are improved knowledge-sharing platforms for:

- case studies and more information for litter prevention updates
- Don't be a Tosser!
- NSW EPA Enforcement Data and the Marine Litter campaign
- virtual chats and modern online platforms.

Appendix



Figure 9 Detail of the litter prevention strategy from p12.

