



National
Violence Against Women
Network

is.
improvement service

Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework

Key Learning from 2022/23
Data Returns

Contents

Background	4
The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework	6
Key Statistics from 2022/23	8
Equally Safe Quality Standards - Results and Key Learning	9
1. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.	10
2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.	14
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people.	18
4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.	22
5. Multi-agency partnership working.	26

Background

Background

[Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls](#) was launched in 2014 and refreshed in 2023. The strategy sets out the Scottish Government and COSLA's joint vision for a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.

To support this vision, Equally Safe sets out four key priorities:

1. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG);
2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and political;
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people; and
4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

At a local level, Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWPs) are recognised as the strategic mechanism for progressing these four priorities in a multi-agency and evidence-informed way.

The [Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework](#) was published by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Improvement Service in May 2018, in close collaboration with the National VAW Network and other stakeholders, to support VAWPs with this task.

This national report comes at a critical time as the Scottish Government and COSLA prepare to publish a new Delivery Plan to support the implementation of the refreshed Equally Safe strategy and consider how best to implement the recommendations set out in the Independent Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services.

Much of the key learning and potential next steps highlighted in this report reflects the recommendations set out in the Independent Funding Review. Specifically, the following are examples of recommendations which are relevant to the learning in this report:

- Investment in developing the infrastructure of VAWPs is essential and should include appropriate levels of resource for coordination and administration, and capacity building to support monitoring and evaluation.
- Address and reduce waiting lists for VAWG support services to ensure that victims/survivors can get help to recover when they need it.
- There should be allocation of dedicated resources to develop a national programme on prevention that will identify the actions required at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal level, as set out in the UN framework.

The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework

The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework

The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework responds to the expectations set out in [Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls](#) and in the Violence Against Women Partnership Guidance, in relation to effective performance management.

The Quality Standards aim to raise awareness of the types of services, policies and processes that are most effective in tackling VAWG and capture data on the extent to which they are currently being delivered across Scotland. The Performance Framework aims to measure the impact that these services, policies and processes are having on the lives of people and communities affected by VAWG.

Collectively, the two resources aim to support VAWPs to capture key performance data and facilitate a consistent approach to measuring and reporting on the progress being made to achieve the ambitions set out in Equally Safe at a local level.

This report highlights the key learning from the 30 VAWPs that provided Equally Safe Quality Standard and Performance Framework data returns for 2022-23.

Key Statistics from 2022/23



Priority 1

100% of local authority areas report that there is some guidance about services available to support families affected by VAWG and how to access them.



Priority 2

97% of local authority areas report that Public Sector employers publish a gender pay gap and an equal pay statement and use this information to develop equality outcomes on gender and employment.



Priority 3

93% of local authority areas report that a proportion of Public Sector staff have received basic training in how to identify and respond to women and children affected by VAWG in an appropriate way.



Priority 4

87% of local authority areas report delivering some level of training for Public Sector staff who come into contact with members of the public, to enable them to identify and respond to perpetrators.



Multi Agency Working

100% of local authority areas report that the Partnership aims to bring together representatives from key Public Sector and Third Sector organisations working to prevent and eradicate VAWG within their local area.

Part 1:
Equally Safe Quality Standards
- Results and Key Learning

1. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.

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Overview of percentage of partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 1 in 2022-23:



92% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the Quality Standards for Equally Safe Priority 1



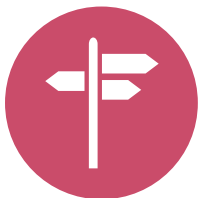
93% of local authority areas report that some level of proactive engagement and communication takes place in the local community to increase people's awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of VAWG, and the role they can play in tackling it.



80% of local authority areas report that the VAW Partnership collects/analyses data to understand people's attitudes in relation to VAWG.



97% of local authority areas report that the VAW Partnership has some processes in place to engage with primary and secondary schools across the local community'



90% of local authority areas report that some youth work organisations across their local communities deliver interventions to raise young people's understanding and awareness of VAWG and the importance of positive, healthy relationships.



93% of local authority areas report that their local VAW Partnership has processes in place to engage with colleges and universities across the local community and works with them to identify opportunities to partnership working in preventing gender-based violence on campuses.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 1:

Dumfries & Galloway – Youth Engagement

In June 2022, Dumfries & Galloway VAW Partnership was invited to the local flagship event ‘Youth Beatz Festival’, an annual youth music and information festival. This provided the opportunity to engage with over a thousand young people from across the area and deliver messages about domestic abuse. Dumfries & Galloway Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Support Centre provided information packs and ‘goodie bags’ with useful resources, safety devices and contact details for out-of-hour support, etc. A fully risk assessed safe space was provided for any potential disclosures and an opportunity to contribute to a ‘Jar of Positivity’.

Edinburgh – Women’s Safety in Public Places

A Public consultation to understand how safe or unsafe women and girls feel in Edinburgh’s public spaces was undertaken. This consultation primarily focused on women’s and girls’ views, however men in targeted focus groups also contributed. An inter-agency Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) has been organised around this workstream, with ongoing data collection from partners as one of the key actions going forward.

Orkney – Time is Now, It’s Not Too Late

Orkney VAW Partnership recognised a gap in awareness around domestic abuse in people over the age of 60. To address this, the ‘Time is Now, It’s Not Too Late’ campaign was created to raise awareness in the community, with posters and leaflets being shared in local services. A video was also created which is displayed across all screens in the local hospital. Additionally, Women’s Aid Orkney has joined the campaign with a focus on delivering training sessions in care homes, care at home services and GP surgeries. The aim of this training is to better recognise signs of abuse, how to respond, and the effects this can have.

Perth & Kinross – Bold Girls Ken

[Bold Girls Ken](#) is a youth led campaign on consent delivered as part of the Young Women Know project by NSPCC Scotland and the Young Women’s Movement, in partnership with Perth & Kinross Council. The campaign aims to educate young people to understand consent, both on and offline, to ensure that young people get realistic and appropriate information about consent and ensure they know where to go for help if it is needed. The delivery of this campaign is currently underway in secondary schools across Perth & Kinross.

South Ayrshire – Hystayria: The Ageless Persecution of Women

Ayr North Time Team, an adult learning group supported by Thriving Communities, developed a play that tells the stories of innocent local women subjected to gender-based violence at the hands of powerful men through executions during the witch trials of Ayr. The play debuted during 16 Days 2022, with an additional performance being held as part of International Women's Day in March 2023. Each performance was followed by a Q&A session, which generated useful discussions around VAWG and how the root cause of these trials is still prevalent today. Since the success of these performances, the play has been created into a film resource to share with schools and the wider community. The VAW Joint Action Group are creating a lesson plan to go alongside this resource.

West Dunbartonshire – Educational Services Strategy

The West Dunbartonshire Council Educational Services Strategy on teaching and supporting positive relationships is integral to the Health and Wellbeing curriculum from 3-18 years. This supports all children and young people to learn and develop resilience and self-awareness. It also teaches them how to be confident and aware of how both healthy and abusive behaviours can present, providing them with information on supportive resources. West Dunbartonshire Education service area also has a comprehensive programme of support and professional learning for staff, which enables them to support individuals and their families.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- Although 100% of Partnerships indicated guidance is in place about the range of VAWG services available locally, it has been highlighted that there is an accessibility gap in current guidance. There has been a focus on making information available online since the pandemic, however this has resulted in a lack of physical guidance, such as pamphlets and posters. As digital poverty can be prevalent across different areas, it is important to have offline mechanisms of information distribution.
- A number of local authorities noted that they are in the process of undertaking audits in various areas, such as in schools and youth services. The aim of these audits is to determine what work is currently ongoing and discover any potential gaps that need to be addressed.
- Many partnerships are looking to better their local data collection to improve understanding of the views of both the public and workforce on VAWG, as well as to gather statistics that will emphasise the impact of local work. Some areas have recently established subgroups to drive this work.
- Similar to last year, partnerships emphasised the need for an increase in prevention work within schools and youth work settings. This has been a focus area of improvement for some areas over the last year.

2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.

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Overview of percentage of partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 2 in 2022-23:



94% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the Quality Standards for Equally Safe Priority 2.



97% of local authority areas report that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken when developing some new policies, processes and services at a local level in partnership with Equality Groups, however not all areas do this routinely.



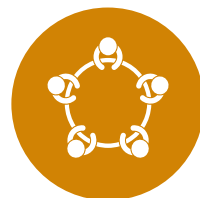
97% of local authority areas report that engagement with local equality groups takes place to ensure they are aware of the VAWG agenda and understand the inequalities that underpin it.



100% of local authority areas report Public Sector workplace policies are gender-sensitive and recognise some of the barriers to women's workplace equality, but not all barriers are addressed in every locality.



100% of local authority areas report that work is underway to ensure that workplace policies recognise that employees may be affected by VAWG and communicate/support clear paths for women experiencing this.



73% of local authority areas report that VAW Partnerships (and their member organisations) actively engage with Close the Gap's 'Equally Safe at Work' pilot.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 2:

Dundee – Mainstreaming Equality Progress Report

Dundee City Council have published a [Mainstreaming Equality Progress Report](#) which provides in depth gender related information. This includes calculations of the local Gender Pay Gap, and a statement on Working to Close the Gap. It also includes a summary of gender by professional post, as well as a breakdown of Council job applications by gender. Additionally, the report has highlighted good progress and opportunities that Dundee VAW Partnership have contributed to in relation to specific Equality Outcomes.

North Ayrshire – Domestic Abuse Policy

North Ayrshire Council's Domestic Abuse Policy has a variety of processes in place to help provide the support employees may need if they experience domestic abuse. Employees have 10 days of Safe Leave available to assist with time off that may be needed for appointments with agencies such as Women's Aid, Housing or lawyers. Additionally, a GBV Advisor sits within North Ayrshire Council, allowing staff to bypass their manager if they do not feel comfortable approaching them regarding this subject.

Renfrewshire – Women-Centred Employment Structure

Kairos Women+, a community-led women's space for women and non-binary people across Renfrewshire, is developing a women-centred employment structure. This will take the unique needs of women into account and recognised the impact of gender-based violence on employees and women in the community. Measures that will be offered include flexible working, part-time hours, reasonable adjustments, and regular group and 1-1 reflections with a focus on support.

Scottish Borders – Equality Groups Engagement

To inform the development of Court Support Standards in the Scottish Borders, the Authentic Voice Panel were invited to share their insight on the matter. This encouraged the voice of lived experience to contribute to this development and ensure the outcome reflected the needs of those who it will support.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- In addition to continuity around Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) not routinely being undertaken in all relevant contexts, it has been raised that the quality of these assessments are dependent on the knowledge of the member completing it, meaning that they may not be as robust as they should be.
- Similar to last year, increased engagement with local equality groups is an ongoing priority for a number of local authority area. It has been emphasised that certain groups in particular require better representation, such as Black and African communities.
- Many partnerships felt that Public Sector workplace policies are gender-sensitive and recognise the barriers to women's workplace equality. However, it was noted that progress could still be made as some services appear to be more developed in their policy and practice than others.

3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people.

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Overview of percentage of partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 3 in 2022-23:



95% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the Quality Standards for Equally Safe Priority 3.



100% of local authority areas report that high quality, accessible accommodation options are available locally to some women and children affected by VAWG, however the range of options available may be insufficient to meet all needs.



93% of local authority areas report that targeted interventions are in place for some women and children who may experience additional vulnerabilities and barriers as a result of race, sexual orientation, age or disability.



80% of local authority areas report that the Partnership works to ensure that adequate levels of funding are available for specialist VAWG services that contribute to the local outcomes and activities that have been identified by members of the Partnership.



97% of local authority areas report that staff in child welfare have received some level of training in the Safe & Together model



60% of local authority areas report that they are in the process of, or have already developed, a clear position statement that recognises commercial sexual exploitation as a form of VAWG.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 3:

Argyll & Bute – Roll Out of Training

Argyll & Bute VAW Partnership has utilised the Delivering Equally Safe fund to roll out a wide range of training that aims to improve the skills and awareness of staff in relation to VAWG throughout 2022-23. This training includes Safe & Together, Routine Enquiry, Awareness Raising, Dealing with Disclosure of Sexual Assault, How the Police deal with Domestic Abuse and Support Victims, Harmful Traditional Practices, Commercial Sexual Exploitation, and Trauma Impacts of Domestic Violence on Women and Children. These training events have been attended by a wide variety of staff, including those who work in health, education, social care and third sector environments.

Ayrshire-wide – Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Team

In 2022, the Police established a Domestic Abuse Safeguarding team for Ayrshire, bringing together MARAC, MATAC and DSDAS within a single hub which is staffed by dedicated officers. This joint approach has streamlined and optimised the provision of domestic abuse prevention across Ayrshire. This is being achieved through effective and timely disclosure of previous domestic abuse offending to victims, and offering a joined-up, multi-agency approach to support to victims considered to be at the highest risk.

East Renfrewshire – Position Statement on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign in 2022, the East Renfrewshire VAW Partnership signed a [new position statement](#) on commercial sexual exploitation. The statement recognises that commercial sexual exploitation is a significant issue affecting women, is a form of gender-based violence and is a violation of the most fundamental human right.

Fife – Housing First 25+

Housing First 25+ is a new collaborative project being delivered by Fife Women's Aid, Bethany Trust, and Turning Point Scotland, funded by Fife Council Housing Services. This provides support for women who have experienced domestic abuse, have been homeless and require a more intensive level of support to promote recovery. This service recognises the impact of trauma on day-to-day living and the need for flexible support to enable women to maintain their own home in the community.

Renfrewshire – Lived-Expertise Panel

Kairos Women+, Rape Crisis Scotland and the Scottish Women's Right Centre are working in partnership to host a Lived-Expertise Panel to share views of justice and gender-based violence. This work aims to have an impact at a national level and improve access to services for those underrepresented, such as older women, disabled women, LGBTQ+ people and BAME women.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- Routine enquiry is not being recorded consistently and it has been recognised that levels of recording appear to be dropping. It has been highlighted that different systems being used throughout services may be contributing to this as it can make extracting data more difficult.
- Many partnerships highlighted that there is a lack of high-quality housing options, particularly as they lack accessibility and may be inappropriate for the needs of all families. Furthermore, even when local areas have high quality housing available, often there isn't enough to meet demand.
- There appears to be good work happening across local areas in terms of having targeted interventions which meet the needs of those with complex needs, particularly a lot of work happening around trauma. However, it was highlighted that due to the intersectional nature of VAWG and the broad range of protected characteristics, there is still scope to increase such interventions.
- There has been an increase in local areas that are including Safe & Together principles in domestic abuse training and undertaking Safe & Together briefings. It was emphasised that it would be useful to have longer term funding to further commit to embedding this model.
- There continues to be issues for those whose immigration status does not qualify them for access to Public Funds, and therefore it has been emphasised that this needs to be addressed to ensure these women and children have access to the support they need.
- Some partnerships highlighted that services in their local area have waiting lists that are at capacity and, as a result, are now closed for referrals. Resources and funding are needed to ensure that these services are able to provide support to all women and children that need it, when they need it.

4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

Overview of percentage of partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for Priority 4 in 2022-23:



79% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the Quality Standards for Equally Safe Priority 4.



100% of local authority areas report that Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAAC) groups are in place locally to support a multi-agency approach to be taken to identifying high risk perpetrators of domestic abuse and ensure they are held to account for their behaviours.



83% of local authority areas report that measures are in place to ensure women and children who experience domestic abuse receive an appropriate response from the criminal justice system.



80% of local authority areas report that court-mandated programmes are in place at a local level that work with perpetrators of VAWG to hold them to account for, and support them to change, their behaviours.



47% of local authority areas report that non-court-mandated programmes are in place at a local level that work with perpetrators of VAWG to hold them to account for, and support them to changes, their behaviours.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress Priority Area 4:

Angus – Engaging with Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse (Coercive Control) Training

A two-hour session held by Angus Council Justice Services is now part of the PPA Learning and Development Framework. This training is open to all multi-agency staff in Angus, and is being offered at regular intervals throughout the year as part of a rolling programme. It aims to increase understanding of domestic abuse and of the Safe & Together approach, as well as teaching skills and values around working with perpetrators.

Clackmannanshire – STRIVE

Clackmannanshire Council's STRIVE group (Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention) is a multi-agency, public sector working team that aims to improve the existing system of safeguarding vulnerable individuals on the cusp of statutory intervention. To ensure that pathways for women to access support through justice services are effective, a Women's Support Worker and a Perpetrator Support Worker have been added to the group as part of an early intervention/support strategy.

Highland – 'Learning Journey' Perpetrator Course

A pilot course aimed at working with perpetrators was designed and delivered by NHS Highland, RASASH and staff at HMP Porterfield. Six sessions of 45-minutes were scheduled, however the interest resulted in seven sessions with the longest running for nearly 2-hours. A person-centred, trauma-informed approach was taken to these sessions to facilitate open conversation, particularly around how and what we learn about love and about violence. This course is intended to be the start of a conversation that would lead participants further along their learning journey towards change. Participants gave positive feedback, saying that they would encourage others to do the course and that they had benefitted from it.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

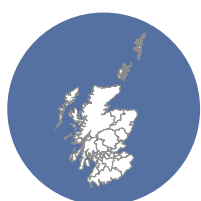
- Some partnerships are considering widening the remit of training in relation to perpetrators, as currently this appears to mostly be targeted at services that commonly work with perpetrators. It is thought that other Public Sector workers, such as receptionists, should have this training made available for them.
- There is a need for more recognition of the high levels of reoffending in the judicial system, particularly in relation to domestic abuse.
- In relation to a recommendation in last year's report, some partnerships appear to be exploring options for non-court mandated programmes within their areas. Many are scoping current provisions in other local authority areas to use as good practice examples that they could apply to their own areas.
- It is understood that most training in relation to responding to perpetrators focusses on domestic abuse. It was highlighted that it would be beneficial for Public Sector training to expand to perpetrators of other forms of VAWG.

5. Multi-agency partnership working.

5. Multi-agency partnership working.

This section of the Quality Standards aimed to generate learning on the extent to which the minimum standards and key activities that the Scottish Government and COSLA set out the 2016 VAW Partnership Guidance are currently being met at local level.

Overview of percentage of partnerships meeting and partly meeting the quality standards for 'Multi-agency partnership working' in 2022-23:



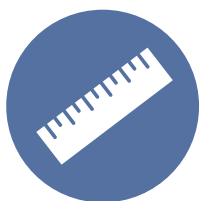
90% of local authority areas across Scotland report meeting or partly meeting the Quality Standards for Multi-Agency Partnership Working.



97% of local authority areas report that a VAW Partnership is in place that is responsible for working to prevent and eradicate all forms of VAWG within the local area.



93% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has a strategic plan in place that outlines how the Partnership will implement Equally Safe at a local level.



93% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has a Framework in place for measuring its performance and progress towards achieving its agreed outcomes.



57% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has undertaken a self-assessment in the last 3 years using the VAWP Self-Assessment Checklist.



93% of local authority areas report that the Partnership has clear strategic links with other relevant thematic partnerships/groups within the Community Planning Partnership who are working towards shared outcomes.

Examples of Good Practice

The following examples of good practice identified through the Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provide a snapshot of work taking place in local authority areas across Scotland to progress multi-agency partnership working:

Glasgow – VAW Partnership Self-Assessment Workshop & Improvement Plan

Glasgow VAW Partnership conducted a self-assessment in 2022 with the support of the Improvement Service. This comprised of a survey undertaken by the partnership, with the results of the survey being discussed at a workshop to determine priority areas of improvement. Partners were encouraged to consider actions to drive improvement in these areas, and the partnership built on this after the workshop to develop an improvement plan that has since been progressed.

North Lanarkshire – VAW Partnership Structure

North Lanarkshire has adopted a two-tier structure for the VAW Partnership. The VAW Strategic Group is a decision-making body that pushes the agenda through senior management and political structures, whilst the VAW Operational Group progresses the work identified to drive the VAW agenda forward in North Lanarkshire. This structural approach allows for the partnership's vision to gain buy in and be actively driven forward to ensure this is achieved.

West Lothian – Supporting Women and Girls Initiative

The development of a new [Supporting Women and Girls initiative](#) involved partnership working between West Lothian GBV Committee, Community Planning Partnership, and the Community Safety Partnership. To plan for this initiative, a consultation with women in West Lothian and organisations/agencies working with local women took place. This initiative that was developed in response to the consultation aims to: help women feel safer in West Lothian's public places and spaces; provide a way for women and girls in West Lothian to speak up about the public spaces and places where they feel unsafe; and highlight to men the role they can have in helping women and girls feel safer.

Key Learning & Potential Next Steps

- A number of partnerships mentioned that they are in the process of filling gaps in their membership and ensuring that members have an appropriate level of seniority to progress actions. Other partnerships feel that improvements could still be made in this area as they are going through a period of change due to members leaving or retiring. This can create gaps whilst waiting for these positions to be filled, however once new members are in place it is felt that their new insight is refreshing and work continues to progress.
- There has been an increase in areas undertaking a self-assessment over the past year. This is positive to see as it was previously suggested that it would be beneficial for partnerships to conduct a self-assessment post-pandemic to understand where they currently stand.
- It is thought that it would be beneficial to increase appetite to engage in joint work with other strategic partnerships to reduce any potential duplication and increase participation.

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