

# Regen Melbourne & Australian Communities Foundation

Building the collaborative community infrastructure required to  
accelerate the regeneration of Greater Melbourne

## Context

We are currently experiencing the convergence of three disruptive and interconnected forces: the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19, rising social inequality, and the climate and biodiversity emergency. Our current economic paradigm does not adequately provide pathways for the transformative action needed to overcome these complex and interconnected challenges. We urgently require new community infrastructure to collaboratively rise to these challenges and more importantly seize the opportunities that are increasingly clear.

## Background

Regen Melbourne is an emerging network of individuals and organisations exploring a regenerative future for our city. Formed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the network was convened by Small Giants Academy, Circular Economy Victoria, the Coalition of Everyone and Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. Regen Melbourne is now made up of more than 800 individuals and more than 50 organisations from across sectors.

In October 2020, Regen Melbourne instigated a community engagement project with three clear purposes: to investigate the appropriateness and adaptability of the [Doughnut Economics](#) model to Melbourne's unique context (see appendix 1), to develop preliminary community insights around a regenerative future for Melbourne, and to explore the value of a place based collaborative network to Greater Melbourne. To achieve this, we combined the Doughnut Economics City Portrait methodology and a unique community engagement model.

Building on much great work that has come before it, including [Macro Melbourne](#) and [Resilient Melbourne](#), this process produced the core building blocks of our collaborative network: a co-created vision for our city (see appendix 2), a unique compass for measuring our progress (the Melbourne Doughnut, see appendix 3) and a road-map of action (see appendix 4). [The full report can be accessed here.](#)

## The Opportunity

Collaboration in any form is hard in an economic system that favours competition. Cross-sector collaboration is harder still. There are a range of existing networked-projects in Melbourne around themes like food (Moving Feast) and climate change (Greenhouse Alliance). However, collaboration between sectors and systems is rare and difficult. A lack of time, resourcing, visibility and leadership keeps silos in place and maintains the status quo.

Systems level collaboration requires structures and support that are rarely resourced appropriately. This type of collaboration requires a defined strategic and geographic mandate, alongside shared principles and a shared vision of the future. During our first six months of work, Regen Melbourne attracted an astonishing array of cross- sector expertise. We recognised the opportunity to harness this community to bridge the ‘system of systems’ gap across Melbourne.

## A Collaborative Network for the Regeneration of Melbourne

Regen Melbourne can become a key piece of community infrastructure: a collaborative network for the regeneration of our city. To harness the energy of the network and to fulfil the promise of the [Towards a Regenerative Melbourne](#) report, the proposal here is to establish and fund the backbone support function for Regen Melbourne. An independent and resourced backbone function is a common feature of successful place-based networks around the world. The role of this function is to:

- Coordinate four key work streams: convening, research, projects and storytelling;
- Ensure accountability to the road-map and the vision/principles;
- Manage daily operations of the network;
- Internal and external communication;
- Develop strategic partnerships; and
- Ensure appropriate resourcing and resource allocation.

## Project Outcomes

1. Develop Regen Melbourne as mature, active, cross-sector and influential network;
2. Deliver the Regen Melbourne road-map (see appendix 4);
3. Deliver a blueprint for community led collaborative networks that can be established in other locations around Australia; and
4. Deliver a blueprint for the activation of place-based, regenerative capital to support community led regeneration.

## Resourcing

*“The mismatch between the level of importance for collaboration and actual funding of it, highlights a great opportunity for the sector”* ([Menzies Foundation](#), July 2021)

The total funding requirement for the next two-year phase of Regen Melbourne is \$700,000. This funding will support a core team made up of a CEO/Chief Convener, a Community Manager and an Operations Lead, alongside an operations budget over a two-year period.

The anchor funders for this phase of work are the Small Giants Catalyst Foundation and Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (LMCF), alongside a number of other philanthropic partners. We are now bringing together a broader funding group. Funding partners are invited to join the Regen Melbourne funding circle to collaboratively explore the role of regenerative capital. This group will actively explore the role of philanthropy, impact investing, and superannuation funds in our city.

### **Australian Communities Foundation & Regen Melbourne**

In partnership with Australian Communities Foundation, Regen Melbourne is seeking philanthropic contributions between \$10,000-\$100,000.

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## Appendix 1: Doughnut Economics Overview

The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries envisions a world in which people and planet can thrive in balance – in other words, it offers a compass for guiding 21st century prosperity, as shown in Figure 1<sup>11</sup>.

The Doughnut's social foundation, which is derived from the social priorities in the UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>9</sup>, sets out the minimum standard of living to which every human being has a claim. No one should be left in the hole in the middle of the Doughnut, falling short on the essentials of life, ranging from food and water to gender equality and having a political voice.

The Doughnut's ecological ceiling comprises nine planetary boundaries, drawn up by Earth-system scientists in order to identify Earth's critical life-supporting systems and define the global limits of pressure that these systems can safely endure<sup>10</sup>. Humanity must live within these ecological boundaries if we are to preserve a stable climate, fertile soils, healthy oceans, a protective ozone layer, ample freshwater, and abundant biodiversity on Earth.

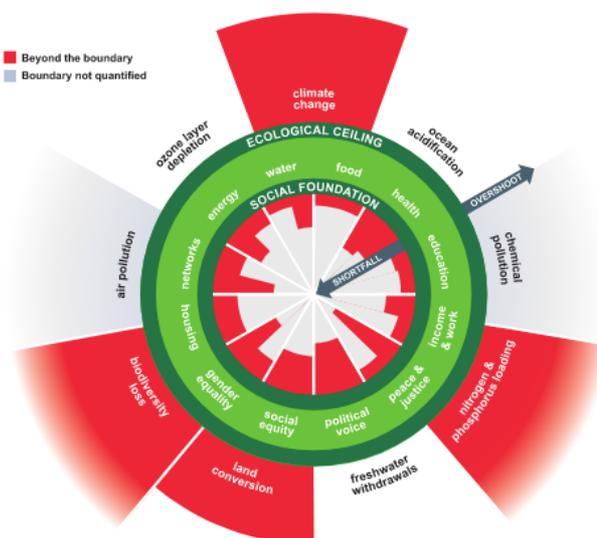
Between the social foundation and the ecological ceiling lies a doughnut-shaped space in which it is possible to meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet – an ecologically safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive.

If humanity's goal is to get into the Doughnut, the challenge is that we are currently far from doing so, as shown in Figure 2. Worldwide, billions of people still cannot meet their most essential needs, yet humanity is collectively overshooting at least four planetary boundaries, and is driving towards climate breakdown and ecological collapse. The red wedges below the social foundation in Figure 2 show the proportion of people worldwide currently falling short on life's essentials<sup>12</sup>. The wedges radiating beyond the ecological ceiling show the current overshoot of planetary boundaries. The challenge of our times is that we must move within the Doughnut's boundaries from both sides simultaneously, in ways that promote the wellbeing of all people and the health of the whole planet. Achieving this globally calls for action on many levels, including in cities, which are proving to be leaders of driving such change. The City Portrait aims to amplify that potential.

**Figure 1** The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries



**Figure 2** Transgressing both sides of the Doughnut's boundaries



Overview from: *Creating City Portraits*, A Methodological Guide from the Thriving Cities Initiative  
<https://doughnuteconomics.org/Creating-City-Portraits-Methodology.pdf>

Appendix 2: A Co-Created Vision for Greater Melbourne



Appendix 3: The Melbourne Doughnut



## ROADMAP STEPS 2021-2023

### Further developing the Melbourne Doughnut

1. Building on the insights generated to date and the Melbourne Doughnut created here, continue the City Portrait process for Greater Melbourne and incorporate both our local and global responsibilities
2. Establish expert-led working groups for each of the dimensions of the Melbourne Doughnut
3. Investigate gaps and opportunities in local, state and federal government policy that can inform the development of doughnut-aligned policies for Greater Melbourne
4. Establish a data and measurement working group and identify primary indicators and associated data sources for each dimension of the Melbourne Doughnut

### Further community activation

5. Convene a regenerative business forum to support and enhance collaboration and to share knowledge of aligned business practice
6. Establish at least five Regen Melbourne neighbourhood groups to explore local, place-based activation of Melbourne's Doughnut
7. Recruit at least five Greater Melbourne councils as beacons that engage in the activation of Melbourne's Doughnut within their municipalities
8. Activate community around projects by establishing a Regenerative Project Incubator to support new ideas and ventures that move our city into the safe space described by the Melbourne Doughnut

### Further developing the Regen Melbourne network

9. Establish a Regen Melbourne steering committee, governance framework and resourcing strategy
10. Utilise the Melbourne Doughnut, create an interactive map of people, organisations, projects and research that are accelerating our city into the safe and just space for humanity
11. Share stories of individuals and organisations working to achieve the goals of Melbourne's Doughnut
12. Create and share demonstration projects and practical tools for activating Melbourne's doughnut