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Local Area Coordination

Community Development Framework

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For equality of life.

Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action (Kenny & Connors, 2017). Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom. Community development programs are led by community members at every stage – from deciding on priority areas to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation. Community development explicitly focuses on redistributing power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

The purpose of this document is to present a community development framework focusing on strengths-based practice. It is intended to enable staff to work consistently to high standards in their community development and engagement work with a diverse range of individuals, families, groups, policy makers, specialists and mainstream services in Sydney and South-Western Sydney.

The community is at the core of all we do. So our approach focuses on how we partner with and work alongside people with disability in a purposeful and inclusive way, harnessing their lived and living experiences and expertise to support them in achieving their goals through community capacity building initiatives.

Pillar No. 1: Our Understanding

Developing effective and sustainable initiatives

Effective and sustainable initiatives develop when decision-making power is in the hands of individuals and the community.

To develop effective and sustainable initiatives we will:

- Ensure that all individuals and communities know that they can participate or contribute in the ways most meaningful to them, including sharing their ideas or voicing their aspirations, needs and concerns and being involved in the decision making process. Our commitment is to support people with disabilities to lead change for themselves and for their communities.

- Ensure individuals and groups are given the opportunity to voice their aspirations. This work includes exploring how best to include the voices of those who are marginalised or silenced or who may have different needs or a preferred approach to contribute.

- Practise active and deep listening, demonstrating that we are open to hearing about community members strengths (and supporting them to identify those strengths), hearing about their needs, aspirations and the way in which we can work toward their goals together. You can find more about active listening in the glossary of this framework.

- Support communities and individuals to have ownership of the process and end result. This means co-design and co-production processes are central to our practice.

- Be responsive, sensitive and flexible towards the changing needs and aspirations of the individuals and communities. We need to critically analyse, respond and adapt our services, programs and approaches to the changing social, political, economic and cultural context.

The sector has moved away from a service delivery model, where previously we would consider ourselves as the experts and the community as people accessing our service. Our practice is now within a social model of delivery that is about the community guiding the process while we facilitate the conversation, support the community and individuals to self-advocate, set goals and work to increase accessibility and inclusivity.

Ultimately, our approach will encourage activities and outcomes that are driven and owned by the community, so that these community-based initiatives are sustainable and continue to flourish without external intervention.

Pillar No. 2: Involvement and Power Sharing

Community relationships built on trust; listen, learn and manage expectations

Within our practice, we prefer to focus on community involvement, encouragement and power sharing. Power sharing is a word that can be interpreted to mean a transfer of power and authority that only we control. Encouragement, rather than empowerment, is much more about supporting the community to take ownership and leadership over an initiative they believe in.

To build and maintain community relationships built on trust, we will:

- Support individuals or groups in the community to be involved in decision-making on policy, services, programs and activities that benefit them, their families, and communities and which are aligned with their capacity and interests. Examples include peer support roles, reference/working groups, or being advisors or advocates.

- Recognise that relationships are built and dependent on trust. Trust supports a willingness to contribute to a process, and work collaboratively toward a goal together. Therefore, we invest in programs and activities that facilitate long term trust building, transparency and accountability. It also requires us to ensure cultural safety when we work with individuals and communities.

- Be person- and community-centred, acknowledging that each person or community group has a unique experience and story to tell, and that building and maintaining the relationship requires attention to individuals and communities' unique assets, needs and challenges.

To listen, learn and manage expectations, we will:

- Define each person or groups' role at the beginning of an interaction, to ensure clarity and accountability. Too much or too little input leads to confusion, burnout and/or disengagement.

- Be transparent throughout the process, even – and especially – when things aren't going exactly to plan.

- Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound (SMART) goals and expectations, both of the client, community and staff to ensure success.

Involving and encouraging the individual, family and community throughout the initiative means sharing the journey of change with the people with whom we work. At the same time, it requires honesty and pragmatism about expectations.
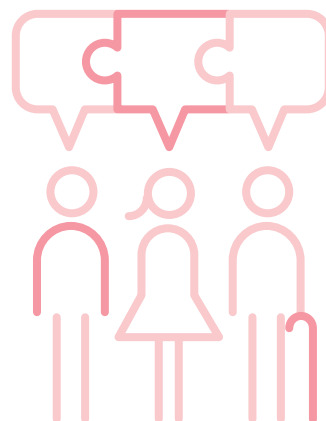
Pillar No. 3: Connect and Develop

Identify what success looks like with community, working together

Identifying what success looks like requires that we design, plan, implement and evaluate our work with the community. To connect and develop we will embed Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)[1,2] as our key framework. ABCD focuses on identifying and building on strengths already existing within communities and the individuals that belong to them. The principles that underlie ABCD value strengths that may be hidden.

To strengthen ABCD as our key framework, we will:

- Move away from needs-based approaches that focus on deficiencies, to a strengths-based approach, focussing on a person or group's offerings and assets.

- Ensure that our strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person, groups and communities and SSI.

- Together determine an outcome that draws on the individual and community strengths and assets. Our key questions will include:

  - What do the individual, groups and/or community want to achieve?

  - Who has leadership skills in the community?

  - How would they like to be involved/contribute?

  - What setting(s) or format(s) will be most appropriate for people?

  - Who is going to be in charge of the plan?

  - How can we work toward achieving the steps laid out in the plan?

- Use this framework as a guide for the community in identifying their strengths, building connections between community members and other stakeholders, and creating a plan. We will make use of proven methods, such as strengthening the community's human, social, environmental, financial and physical capital stated in The Sustainable Livelihood Approach.[3]

The work of connecting and developing requires skills and aptitudes that we already have within our teams and that we will continue to grow through ABCD.

1 García, I. (2020) 'Asset-based Community Development (ABCD): core principles', in Philips, R, Trevan, E and Kraeger, P (eds) Research Handbook on Community Development. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pp. 67-75.
2 Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Resources and Tools, DePaul University, accessed June 21, 2023.
3 Kollmair, M & St. Gamper, J (2002) 'The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach'. Input Paper for the Integrated Training Course of NCCR North-South Aeschiried, Switzerland.

Pillar No. 4: Co-design and Co-production

Co-design and co-production with, not for, the community; identify with the community what success looks like

Transitioning from a service delivery model to a social model of support involves collaborating with the community as experts of their own experiences, in an authentic way from the beginning to the end of an initiative.

Our work to reflect Pillar No. 4 will be effective by recognising community expertise and leadership from the first conversation. We want people to engage in the initial thinking and priority-setting processes (co-planning), in the design of the project (co-design)[4], in measuring the effectiveness of the initiative (co-evaluation), and/or in executing the initiative (co-delivery).

Co-production[5] is the amalgamation of these four modes of cooperative work between our organisation and the community. Progressing beyond solely the co-design of the project, co-production acknowledges that there can be involvement from community at all and every stage of the initiative. For more on these terms, visit the glossary at the end of the framework.

To achieve effective co-design and/ or co-production, we will:

- Apply co-design as a creative process that encourages a range of people to offer their ideas and experiences from the outset. Our key questions will include:
  - What are we looking to achieve?
  - Who should be involved?
  - What approach should we use?
  - What are the timeframes or funding parameters that apply?
- Value the contributions of diverse community members. These are the people who know the topic best given the experience they have gained over time and their proximity to the matter.
- Extend collaboration far beyond the design of an initiative. Use co-production as a way of including the community at all stages of an initiative.
- Recognise that co-design and/or co-production take time and thought to establish trusting relationships built from mutual respect.

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4 JFA Purple Orange (2021) 'Guide to Co-design with people living with disability', Purple Orange: Unley.
5 Roper, C, Grey, F & Cadogan, E (2018) Co-production: Putting principles into practice in mental health contexts. University of Melbourne: Melbourne.

Pillar No. 5: Learnings, Outcomes and Social Impact

Identify and report on positive life changes for diverse people with disability and capture the positive social impact the project has made to the community

Learnings, outcomes and social impact are all results that we need to measure and document during and after working with an individual or community on an initiative.

The language we use and terms we adopt are important. We can distinguish between an output, which describes the result of the activity, the outcome that this has for those involved in the initiative, including the benefits we can see, and the broader social impact this has for the community, denoting the longer-term consequences of the project.

Learnings not only occur once an outcome has been attained but, importantly, throughout the life cycle of an initiative. Capturing outputs, outcomes and social impact is all part of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) that we build into each project. For more on these terms, see our glossary at the end of this framework.

To capture learnings, outcomes and social impact, we will:

- Understand the difference between outputs, outcomes and impacts of a project, utilising the glossary at the end of this framework as needed.

- Listen to the stories people tell us, acknowledging that the data we analyse comes in many forms.

- Measure the outcomes that have been achieved against the project objectives.

- Measure additional or unintended outcomes, if any, beyond or outside of the objectives. Sometimes projects generate unintended outcomes, and recording these is key.

- Engage in a process of reflection, where we think about what has or hasn't worked well throughout the duration of the initiative, feeding this back into future project design and implementation.

- Consider how the achievements of an initiative may present new directions and/or opportunities to leverage off to achieve our long-term vision. Remember that capturing this data is important for:

  - informing action
  - producing evidence to support community choices and decisions
  - giving a voice to what people want to say
  - meeting funder requirements
  - for learning and reflection, building our findings into future programs.
  - Inform continuous improvement

Whether capturing learnings and outcomes, or measuring the social impact of our work, we will ensure we can rely on effective systems and processes for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (or MEL).
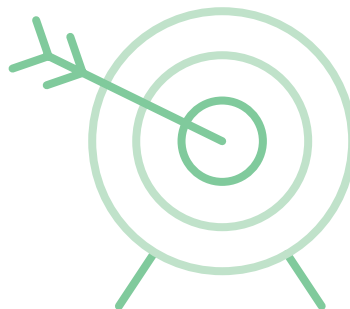
Pillar No. 6: Reflect and Celebrate

Promote continuous learning and improvement

Closely associated with the learning described under Pillar No. 5, reflection on the lessons of our work enables us to continually improve our work. Critical analysis is essential. At the same time, successful work deserves to be celebrated.

To practise effective learning and improvement, we will:

- Build reflective practice into our work in a way that strengthens teamwork both within our staff and with the community. We will apply planned methods for ensuring reflection brings in hidden voices from the community and takes on board their perspectives.

- Recognise that reflecting and celebrating can also be an important part of marking that our time in a project has come to an end and can be a positive way to transition into the next chapter.

- Celebrate and reflect all the way through an initiative, as well as at its conclusion, including as milestones are achieved.

We will always acknowledge that reflecting and celebrating comes in many forms. They include debriefing sessions, having a yarn, a shared meal, informal conversation groups or a workshop session. We will also recognise that individuals within the community may prefer to contribute outside group settings.

Our Understanding   1

Developing effective and sustainable initiatives

- Ensure a meaningful platform for community participation and contribution
- Include marginalised or silenced voices
- Practise active and deep listening
- Support community ownership
- Act flexibly and responsively to changing needs

Involvement and Power Sharing   2

Community relationships built on trust; listen, learn and manage expectations

- Support involvement in decision-making
- Recognise that relationships are built on trust
- Take a person- and community-centred approach
- Define roles to ensure clarity and accountability
- Set SMART goals and expectations

Connect and Develop   3

Identify what success looks like with community, working together

- Strengthen Asset-Based Community Development
- Move away from needs-based, deficit models
- Ensure strengths-based, collaborative processes
- Use this framework to guide the community in identifying their strengths, building connections between stakeholders and creating a plan

Co-design and Co-production   4

Co-design and co-production with, not for, the community; identify with the community what success looks like

- Apply co-design as a creative, collaborative process
- Value the contributions of diverse community members
- Extend collaboration beyond the design phase
- Recognise that co-design and/or co-production takes time and trust

Learnings, Outcomes and Social Impact   5

Identify and report on positive life changes for diverse people with disability and capture the positive social impact the project has made to the community

- Utilise the glossary
- Listen to the stories people tell us
- Measure outcomes against project objectives
- Look for unintended outcomes
- Engage in reflection and use learnings to inform future work
- Consider how achievements may present new directions and/or opportunities

Reflect and Celebrate   6

Promote continuous learning and improvement

- Build reflective practice into our work
- Recognise that reflecting and celebrating can mark a positive transition
- Celebrate and reflect at every milestone, including at the end
- Acknowledge that reflecting and celebrating takes many forms

Framework Glossary

Term	Definition
Active listening	Active listening is a type of communication skill that involves more than hearing the words a person is saying, and rather actively showing them that you are engaged with the intent and meaning behind those words. Techniques for active listening include: • giving non-verbal responses, such as nodding the head, eye-contact, leaning forward or turning your body to face the speaker • giving verbal affirmations like "sure", "right", "I see", "I hear you" It is worth noting that active listening may look slightly different according to the context and cultural protocol.
Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)	ABCD recognises that positive, community-based change takes place where people are able to identify and invest their unique offerings into the process. Instead of depending on external resources outside the community, it is best to start the process of development inside the community. (Adapted from García, I. (2020) 'Asset-based Community Development (ABCD): core principles', in Philips, R, Trevan, E and Kraeger, P (eds) Research Handbook on Community Development. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, p. 70)
Co-design	Co-design is shorthand for cooperative design and is a creative process that encourages a range of people to offer their ideas and experiences. Co-design values the leadership and contributions of community in making decisions around how the initiative should look in the design phase.
Community development	Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action (Kenny & Connors, 2017). Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom. Community development programs are led by community members at every stage – from deciding on issues to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation. Community development has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

Term	Definition
Community capacity buidling	Community capacity building is about promoting the 'capacity' of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to problems in a way that helps them shape and exercise control over their physical, social, economic and cultural environments. Community capacity building is the continuous process required to foster the pride and appropriate local leadership that allows communities, through their members, to take responsibility for their own development.
Continuous learning	As the name suggests, continuous learning refers to an ongoing process of learning new skills and obtaining new knowledge. For example, it could be gaining a deeper insight into an individual or community with whom we are working, or learning something new about ourselves and how we are supporting or working with community members.
Co-production	Co-production raises the bar for working with communities, seeking community leadership from the outset so that people are engaged in the initial thinking and priority-setting processes of a new initiative and are involved through to its conclusion. Co-production includes four core stages of cooperative work: • Co-planning • Co-design • Co-evaluation • Co-delivery
Cultural safety	Cultural safety is more than just being aware of other cultures and respecting all people. It is about creating an environment where everyone is conscious about their own cultural identities and attitudes and is open-minded and flexible in their attitudes towards people from cultures other than their own. Strategies that enhance the ability to be culturally safe include: • reflecting on one's own culture, attitudes and beliefs about 'others' • clear, value-free, open and respectful communication • developing trust • recognising and avoiding stereotypical barriers • being prepared to engage with others in a two-way dialogue where knowledge is shared • understanding the influence of culture shock

Term	Definition
Encouragement (and empowerment)	In this context, encouragement refers to the way in which we support an individual or community to achieve their goals. It requires respect and an understanding that those we aim to support already hold the power to effect positive change over their own lives.
	We use 'encourage' or 'encouragement' rather than 'empower' or 'empowerment' because the latter has become a loaded term that can feel disingenuous, sometimes being referred to as power we are giving back to the community, rather than recognising that their power has always existed within for them to harvest. By contrast, encouragement can mean guiding a person to realise that they already have the tools they need to contribute to the positive change they seek.
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)	MEL comprises the strategies, processes and methods for the regular collection of information on the progress we are making (monitoring), taking a step back to look at the bigger picture of the difference our project is making for the individual or in the community (evaluation), learning from the experience about what is working and what is not, and using these findings to inform our future projects and practice (learning).
Outcome	The measurable benefit(s) achieved for the community as a result of project activities and their outputs.
Output	A tangible product of a project, usually produced as a direct, immediate or short-term result of the activities of the team, such as a training workshop or a community event.
Reflective practice	Reflective practice is, in its simplest form, thinking about or reflecting on what you do. It is closely linked to the concept of learning from experience, in that you think about what you did, and what happened, and decide from that what you would do differently next time.
Service delivery model	The provision of a service to individuals or communities who can access the service, but usually were not involved in the decision-making that happened around creating the service, including its design. A criticism of this model is that it provides a service that misses the important viewpoints of the people in which it hopes to serve, which can make it less relevant and less accessible.

Term	Definition
Social impact	If outputs are the activity delivered, and outcomes are the benefits achieved as a result of those activities, the social impact can be understood as the bigger picture, positive effect these outcomes have had on the well-being of an individual or community.
Social model	A social model is a type of initiative that incorporates voices of individuals and the community into its delivery, including supporting community ownership over projects that SSI has initiated. A social model recognises the importance of co-design and co-production with the community in ensuring that a project is both effective and sustainable. An initiative that takes on a social model is one that the community can continue to pursue and benefit from, even after funding ends, or the SSI team decide it is time to pull back.

Appendix

PowerPoint slides that accompany this booklet

Community Development Framework

What is Community Development?

- Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action (Kenny & Connors, 2017).

- Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom.

- Community development programs are led by community members at every stage – from deciding on priority areas to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation.

- Community development explicitly focuses on redistributing power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

2

Pillar No. 1: Our Understanding

Developing effective and sustainable initiatives

- Ensure a meaningful platform for community participation and contribution
- Include marginalised or silenced voices
- Practise active and deep listening
- Support community ownership
- Act flexibly and responsively to changing needs

Effective and sustainable initiatives are grounded in genuine participation, active listening, community ownership and flexibility to changing needs.

3

Pillar No. 2: Involvement and Power Sharing

Community relationships built on trust; listen, learn and manage expectations

- Support involvement in decision-making
- Recognise that relationships are built on trust
- Take a person and community-centred approach
- Define roles to ensure clarity and accountability
- Set SMART goals and expectations

Supporting decision-making, building trust, defining roles and setting SMART goals and expectations are ways we involve and power-share with communities.

4

Pillar No. 3: Connect and Develop

Identify what success looks like with community, working together

- Strengthen Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

- Move away from needs-based, deficit models

- Ensure strengths-based, collaborative processes

- Use this framework to guide the community in identifying their strengths, building connections between stakeholders and creating a plan

By using this framework to identify community strengths and ensure a collaborative process, we can see what success looks like and achieve our shared goals.

5

Pillar No. 4: Co-design and Co-production

Co-design and co-production with, not for, the community; identify with the community what success looks like

- Apply co-design as a creative, collaborative process

- Value the contributions of diverse community members

- Extend collaboration beyond the design phase

- Recognise that co-design and/ or co-production takes time and trust
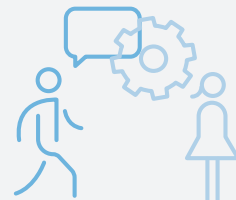
We can identify what success looks like with the community by adopting co-design and co-production principles that value the contributions of diverse community members at every stage of an initiative.

6

Pillar No. 5: Learnings, Outcomes and Social Impact

Identify and report on positive life changes for diverse people with disability and capture the positive social impact the project has made to the community

- Utilise the glossary
- Listen to the stories people tell us
- Measure outcomes against project objectives
- Look for unintended outcomes
- Engage in reflection and use learnings to inform future work
- Consider how achievements may present new directions and/or opportunities

By utilising the glossary, listening to the stories people tell us, measuring outcomes and engaging in reflection, we can report on positive life changes and social impact.

7

Pillar No. 6: Reflect and Celebrate

Promote continuous learning and improvement

- Build reflective practice into our work
- Recognise that reflecting and celebrating can mark a positive transition
- Celebrate and reflect at every milestone, including at the end
- Acknowledge that reflecting and celebrating takes many forms

We can reflect on our work and celebrate our achievements to mark milestones and celebrate transitions, where doing so will promote continuous learning and improvement.

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