ABILITY LINKS

Community Development Resource Package

NSW GOVERNMENT

ABILITY LINKS NEW SOUTH WALES

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Linking people and communities with opportunities

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Disclaimer

This Package has been developed as a guide to help organisations design and deliver community-based inclusion projects with people with disability.

The guide is based on a scan of the community development literature in the disability sector, a review of Ability Links NSW providers' project documentation, and interviews and workshops with Linkers. While we aimed to capture key information, the review of the literature and documentation was not systematic and not all providers participated in the workshops.

While all care has been taken to ensure information contained in this Package is accurate, the information is intended as a guide only, for establishing, implementing and sustaining a community inclusion project. The Package cannot provide all the answers because best practice in community development is to co-design and respond to community members' needs, so there are no hard and fast rules.

1. Purpose of the Package

1.1. Why was this Package developed?

Ability Links NSW (ALNSW) and the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (with the support of the NSW Department of Family and Community Services) engaged ARTD Consultants to collaborate with Ability Links NSW providers across the state to develop this Community Development Resource Package.

Over the five years since ALNSW was established, Linkers have worked with people with disability, their families and carers, as well as with organisations and other community members to increase opportunities for inclusion. These initiatives have varied in scale from one-off events and small social groups to region-wide efforts to improve access and inclusion in businesses, schools and public precincts.

Working together, Linkers and communities have achieved important milestones on the journey to sustaining inclusion. They have also learned about what works and what doesn't in different contexts – with different communities and types of organisations.

The Package is designed to celebrate the successes of ALNSW's community projects and share their learnings to support other organisations and communities taking steps to increase inclusion.

The Package is intended to help support ALNSW's vision.

> *The vision for ALNSW is to have had a sustainable impact on inclusive attitudes and behaviours across NSW by increasing awareness, changing attitudes towards people with disability, creating connections, reducing isolation and embedding people in a community of relationships, and breaking down barriers to participation in community.*

Achieving this vision relies on:

- the development and strengthening of informal support networks
- the use of sustainable approaches to build the capacity of community organisations, mainstream services and supports, and businesses to include people with disability
- the empowerment of people with disability as leaders and advocates for inclusion.

1.2. Who is this Package for?

The Package is designed to be used by existing ALNSW providers, community organisations and community champions, including people with disability and their families, who have an idea for or want to work to support inclusion of people with disability. Projects may range from large-scale initiatives involving multiple organisations and stakeholders, to small-scale community initiatives or events.

1.3. How do you use the Package?

The Package has nine chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines the need for inclusion and what community development for inclusion looks like.

Chapter 3 identifies guiding principles for this work based on the experiences of ALNSW Linkers.

Chapters 4–6 take you through the process of engaging with community to develop a project idea; to planning, managing and sustaining a project.

Chapters 7–8 provide you with top tips and best practice case studies for working with particular population groups and types of organisations.

Chapter 9 provides guidance on monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on project outcomes to track progress and inform continuous improvement.

If you are new to community development for inclusion, you may want to progress through each chapter. If you are more experienced in the field, you can dip into the sections that are relevant to you. You can also look at the sections in Chapters 7 and 8 when working with particular groups or organisations – either as a refresher, or because you are new to this area. If you'd like to find out more about the case studies, you can contact the ALNSW provider organisations here: https://www.abilitylinksnsw.org.au/link/providers.

In using this Package, remember that community development is not a linear process – you might not progress neatly from community conversation to project plan. This may be a more iterative process than the structure of a written document allows. Also, every community and every project will be different – there is no one-size fits all approach. So, choose what is relevant to you in the Package based on the needs and goals of the community involved.

1.4. Where does the information in the Package come from?

The Package draws on:

- a rapid scan of the community development literature, focusing on the disability sector
- the tools, strategies and guides documented by ALNSW providers across NSW
- best practice case studies of ALNSW community projects
- interviews with Linkers to explore best practice case studies and top tips
- three workshops with ALNSW Linkers in Sydney, Port Macquarie and Dubbo, focusing on the principles that guide their work and their project learnings and tips.

2. About community development for inclusion

In this chapter, we outline the context and need for inclusion in the community, including the right to inclusion at all levels of government, common barriers to inclusion, and what social inclusion looks like at the community level and at the individual level.

We also introduce community development as a way of working towards social inclusion, and the main approaches to community development as identified in the literature.

2.1. What's the context for increasing inclusion of people with disability?

A snapshot of disability in New South Wales

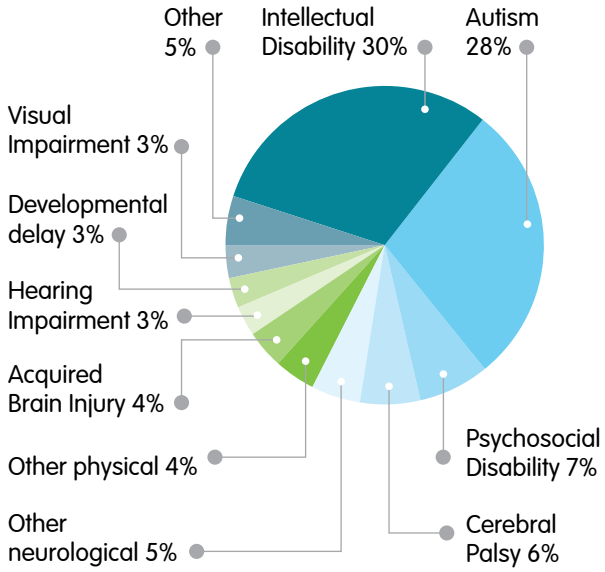
883,600
carers in NSW

776,300
people with Disability in NSW under 65

1,372,400
people with Disability in NSW

NDIS participants in NSW

Types of disability

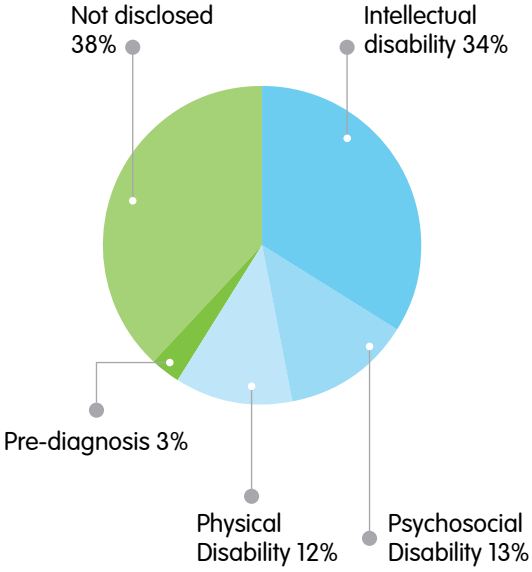


9%
are culturally and linguistically diverse*

5%
are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander*

People engaged with Ability Links NSW

Types of disability



22%
are culturally and linguistically diverse

23%
are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Statistics about no. of people with disability and carers in NSW come from: *Australian Bureau of Statistics, 44300DO001_2015 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales, 2015*

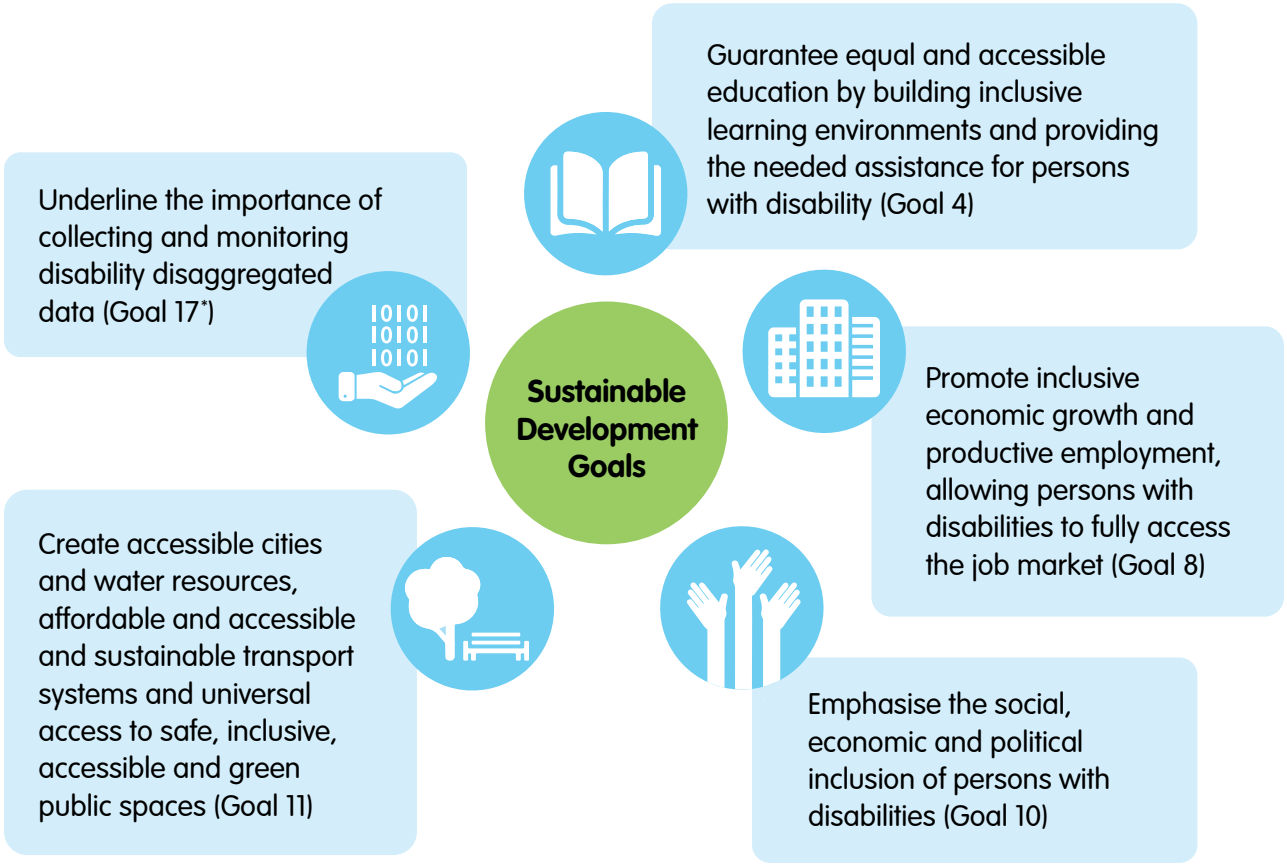
Statistics for NDIS participants come from: *NDIA, Market Position Statement: New South Wales, 2018 and NDIS, NSW Public Dashboard, 31 March 2018*

Statistics about people engaged with ALNSW come from: *Ability Links New South Wales, Quarterly update 1 January to 31 March 2018*

2.1.1. The right to inclusion

At the **international level**, the Australian Government is one of many governments around the world that has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This enshrines a national commitment to and respect for the inherent dignity and autonomy of people with disability to have the same opportunities as other Australians to participate in social, economic, community and civic life, and the right to non-discrimination and inclusion.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to integrate the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is protecting and promoting the human rights and freedoms for people with disability. The Agenda also seeks to:



*Source. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Disability. 2015. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability.htm

At the **national level**, the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 articulates how Australia will meet its obligations under the Convention and ensure the national value of a 'fair go' includes people with disability. The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has also been changing the service system for people with disability by providing supports, where reasonable and necessary, for people under the age of 65 years who have a permanent disability which significantly affects their everyday lives. The NDIS also has an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building component that includes grants funding for initiatives that empower people with disability and support mainstream and community services to be more inclusive.

At the **state level**, the NSW Government passed the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW). The Act makes clear that people with disability have the same human rights as other members of the community and that the state and the community have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights. Under the Act, all **local councils** and **NSW Government Departments**, and some **government agencies** were required to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).

2.1.2. Barriers to inclusion

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises that attitudes, practices and structures can create unnecessary barriers for people with disability who wish to enjoy economic participation, social inclusion and equality. Consultations undertaken with people with disability to develop the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 identified that while most people with disability were now no longer 'shut in'—hidden away in large institutions—many were 'shut out' of buildings, homes, schools, employment, businesses, sports and community groups. Barriers include:

- social exclusion and discrimination
- accessing and navigating supports and services
- accessing education and employment
- accessing and navigating the built environment and information.[1]

These barriers mean that people with disability have worse quality of life outcomes than other Australians, including health, education and employment outcomes.[2]

Some people with disability also face multiple and compounding disadvantages, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people from regional and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people identifying as LGBTQIA+ (explored in more detail in Chapter 7).

2.1.3. What inclusion looks like

There is no universal definition of social inclusion. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines an inclusive society as:

> *...a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.*[3]

In practice, the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 focuses on improving the following to increase inclusion of people with disability:

- **accessible communities**—public transport; parks, buildings and housing; digital information and communications technologies; civic life, including social, sporting, recreational and cultural life

1 Department of Social Services. SHUT OUT: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia. 2012. https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/Shelly-out-the-experience-of-people-with-disabilities-and-their-families-in-Australia

2 Department of Social Services. National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. 2012. https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/national-disability-strategy-2010-2020

3 Australian Human Rights Commission. Social Inclusion and Human Rights in Australia. 2013. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/social-inclusion-and-human-rights-australia

- **rights, justice and legislation**—statutory protections such as anti-discrimination measures, complaints mechanisms, advocacy, the electoral and justice systems
- **economic security**—jobs, business opportunities, financial independence, adequate income support for those not able to work, housing
- **personal and community support**—community inclusion and participation, person-centred care and support provided by specialist disability services and mainstream services, informal care and support
- **education and skills**—early childhood education and care, schools, further education, vocational education; transitions from education to employment; life-long learning
- **health and wellbeing**—health services, health promotion and the interaction between health and disability systems; wellbeing and enjoyment of life.[4]

2.1.4. What inclusion means for individuals

Broadly, social inclusion means that individual people with disability have choice and control over their lives, are able to do things that are meaningful to them, and feel valued and have a sense of belonging.[5] This requires that people with disability have the 'resources, opportunities and capabilities' they need to participate in education, training, employment and local cultural, civic and recreational activities; engage with people and local services; and influence the decisions that affect them.[6]

In a study about experiences of inclusion, Milner and Kelly identify the following criteria that support a sense of inclusion.

- **Self-determination:** individuals autonomously choosing an activity, and where, when and with whom to engage.
- **Social identity:** places and relationships where an individual feels known and embedded within the community.
- **Reciprocity and valued contribution:** individuals doing things for others, and challenging negative attitudes and assumed dependence.
- **Participatory expectations:** individuals overcoming limited expectations of community participation and finding opportunities to 'prove' oneself to others.
- **Psychological safety:** individuals feeling a sense of belonging when community members value what they have to say and expected their contribution.[7]

4 Department of Social Services. National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. Op. cit.

5 Australian Social Inclusion Board. Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring. 2012. http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/3170/1/Social%20inclusion%20in%20Australia%20how%20Australia%20is%20faring2012.pdf

6 National Disability Services. Community Participation in Action: A Resource Guide for Disability Service Providers. 2016. https://www.nds.org.au/images/resources/resource-files/CII_Community_Participation_in_Action_Guide_2016.pdf

7 Milner P. and Kelly B. Community participation and inclusion: people with disabilities defining their place. Disability and Society. 2009. 24(1), 47–62. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09687590802535410

2.2. How can the community support inclusion?

2.2.1. What is community?

While there are many definitions of community, all represent the bonds, structures, relationships and activities that organise and bring people together. Communities are organic groupings and can be based on political constructs, geographic boundaries (including physical and online spaces), and/or values and personal identities (such as gender, ethnicity or faith).

In a well-functioning community, members feel a sense of belonging and attachment, celebrate diversity, strive for inclusion, and share resources for mutual support. Communities require strong ties and trust to stay well-connected, but also weak connections and openness to 'outsiders' in order to understand different perspectives and leverage new opportunities for development.[8]

2.2.2. What is community development?

There is no universally accepted definition of 'community development'. However, there are some clear distinctions between what community development is and what it is not.[9, 10]

Community development is:

- grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, social justice, self-determination, and collective action
- considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities
- a collaborative and local solution to common issues, owned and led by community
- experimental and opportunistic, drawing on community strengths and assets
- focused on the redistribution of power to address causes of inequality and disadvantage

Community development is not:

- service delivery
- social work
- advocacy on behalf of individuals
- tokenistic or one-off
- top-down engagement/ issuing of directions
- consultation to inform goals or strategies
- community advisory groups or committees (although these might be part of a project)
- leadership training

2.2.3. Approaches to community development

Within the community development literature there are a range of theoretical approaches. The approach you use will depend on the needs, goals and preferences of the community involved. You might also use a combination of approaches.

Community development works best when the community members affected are meaningfully involved in designing and implementing the project from the beginning and when they aim to

8 Rawsthorne M. and Howard A., Working with Communities: Critical Perspectives. 2011.

9 National Disability Services. *Community Inclusion Initiative Factsheets: Community Development*. https://www.nds.org.au/resources/community-inclusion-initiative-factsheets

10 Australian Institute of Family Studies. *What is community development?* 2017. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-community-development

create change at a community or neighbourhood level. It's less likely to work when you already know the outcomes you want to achieve and the activities you want to use.

Common approaches to community development

Asset-Based Community Development. This is a strengths-based approach that recognises the assets and resources of community members and organisations that can be tapped into and pooled.

Capacity building. This approach aims to develop and strengthen the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive.

Community engagement. This is a process in which the general public and other interested parties are invited to contribute to particular proposals or policy change. Engagement methods can range from consultation, through deliberation and involvement, to empowerment.

Community empowerment. This approach aims to mobilise people and resources to act collectively to create social or political change, enabling them to gain control over the factors or decisions that shape their lives.

Rational/ dialogical. This approach involves a process of sharing and debating ideas in community conversations, allowing new ideas and solutions to form.

2.3. Useful resources

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to Disability
- The Council of Australian Government's National Disability Strategy 2010-2020
- The NSW Government's Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Local Government NSW's resources for developing Disability Inclusion Action Plans
- The National People with Disabilities and Carer Council's 2009 report, Shut Out: The experience of people with disabilities and their families in Australia
- Australian Social Inclusion Board's 2012 report, Social Inclusion in Australia: How is Australia Fairing?
- National Disability Services' Community Inclusion Initiative Factsheets
- The NSW Services for the Treatment and Rheabilitation of Torture and Taruma Survivors (STARTTS) 2012 guide to planning and evaluating community developmeny work with refugee communiuties, the Community Development Evaluation Manual
- Think Local Act Personal's resources for Building Community Capacity

3. ALNSW's approach to inclusion

In this chapter, we outline how ALNSW providers approach their community development projects to support sustainable inclusion. This includes the values and principles that guide their work, and the key qualities and skills needed.

3.1. What principles guide ALNSW's inclusion projects?

3.1.1. ALNSW values

ALNSW is underpinned by four core values.

- **Believing in**
- **Can do**
- **Flexibility**
- **Inclusion**

While values tell us what we believe is important, they do not tell us how to behave. It is also difficult to set rules to tell us how to behave, as community development projects need to be flexible and responsive to the preferences and needs of those involved. Instead, evidence-based guiding principles can be useful.

Effective principles point towards intended outcomes, which, in this case are sustainability and inclusion. ALNSW Linkers are guided by the following principles in working towards sustainable inclusion. For specific projects, try to articulate how each principle will apply.

1. **Ensure the project is community led.** The involvement of people in the community should be intrinsic to identifying, leading, designing, implementing, and evaluating community development projects. Build capacity, and value lived experience and local cultures, skills and knowledge.
2. **Be inclusive.** Embrace and respect diversity, be culturally appropriate, and support people to feel safe and have a sense of belonging.
3. **Be strengths-based.** Support communities to build on their existing strengths and assets and encourage hopes and aspirations.
4. **Be collaborative.** Build relationships, take collective action, and don't duplicate existing supports. Take a win-win approach by identifying what partners can gain from working with you towards a common goal.
5. **Ensure integrity of process.** Be open-minded and transparent, have ongoing conversations, be responsive, continuously reflect, and follow-up on what you say you will do. Ensure a bottom-up process and be consistent in your approach.
6. **Be organised but flexible.** Be organised and plan, but allow projects to evolve naturally as you respond to changing circumstances, priorities and interests.
7. **Be sustainable.** Consider implications for sustainability in everything you do, including who can support the project to continue.
8. **Learn and reflect.** Track what you're achieving, celebrate your successes, reflect on your failures and share your learnings in order to continuously improve what you're doing.

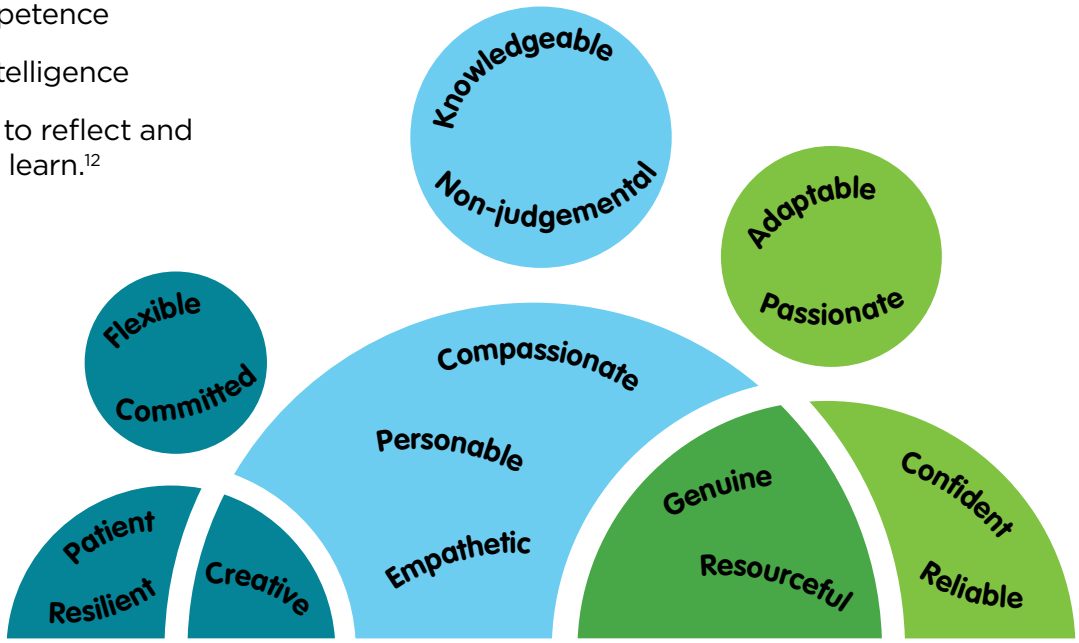
3.2. What qualities and skills are needed?

What's more important than professional qualifications are your qualities and community connections. To build connections and work effectively with community, you will need to:

- believe in the inherent capacity of individuals with lived experience, and communities, to make decisions that affect them
- believe in and be passionate about facilitating genuine inclusion and participation
- build relationships by being personable, empathetic, compassionate, non-judgemental and patient
- take appropriate approaches and identify opportunities by being knowledgeable about the service system and existing supports
- build trust by being genuine, committed and reliable
- be flexible and adaptable, recognising that plans will evolve, and you may need to find alternative avenues and options
- be creative and resourceful
- be patient and persistent in the face of challenges and set-backs.[11]

Important skills include:

- the ability to identify and work with people's strengths
- effective negotiation and communication skills
- time-management skills
- cultural competence
- emotional intelligence
- the capacity to reflect and continuously learn.[12]



11 Ability Links NSW. *Ability Links NSW Guidelines*. 2016

12 Urbis. *Ability Links NSW Final Evaluation Report*. 2016. https://urbis.com.au/insights-news/a-successful-approach-to-building-inclusive-communities-revealed/

4. Getting started

This chapter shows how you can start an inclusion project in the community. It provides guidance for engaging communities and steps through the key things to think about when co-designing a project – including how to brainstorm project ideas, goals and activities.

4.1. How do you engage community?

You'll need to take an inclusive approach to engagement that reduces barriers to, and enables meaningful (not tokenistic) participation. To find community members you might work with people in your existing programs, partner with other organisations, or promote the process publicly at community venues or online.

When designing your engagement strategy think through the barriers people may face. These might be:

- personal (for example, limited money, mobility, time or geography)
- informational (for example, limited knowledge about the subject or purpose of the engagement, and consultation fatigue)
- language and literacy
- social and cultural (for example, degree of social inclusion).[13]

People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTQIA+ people, older people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, people in regional and remote locations, and young people, can be more likely to face these barriers.

There are pros and cons to different methods of engagement, and each requires different considerations. For example:

- small group activities, such as community meetings and focus groups, allow like-minded people to share information and build trust, but creating a safe and confidential space is critical.
- large group activities, such as workshops, allow a wider range of perspectives to be heard, but having a skilled facilitator, a clear agenda and an appropriate venue becomes more important.
- online engagement can be convenient for people who are time poor, geographically isolated, have physical access requirements, or prefer anonymity, but this requires technological literacy and accessibility and someone to moderate the conversation.

Below are some tips for facilitating an inclusive and productive conversation. These tips generally apply to face-to-face activities.

13 Capire Consulting Group. The Inclusive Community Engagement Toolkit. 2016. http://capire.com.au/#publications-section

Top tips for facilitation

Choose an inclusive venue

- The venue should be safe, accessible and culturally appropriate.

Remember your role

- Remember that you play a neutral role. You should not weigh in with your opinions, nor vote on any actions that community members decide to take.
- Your job is to provide oversight, guidance and support, and everything you do should be in partnership with community members. This will help build capacity, cement project ownership and support sustainability.

Set the ground rules

- Make the scope and purpose of the meeting clear.
- Explain confidentiality to create a safe space for open discussions.
- Establish tone of respect (one person speaks at a time), no judgement and empathy.
- Set clear expectations about your role in the project.

Set a positive tone

- Start with an 'icebreaker' activity. For example, participants could take turns introducing themselves, and using the first letter of their name to describe something they are proud of in their community.
- If there are lots of people in the room, try breaking into smaller groups.
- Begin the conversation by discussing how participants are involved in the community, and what they see as the strengths of the community.

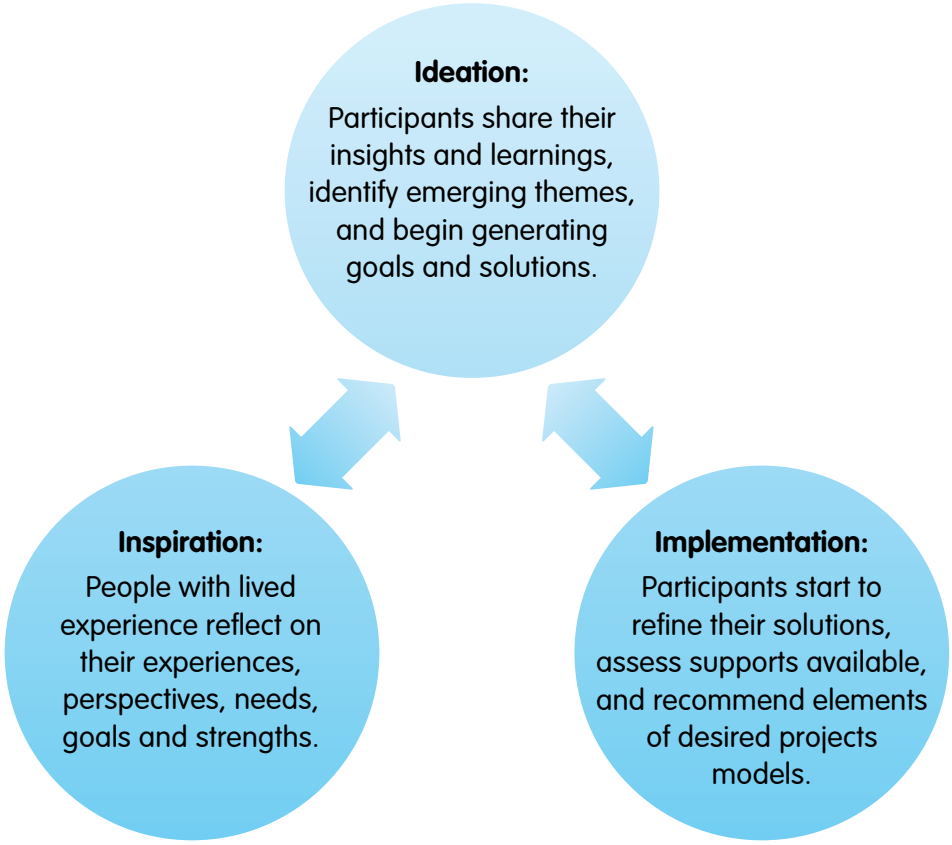
Ask and listen carefully

- Use open questions to encourage reflection, problem-solving and creativity. Encourage people to elaborate, by asking 'why' or 'how' and seek clarification if you're not sure what they mean.
- Use closed questions for affirmation or consensus.
- Give people time to answer. Sometimes silence means people are thinking and reflecting carefully.
- Be an active listener—don't interrupt, use eye contact, use encouraging sounds and body language, and acknowledge feelings.
- Use butcher's paper or a whiteboard to write up responses collectively so that people can see that they have been heard.
- You might also want to record the conversation by taking minutes or using a video or voice recorder.

4.2. How do you co-design a project?

Co-design recognises people as experts in their own experience, who should shape the supports and services they use. Traditional consultation approaches typically start with a program model and ask for people's views about it. This can lead to a solution that doesn't address the core problem or meet users' needs. A co-design approach, however, starts from the ground up, engaging participants creatively and collaboratively to develop solutions that effectively respond to their identified needs. This process can also involve practitioners and other stakeholders.

Co-design involves moving through three 'design' phases.



4.2.1. What are the needs and strengths?

If you're reading this Package, you've probably already identified a need for an inclusion project in your community or had a community member suggest a project idea. While you may think you have a good handle on the need, it's important as the first step in the co-design process to engage with community members to deeply explore their needs and strengths and collaboratively develop a project that reflects these. Don't go in with a preconceived agenda or assumptions. Instead, support the community to define their own problems and solutions. The project may not get off the ground or be sustainable if there's no interest or buy-in from those impacted.

After setting the ground rules and running an icebreaker activity, you should discuss the

common needs and barriers to inclusion that members face. To prompt the discussion, you might want to:

- suggest some fundamental human needs and ask if these are being met
- use a map of the local area as a prompt for thinking about where people feel included (or not)
- try talking circles (where a group sits in a circle taking turns speaking and actively listening), or world café discussions (where a group rotates around three or more tables, each assigned a topic of conversation)
- use creative tools such as Lego Play or photo cards
- pose an open-ended question to the room.

You'll then need to consolidate the information into common or thematic areas of need, such as 'physical accessibility' or 'accessible information'. Make sure to connect individual needs to broader community and social needs. Then, work towards identifying shared priorities for action as an inclusion project.

4.2.2. What's the goal?

Once you've prioritised community needs and made sure that there aren't supports already available to address these, you should start to define your vision and objectives. You can ask questions like 'what is our vision for the future?' or 'what would success look like?'.

Remember, what you're trying to achieve might be different for the different stakeholders involved. For example, your goal might be to build the confidence and skills of participants with disability to gain local employment, while also working with local business owners to understand the benefits of employing a person with disability and the adjustments they can make to be a more inclusive employer.

4.2.3. What other supports are available?

Before you start your project planning, make sure you check out what other supports and services exist locally. This will help you to: avoid re-inventing the wheel or duplicating what is already available; articulate how your project differs from what's already available; and, identify possible community members or organisations who you might want to partner with or seek support from later down the track.

You can get to know your local supports and services informally by building personal relationships with local community leaders, members and organisations and doing online research; and formally, by attending community networking, council and interagency meetings.

4.2.4. How will you achieve the goal?

Before you start formally planning your project you should brainstorm with the community how they could work to achieve their goals. While it's important to be aspirational and 'dream big' so that you aim high and don't shut down any ideas in the brainstorming process, you'll need to circle back to realistic and feasible ideas for the project to get off the ground. Ask yourself the following questions to explore what the project will look like in practice.

- **How will you achieve your goals?** Try to articulate what the project would look like from a practical point of view. What will happen on the ground, and how often?
- **Who will drive the project?** You'll need someone from the community with a passion or vested interest in the project, who is willing to champion it and help you get others on board.
- **Who are the potential partners?** Start compiling a list of who you could approach to be involved in the project, from local businesses to people with disability who might want to be involved.
- **Is the project sustainable?** Think about the resources you will need to keep the project running. Is the project intended to be ongoing, or a one-off event? And what support will the community need from you in the short and long term?

4.3. Useful resources

- The NSW Services for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Taruma Survivors (STARTTS) 2012 guide to planning and evaluating community development work with refugee communiuties, the Community Development Evaluation Manual
- Capire Consulting Group's Inclusive Community Engagment Toolkit
- Cormac Russell's TedxExeter talk on YouTube, Sustainable community development: from what's wrong to what's strong
- Local Government NSW's information sheet, Engagement tools and techniques

5. Planning a project

Now that you have brainstormed an idea for an inclusion project that is based on the needs and strengths of the community, it's time to start formally planning. In this chapter, we step through the process of articulating the logic that underpins your project and developing a project plan. Make sure you adapt each step of the planning process to the appropriate scope and scale for your project.

5.1. What is the logic for your project?

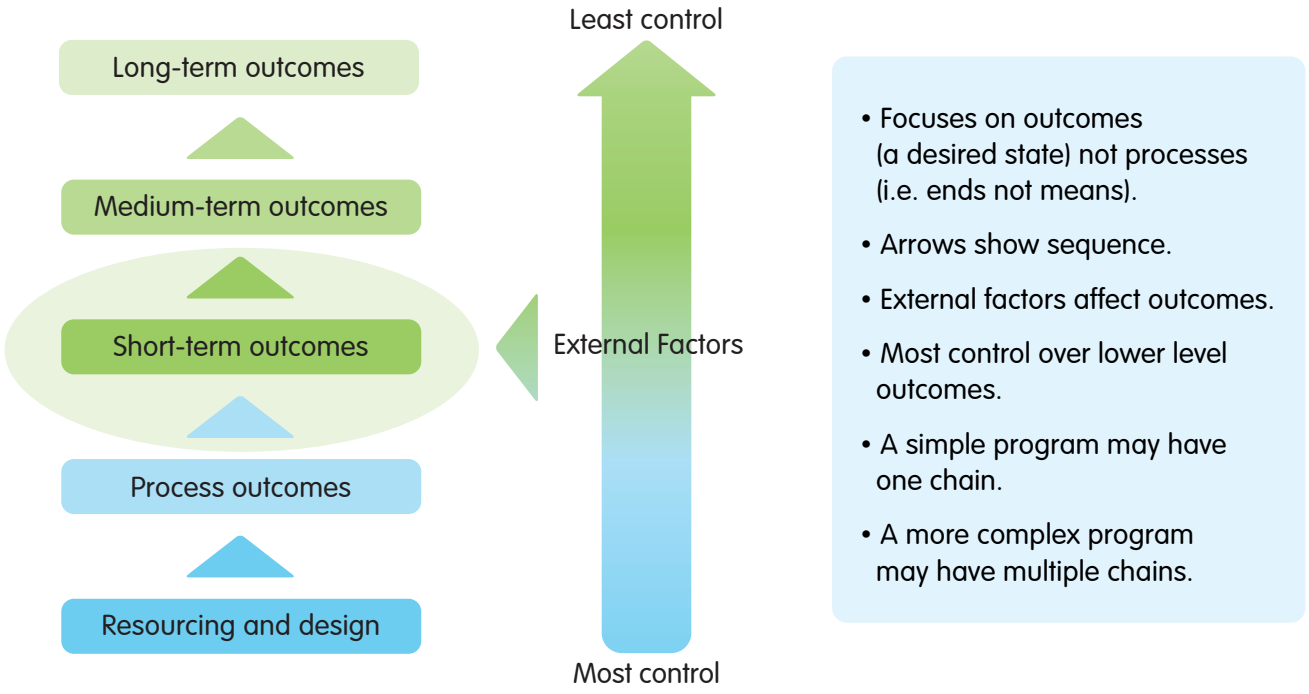
It's important to think about the logic and theories of change that underpin your project. These will help you clarify how you intend to achieve your goals, framing your project plan.

They will also form the basis of your plan for monitoring and evaluation. It's important to build these into your plan from the outset so you collect the data you need to track your progress, make improvements and assess your outcomes.

As your project evolves, your program logic and theory/ies of change should also evolve. You may also need to refine your data collection.

5.1.1. What is a logic model?

A **logic model** is a one-page diagram that shows the important components of an intervention and its expected outcomes. The model begins with the inputs over which you have a high degree of control, then progresses through the immediate and intermediate outcomes that logically, if achieved, should contribute to your intended ultimate outcomes. The model should also recognise the external factors that may affect intended outcomes, particularly higher-level outcomes.



Some people have questioned how useful logic models are for community development projects, which are generally iterative in nature, with outcomes that are not necessarily predictable from the start. However, if treated as living documents that are updated as goals change, logic models can be a useful way to make sure everyone is on the same page about what they're trying to achieve and ensure the right data is collected as you go. Logic models can also reflect non-linear processes through feedback loops.

To demonstrate what a logic might look like in practice, a template for a community capacity building project is outlined below.

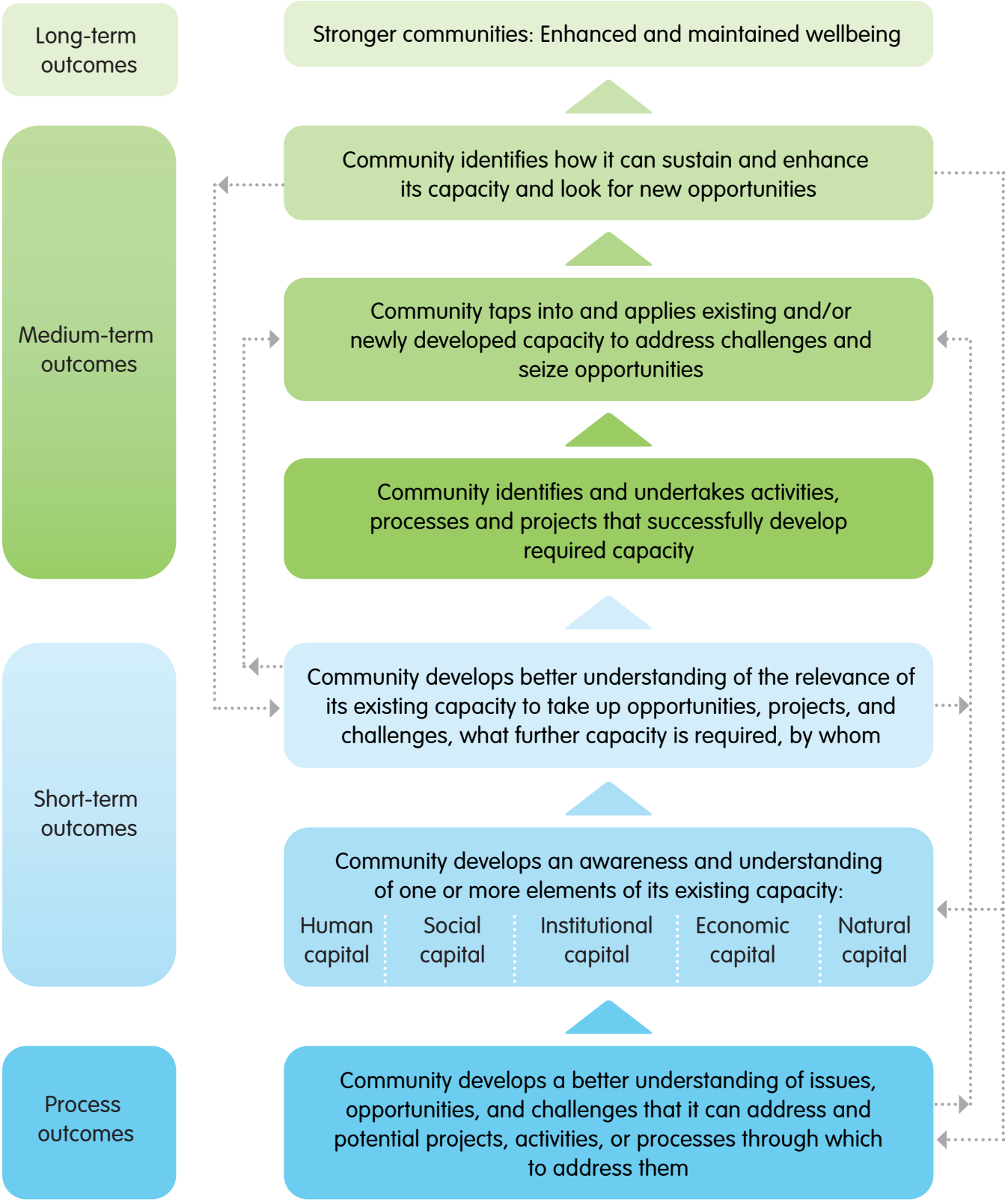
Community capacity building project template

There are many different approaches to community capacity building. This logic model shows, at a high level, how these types of projects are intended to work.

An awareness and understanding of the community in question's existing assets is key. The steps in this model may not always occur in order. This is shown, for example, in the jump that can be made from understanding the opportunities to tapping into and applying capacity. Additionally, capacity building tends to generate new capacities. This is shown in the feedback loops (dotted arrows).

The commitment levels of the community can affect the achievement of outcomes. Some communities, in particular those who choose to participate, will have high levels of engagement and involvement, while others may have moderate to no commitment from members.

External factors can also affect the engagement of community and the opportunities to apply capacity.



Source: Funnel and Rogers. (2011). Purposeful program logic. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

5.1.2. What is a theory of change?

A program logic is complemented by a theory or theories of change. Put simply, a theory of change describes why you expect an intended outcome to be achieved through your actions. It is good practice to draw on research literature to develop your theory of change.

A program has only one logic, but it can have many theories – covering the project overall, as well as the different levels of the program logic. For example, you might have a theory about how you will reach and engage your target audience, another about how you will persuade them to change their behaviour, and another about how you will tip individuals toward social change.

Some common theories of change for community projects are outlined below.

Theories of community-level change

You can draw on different types of **social capital** to create community-level change. Social capital is the 'links, shared values and understandings' that embody communities and enable people to cooperate in relationships that are based on reciprocity and trust.[14] There are different forms of social capital.

- Bonding social capital: this is about having strong, mutual and multi-functional connections in a community that create trust and connections. However, these connections fail to reach outside of the community, and may fail to extend to minority or vulnerable groups within the local area.
- Bridging social capital: this is about having a broad range of weaker ties that can create opportunities and resilience.[15]

A combination of both forms of social capital supports inclusive community development.[16]

The **'tipping point'** theory follows three rules.

- Firstly, there must be agents of change to deliver a message – suited for this are people who are good at persuasion or who like to help people.
- Secondly, the stickiness factor – the more powerful or memorable the message the more influential it will be.
- Thirdly, the surrounding environment must be able to support the message to spread.[17]

Empowerment theory focuses on self-determination by empowering people to control their lives and then influence others who affect their lives. It is based on the assumptions 'that:

- problems are best addressed by those experiencing them
- people have valuable knowledge about their own goals and needs
- people's strengths should be built on
- people can be supported to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills.'[18]

14 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Human Capital: How what you know shapes your life. 2007. https://www.oecd.org/insights/humancapitalhowwhatyouknowshapesyourlife.htm

15 Vinson T. and Rawsthorne M. *Lifting Our Gaze: The Community Appraisal and Strengthening Framework*. 2013.

16 Ibid.

17 Gladwell M. *The Tipping Point: how little things can make a big difference*. 2000.

18 Perkins D. and Zimmerman M. *Empowerment theory, research, and application*. American Journal Community Psychology. 1995. Oct. 23(5). 569–79.

Theories of behavioural change

Behavioural change theories attempt to explain the process people go through to change their behaviours.

Social learning theory recognises that observational learning can occur when watching the actions of another person and reinforcements are provided. Behaviour change resulting from interactions with peers may be more likely because peers are perceived to be more credible role models and enhance self-efficacy.[19]

Theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour assumes behaviour change is goal-directed and a person's behavioural intentions are influenced by:

- beliefs about the likely consequences of the behaviour
- attitudes (positive or negative) about the behaviour and its consequences
- perceived social norms around the behaviour
- perceived control over what is needed (opportunities, resources, skills) for the behaviour.[20]

Stages of change recognises the stage at which a person is at in terms of changing their behaviour.

- Precontemplation: not intending to take action, may not be aware of the consequences of their behaviour or made previous successful attempts to change.
- Contemplation: intending to change in the foreseeable future; may be weighing the pros and cons of change or procrastinating.
- Preparation: intending to take action soon; has a plan of action.
- Action: has made specific actions.
- Maintenance: working to prevent relapse; becoming more confident they can maintain the change over time.[21]

However, it is important to note that behaviour change may not be linear.

19 Bandura, A. Self-efficacy: *Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change*. 1977.
20 Ajzen, I. and Fishbein, M. *Theory of Reasoned Action*. 1980.
21 Prochaska et al. *In search of how people change*.1992.

5.2. How do you develop a project plan?

Developing a clear project plan from the start helps you stay on track. At the same time, you should not over specify or get wedded to the plan, as projects are likely to change and evolve naturally based on the needs and interests of the community. Remember to build time for this into your plan.

The sections below provide templates to guide your planning process. They cover the key elements of a typical project plan or proposal, but should be adapted to suit the scale of your project. For example, a project overview and activity log may be sufficient for a small-scale project, whereas stakeholder engagement and risk management strategies may be important for larger scale projects.

Remember to always do your research in the planning stage and check out what other supports exist locally. This can prevent duplicating what is already out there, and help you identify people or organisations you might want to involve.

5.2.1. Project overview

Provides a high-level summary of why, how, where and when the project will run, its main objectives, and who will benefit.

Element	Description
Name	What is the name of your project?
Project rationale	How does your project fit with other work in your organisation or community? Where did the idea come from? Why is it a good idea?
Brief description	What will the project look like or involve, at a high level?
Key objective(s)	What are the key objectives of the project? What are you hoping to achieve?
Timeframe	When will the project start and finish?
Location(s)	Where will the project run?
Stakeholders	Who will benefit from the project, and how? Note that different stakeholders can benefit in different ways.

5.2.2. Action plan

Here you should outline the specific project activities, when and where they will take place, and who is responsible.

No.	Activity description	Location	Timeframe	Responsibility
1	What will you do?	Where will you do it?	When will you do it? Is it a regular or one-off action?	Who is responsible for making sure it happens?
2				
3				

5.2.3. Stakeholder engagement

You might also want to outline the stakeholders, including partners, who you want to involve in the project. Be clear and have agreement on their roles and responsibilities, and the expected timeframes. You might think about establishing Memorandums of Understanding with partners to ensure accountability.

No.	Name	Role	Timeframe	Status
1	What is their name?	What will their role be? What will they be responsible for?	When will they be involved in the project?	Is the partnership secured or are you still trying to get them on board?
2				
3				

5.2.4. Funding and resources

Community development is often done on a minimal to no budget. This can support sustainability, as it means communities do not become reliant on ongoing funding or donations. However, some initial funding or in-kind support can go a long way when trying to get a project off the ground.

Be creative, draw on your connections, and take a strengths-based approach to source funding or in-kind supports. For example:

- **local businesses** can support or sponsor events or provide financial support, or provide in-kind resources such as meeting spaces and catering
- **councils** can provide meeting spaces, help you promote your work, and point you towards relevant grants
- **community organisations** with similar goals may want to pool their resources with you to maximise their impact

- **local community members** can offer specific knowledge, skills or time (though you should not expect them to provide this and should consider paid roles).

The NSW Parliamentary Research Service's Funding Opportunities for Community Groups provides links to possible government and non-government grant funding opportunities for community groups, including grants targeting disability projects.

Before approaching someone for funding, think about how your work benefits them. Having a win-win lens may help persuade them to get on board (see Chapter 8 for more tips on approaching different organisations).

You can use the template below to keep track of the funding or in-kind supports you're aiming for.

No.	Source	Description	Value	Status
1	Who is providing the support?	What are they providing? What will it be used for?	Does it have a dollar value?	Is it secured?
2				
3				

5.2.5. Risk management

Think carefully about the possible risks involved in successfully delivering the project and how you can mitigate these. Some common risks involved in inclusion projects include:

- divergent stakeholder views
- moving timelines
- lack of community interest and ongoing engagement
- limited resources.

In some projects, a dedicated person is responsible for overseeing risk management.

No.	Description	Likelihood	Consequence	Mitigation
1	What are the risks involved?	How likely is it to occur? • Very unlikely • Unlikely • Possible • Likely • Very likely	How significant will the impact of the risk occurring be? • Insignificant • Minor • Moderate • Major • Critical	What will you do to: • reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring • mitigate the consequences if the risk occurs
2				
3				

5.2.6. Sustainability

In any project plan, you should articulate how you intend to build in sustainability.

For projects with a clear end (for example, a project to implement close captioning in a local cinema, or an annual event), explain how and why the completed project will have a sustainable, ongoing impact on inclusion in the community.

For long-term and ongoing projects (for example, social groups, or projects seeking to achieve community-wide change), explain how you will enable the community to lead and fund it without your involvement, as well as how and why the project will have an ongoing impact on inclusion in the community.

5.2.7. Monitoring and evaluation

Develop your plan for monitoring and evaluating your work from the start. You'll need to think about what data you plan to collect and how. This will support you to track progress, assess outcomes and whether you've achieved what you set out to achieve, and reflect on how to improve.

See Chapter 9 for guidance on monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on projects for continuous improvement.

6. Managing a project

Once you have a clear plan of what you're going to do and why, and have started delivering the project, you can use this chapter to help you keep on track and build in sustainability along the way.

6.1. How do you keep your project on track?

While every project is different, there are some key ways to keep any project on track, identified in workshops with ALNSW Linkers.

Establish a project committee. Establishing a project committee or working group can help bring diverse perspectives and resources together and share the workload. Remember that project members may drop in and out, based on their capacity to contribute, so having a few people involved can also help ensure sustainability. While smaller working groups can help to keep the project on track, you should continue to get input from everyone involved on the project direction. It's always important to include people with lived experience in decision-making – think of appropriate roles that build on their strengths and work to build their capacity to lead the project without your support.

Have protocols. Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, making sure to be transparent and realistic about their (and your) capacity and limitations. Set some ground rules about how the committee will work together, such as respect and confidentiality. Always follow up on what you said you would do. You might want to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure accountability. At meetings, it can help to take minutes or notes to update everyone involved on any decisions that were made. This will maintain a sense of ownership. Make sure to create a safe atmosphere where everyone involved feels they can be honest and transparent about their needs or any issues that arise.

Communicate regularly. Regularly checking in with project stakeholders is key to keeping a project on track. You might want to establish a communications strategy that outlines for each stakeholder group when you will touch base (for example, at monthly meetings), and how you will communicate (for example, in person, over the phone, or online). Informal conversations are equally as important as formal meetings.

Have a clear goal. Make sure that all stakeholders have agreed on a clear and common goal. When things go astray, use this to re-focus your efforts.

Be flexible. Remember that things won't always go to plan and your project will need to evolve to continue to meet community needs. Build in extra time to be flexible and be creative in coming up with alternative options when things go awry.

Reflect. Continuously reflect on and discuss the positive and negative elements contributing to where you're at. Who has been involved? What has been achieved? What's worked well (or not)? Are needs still being met? Use this knowledge to inform your next steps. And don't forget to celebrate your successes! (See Chapter 9 for more guidance).

6.2. How do you ensure sustainability?

While it can help to take a proactive leadership role in the beginning to build momentum, it is important that community owns the project and, if the project is intended to be ongoing, they can sustain it beyond your funding.

To build in project sustainability, you should:

- communicate your belief in the capacity of the community
- clearly and regularly communicate your role and your intended 'exit strategy'
- help to build the skills and confidence of a few participants to take over your role and drive the project; be clear about what is involved in your role, so they know what is involved before committing and you avoid making their passion a chore
- have supports in place to reduce the burden of the role, for example:
    - ensure there is more than one project driver
    - build relationships with local organisations willing to provide ongoing supports or resources.

7. Working with diverse communities

An inclusive approach to community development is important so that you can gauge the needs and support the participation of all people in the community. At the same time, you may also run projects with specific population groups.

This chapter outlines the barriers to inclusion that different communities can face, top tips for engaging and working with each community, and successful project case studies. The tips and case studies draw on the learnings and project documentation of ALNSW providers.

7.1. What are the main considerations when working with diverse communities?

It's important to remember that people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), from regional and remote locations, who are young, who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or identify as LGBTQIA+, can face multiple disadvantages or additional barriers to inclusion and participation. Generally, to work effectively with people with disability from diverse communities you should:

- take the time to build trust and relationships
- connect with leaders and champions
- understand their specific needs, but also recognise differences within communities
- tailor communication channels and engagement methods
- remember that not all people and communities will identify with the same experiences or have the same needs and interests.

7.2. Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Of the NSW population, 16.4 per cent of people with disability are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD).[22] The most common countries of birth are China (3%), England (3%), India (1.9%), New Zealand (1.6%), and the Philippines (1.2%). Languages most frequently spoken at home are Mandarin (3.2%), Arabic (2.7%), Cantonese (1.9%), Vietnamese (1.4%), and Greek (1.1%). [23]

CALD communities have diverse values, knowledge and practices. This can include different understandings of disability. CALD communities can also face particular barriers to navigating and accessing support services. These include attitudinal barriers and lack of cultural sensitivities, difficulties communicating and navigating available services, limited access to information in community languages, and inadequate capacity and knowledge within mainstream services to support people from CALD backgrounds.

7.2.1. Top tips

Understand cultural differences. Having a deep understanding of, and respect for different cultural values, practices and protocols is important for building trusting relationships with CALD communities. To understand cultural differences, you might consider cultural awareness training. This can help you build the knowledge and skills you need to connect with CALD communities. It can also help ensure you have culturally appropriate organisational policies, procedures and information in place. While training is important for understanding differences, so is on-the-ground experience and connecting with community members on a personal level.

Take a culturally appropriate approach. This includes being sensitive to the effects of violence, torture or trauma that communities may have experienced; and recognising the different perspectives on disability and inclusion, without making assumptions or judgements.

Connect with community leaders. Identify and engage with community leaders who are well connected and respected. This will help you to better understand their cultural practices and protocols and open doors to connect with and gain the trust of the wider cultural community.

Take time to build relationships. It can take time to build relationships and trust. But it's important to be present, patient and build this rapport so that you can understand the community's needs and work with them from where they're at. Often this can mean having ongoing conversations or providing initial information about what disability and mental health mean and the supports and services available, before discussing longer-term projects for inclusion.

To connect with the community, think about:

- attending or volunteering at community events
- attending places where the community gathers, such as the local church or sporting club
- partnering with multicultural organisations and agencies
- targeting your social media and advertising to CALD populations.

22 Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.* 2015. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0

23 Ibid.

Use community languages. Language and communication barriers can be a major barrier to community participation. Make sure that the way you communicate is culturally appropriate and uses inclusive language.

For written materials, consider using a translation service to translate the text into community language/s, or use plain English and Easy Read. Easy Read uses images to support text, a large font size and plenty of white space to increase readability for people with disability, low literacy levels or where English is a second language.

Understand how concepts translate. Remember that words such as 'disability' have different meanings in different languages and that some concepts are difficult to translate. Having workers who speak the same language can help accurately translate and interpret. Or you can ask a community member to interpret for you, remembering to reimburse them for their contribution if appropriate.

Use culturally appropriate communication channels. Often, face-to-face communication is the most effective communication channel and should accompany written materials. This is because written materials can lose or change their meaning in translation. Make sure to host face-to-face conversations in safe, accessible and familiar environments.

You can also reach out to CALD communities by distributing materials at local community centres, GPs, sporting and social clubs, or letterbox drops, and by using community radio or social media pages.

Be consistent. To maintain trusting relationships, it's important to be consistent in your presence, approach and message. Consistently explain what you're trying to achieve and how you'd like to work together, have a consistent worker if possible, and always follow through on what you say you will do.

7.2.2. Case studies

Iraqi Cultural Festival: Accessible Arts Workshop

Settlement Services International

What is the project?

The Iraqi Cultural Festival is an annual event brought together by artists, cultural leaders and volunteers from diverse sections of the Iraqi community in Sydney. The festival, held over several months in Fairfield and Liverpool, features inclusive music and arts performances, workshops and exhibitions.

Driven and owned by the Iraqi community, the project is supported by a number of larger organisations. In 2017, the Iraqi Australian University Graduate Forum partnered with Settlement Services International's (SSI) Ability Links program and CORE Multicultural Communities to develop, run and promote an Accessible Arts Workshop at the Fairfield City Museum. The workshop included:

- a musical performance by a local Iraqi refugee
- drawing, flower making and etching workshops for people with disability
- a panel to discuss the individual and community benefits of inclusion
- catering from Onsam Catering, a small business supported by SSI's IgniteAbility who work with people with disability in starting up their own businesses.

What is the aim?

The project idea came from a Linker who recognised that some people with disability in the

Iraqi community faced barriers to inclusion due to a lack of understanding of disability. The Linkers drew on their existing connection with one of the organisers of the Iraqi Cultural Festival to build an accessible event into the Festival plan to celebrate diversity within the community and the talents of local artists with disability.

How is community involved?

The Linker connected community artists with disability to the Iraqi community members who were already running the Festival, to help plan and run the Accessible Arts Workshop. The artists involved designed the workshop to showcase their talents and share their skills with community and helped to plan and prepare for the day, with the support of SSI.

How are partners involved?

SSI has strong links with the Iraqi community in Fairfield and Liverpool. SSI also runs an Arts and Culture program across the state to deliver accessible events, projects and workshops in partnership with arts organisations, artists and cultural workers. In 2017, the organisers of the Iraqi Cultural Festival approached SSI to be part of the Festival. It was through this connection that SSI's Ability Links program became involved.

The Festival organisers also collaborate with Fairfield City Council, which provides support and venues for the events.

How is the project promoted?

The Accessible Arts Workshop was primarily promoted through social media and word-of-mouth. The Festival organisers also used their existing media and social media channels to support promotion. After the event, SBS Radio interviewed the SSI Linker to reflect on the day.

What are the main challenges?

- Promotion—to increase reach, in the future SSI intends to start social media promotions earlier.
- Risk management—following a cancellation from a guest speaker, the Workshop organisers had to organise a last-minute panel discussion. While the panel was very well received by attendees, the organisers intend to think through a 'Plan B' agenda in future.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Community members who attended the Workshop completed a feedback form, which the Workshop organisers reviewed to reflect on what went well and learnings for future events.

The organisers also received positive feedback from Fairfield City Council staff, who were happy with the event.

Why is the project sustainable?

The impact of the Accessible Arts Workshop is sustainable because of:

- strong community engagement—the different parties involved expressed that they were keen to be involved in future events and to carry the message of inclusion into their everyday lives
- the success of the panel discussion—attendees found the panel discussion on inclusion to be a key feature of the event, providing new ideas and information that enabled them to start to think differently about disability.

Uyghur Women's Group

Settlement Services International

What is the project?

The Uyghur Women's Group is a social network for Uyghur women living in Liverpool and Fairfield who are at risk of mental health issues due to social isolation. The group organises social outings and gatherings in their local community to share their experiences, knowledge and talents.

The first activity was a one-day group outing to a Sydney museum, including a picnic at the Botanic Gardens. This activity established social connections and introduced participants to the history of Sydney. Following this, the group created a longer-term plan to build connections with other ethnic community women's groups, Aboriginal communities, and mainstream communities, which Settlement Services International (SSI) is helping to coordinate. For example, the group co-hosted a community lunch with the local Afghan Women's Group and discussed culture and traditions, discovering many similarities and connections.

What is the aim?

- increase social wellbeing
- increase awareness and reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress
- increase confidence and knowledge of disability
- build connections within and across the Uyghur and other ethnic women's communities
- support integration into the wider community.

How is community involved?

In February 2017, a small group of young community members attended a workshop hosted by the Spanish Latin American Social Association (SLASA) to build skills in facilitating community consultations. Three months later, SSI and a few key community members re-ignited this work by consulting with the Uyghur community at a local language school. Of the 25 attendees, most were women.

At the consultation, community members explained that they felt isolated and disconnected from the mainstream community and other ethnic communities, identifying barriers to engaging and communicating. They also described experiencing depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress due to persecution in their home countries. As a result, the SSI Linker organised a social group based on the interests of the women who attended.

The Linker developed a strong, collaborative relationship with the Uyghur community. They identified community leaders and members to join and promote the group and help organise activities. Members are actively involved in defining the purpose and direction for the group.

How are partners involved?

The project is being delivered in partnership with the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). The partnership built on STARTTS's earlier involvement in SLASA's capacity building workshops.

STARTTS will support the community in the long term by identifying and providing training to a young and passionate female community leader to become the group facilitator; and by offering general support such as providing transport or purchasing tickets for outings. STARTTS meets with SSI and the community leader each month to plan and manage the project activities.

How is the project promoted?

SSI collected the contact details of interested participants at the initial consultation. Community leaders then promoted the group by sending regular text messages inviting participants and their family and friends to join.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges along the way have been:

- engaging group members—some of the women had limited understanding of what disability is, the services and organisations available to support them and how to navigate the Australian welfare system. Mental health issues and past experiences of trauma can also be barriers to joining the group. It has been important that Linkers take time to establish rapport, provide information that is relevant to the women and build trusting relationships.
- meeting group expectations—some women have asked to meet more regularly. The Linker is working with the women to organise a way for this to happen casually, in a public space without support.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

To measure the success of the project, SSI uses:

- attendance numbers—to gauge ongoing interest in the group
- a feedback form—to assess the effectiveness of and satisfaction with the activities
- ongoing conversations with community leaders and members—to determine the direction of the group.

Why is the project sustainable?

The project has been made sustainable by:

- building the capacity and skills of key group members
- identifying and training one community leader to become the paid facilitator
- building a confident support network with knowledge of disability and mental health awareness, reducing reliance on services
- establishing a non-threatening activity to build trust, bring people together and drive change within the community
- connecting with services—forming networks and partnerships for additional support and to access information.

7.2.3. Useful resources

- Settlement Services International's interactive online database to analyse the extent and prevalence of disability among CALD communities in NSW, FutureAbility DataCube
- Multicultural NSW's interactive online database, detailing key social and economic characteristics of communities living across NSW, the Multicultural NSW Community Profile

7.3. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Of the NSW population, 7.6% of people with disability identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.[24] Across the state, there are around 20 different Aboriginal languages, and many diverse communities and cultural practices.

It's important to remember that past government practices, including the forcible removal of children, have an ongoing impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities. This includes a gap between the life expectancy, educational attainment, health, and employment outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. A history of pilot projects and short-term initiatives has also contributed to a lack of trust in institutions and ongoing intersectional disadvantages. Having internet access and mobile phone credit can also be barriers to participation.

There has been international recognition of the right to self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In NSW, the OCHRE Plan is the government's response to improving education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to increasing service delivery and accountability to achieve these goals. Key aims of the Plan are to empower local Aboriginal communities by giving them a voice, creating localised Opportunity Hubs to provide Aboriginal students with clear employment pathways, and facilitating Aboriginal community members to teach Aboriginal languages and culture in schools.

7.3.1. Top tips

Understand culture and history. It's important to develop a deep understanding of, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture in order to build trusting relationships. This includes understanding the history of government policies and approaches to service delivery and their impact on community; understanding the fundamental concepts of family, kinship, community, connections to land and spirituality; and recognition of the many unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and language groups across NSW.

Follow cultural protocols. It's also important to understand and follow cultural protocols to gain and maintain trust. These will depend on the individual community and can include processes and preferences relating to communication and consent. For face-to-face engagements, always use a safe, accessible and culturally appropriate space. And recognise the importance of extended families in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in decision-making.

Take time. Gaining trust and respect is vital. Take time to build and maintain relationships, be open and honest, listen to stories, be present and show a genuine commitment, understanding and empathy, for example by attending and offering to support NAIDOC, reconciliation and community events.

Remember that it's also important to give people time to reflect, process and discuss anything you've suggested with their family and friends before responding. It can also help to have informal conversations ('yarns') to build rapport and allow people to open up and tell their story, before suggesting ways of working together. Always work at their pace and avoid strict timeframes.

24 https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/new-knowledge/KEY-DATA-ABORIGINAL-PEOPLE-2018.pdf

Connect with Elders. Connecting with local Elders, or other well-connected and respected community leaders will help you to better understand the needs of and be introduced to the community. It will also demonstrate a greater sense of legitimacy, that will help you to gain trust, particularly if you are not Indigenous. Local councils can be a good place to start if you're not sure how to connect with Elders.

Being accountable. Given a history of one-off and pilot programs in many communities, following through on what you promise is vital for maintaining trust. Always be honest and consistent about what you can and can't deliver and 'put your money where your mouth is'.

Understand disability. In many traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, there is no exact translation for the word 'disability'. Many people and families, particularly older generations, do not recognise disability and are not diagnosed, though this is slowly changing among younger generations. Historically, disability supports have often come from within the family, though this is also changing. To recognise the varied understandings of and approaches to disability, it can help to focus on strengths and shared interests rather than diagnostic labels.

Recognise different preferences. Remember that everyone will have different experiences, support needs and preferences about who they want to work with. While some people (often older generations) may specifically want to work with other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, others may not.

7.3.2. Case studies

Autism Support Group for Carers

Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

What is the project?

The Kinchela Autism Support Group for Carers was established to provide support, guidance and NDIS-related information to Aboriginal carers of autistic people in Sydney.

An Aboriginal Linker at Kinchela identified a need for the group after talking to his aunt, a carer for her autistic daughter, and recognising that some Aboriginal families have limited awareness of autism. He also saw demand for autism-specific information in the new NDIS context, after attending an autism awareness workshop which attracted over 60 participants.

A group of around 8–12 carers now meets once a month at Kinchela's head office in Redfern or at local cafés to share experiences, challenges and strategies. The Linker, who is blind, helps to organise and facilitate the meetings and arranges for local services or NDIS representatives to attend and answer questions.

What is the aim?

The aim of the project is to provide autism-related information and education to carers, and to support them to identify the challenges they face and strategies or solutions to manage these.

How is community involved?

Kinchela Boys Home identified carers to be involved through their existing connections and a recruitment drive among service providers in Sydney.

The group is now community-driven, with members deciding what they'd like to discuss at each meeting through group discussions with the Linker.

How are partners involved?

The Linker identifies local services and NDIS representatives to attend the group meetings, drawing on personal contacts and online research. Kinchela Boys Home also contacts local businesses, which often donate food or meeting spaces to the group, such as a local butcher that donates meat for BBQs and a local café that offers food and a space to host meetings.

How is the project promoted?

Kinchela Boys Home promotes the group through word-of-mouth, Koori radio and public flyers.

What are the main challenges?

- Travel—Kinchela Boys Home operates across several Local Government Areas but has its head office in Redfern. It can be hard for some participants to travel to Redfern. The Linker is looking into starting similar groups based in different LGAs to increase access.
- Limited resources—the group operates with limited resources. The Linker is persistent in seeking alternative funding and asking for support from local businesses.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

The Linker and group members monitor the project through open, informal conversations. Members are comfortable raising concerns with one another during meetings and discussing solutions together. Members also complete a short, six-question feedback form every two months. From this, the Linker can gauge satisfaction and what members would like to see more or less of in future meetings.

At a more strategic level, the Linkers meet each fortnight to provide project updates, discuss issues, reflect on learnings and share ideas and potential avenues for support.

Why is the project sustainable?

The aim of the project is for group members to continue facilitating meetings without the ongoing support of the Linker. To do this, the Linker does not take a directive approach but rather allows the group to drive the meeting agenda, and is slowly building the skills of a couple of members to take on the facilitator role. It has been important to:

- take time to build trusting relationships with group members
- actively listen to members' needs and interests
- be persistent in looking for local community support
- be flexible and open minded, recognising that there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

Girrwaawa

Mid Coast Communities and North West Alliance

What is the project?

'Girrwaawa' is the Gumbaynggirr word for a mob gathering together. The Girrwaawa project is run in the Nambucca Shire NSW for local Aboriginal community members to meet to cook, eat and create art and music. It is led by respected Aboriginal community member, Michael Jarrett.

Michael Jarrett works with Mid Coast Communities to build the capacity of his community to become stronger, healthier, more confident and connected across generations. In 2017, he led a 'Healthy Mob Retreat' for 25 family members to learn about nutrition, psychology and health. Following this, and an unexpected bereavement, a Linker continued to work with Michael to assist family members to heal, strengthen and explore the next steps after

the retreat. This led to the birth of the Girrwaawa project.

To date, Girrwaawa has run three events. Participants made healthy food and participated in a drumming workshop at each event. The first was held at the Nambucca Youth Centre, where participants made sushi. The second was held at Muurrbay Culture and Language Co-operative, where participants made Indian curries and created origami. At the third event, participants commemorated the death of a young man and other young people who had recently passed away in the community. They also made pizzas, ate and sang together, and created a community art piece.

What is the aim?

The aim of the project is to build the confidence of community members; provide an opportunity for Elders to connect in a meaningful way with younger generations; and create a safe space for people who have experienced trauma, mental illness or disability to participate. The project also builds connections between community members to support each other outside of the events.

How is community involved?

Michael drew on his personal connections with the local Aboriginal community to get people involved in the project. Numbers grew from 18 people at the first event to 60 at the third event, all connected to Michael and his family.

Community members are heavily involved in designing and leading the project. They meet informally with Linkers before each event, often by the local river, to share their stories and brainstorm ideas and plan the activities for each event.

How are partners involved?

Muurrbay Culture and Language Co-operative provides a safe and culturally appropriate space for the events. Mid Coast Communities also engages a local person to lead a drumming circle to help engage the young men of the community.

Other local organisations, including Linkers and local youth workers, are also invited to attend the events. Local businesses also attended and engaged with community members for related projects, such as Regional Development Australia's employment project.

How is the project promoted?

Michael and his family have been key to the successful promotion of Girrwaawa, personally texting, calling, emailing and talking to local community members about the project. The events are also promoted via Facebook.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges have been:

- predicting attendance numbers—this can make it difficult to ensure the right amount of food, equipment and resources are set up.
- risk management—keeping the space, including food preparation areas, clean and ensuring safety for children has been a concern. To manage this, Linkers try to ensure the activities are engaging for all generations and encourage adult-child interaction.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

After each event the Linkers always debrief with key community members to reflect on what went well, what they would like to change and improve, and brainstorm ideas for the future.

Why is the project sustainable?

Michael is key to the sustainability of the project, engaging and encouraging local community members to be involved. Enabling community members to design and lead the activities also promotes sustainable inclusion.

7.3.3. Useful resources

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The NSW Government's Aboriginal Affairs Strategy, the OCHRE Plan
- The NSW Department of Family and Community Services's 2017 Guide to organising gatherings for Aboriginal people and communities

7.4. Working in regional, rural and remote communities

Around 35% of the NSW population reside outside of Greater Sydney.[25] People living in these communities often face additional barriers to inclusion due to limited service availability and a lack of access to transport. Where services are available in regional, rural and remote areas, recruitment and retention rates of appropriately qualified staff are also lower. A history of pilot projects and fly-in fly-out outreach services also limits the supports and services available and community's trust in these.

Exclusion may also be heightened by having more limited access to the internet, and limited employment opportunities due to geographic isolation.[26]

The number of people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is also higher outside of Greater Sydney than the NSW average (5.5% compared with 1.5%).[27]

7.4.1. Top tips

Build trust. It can take time to gain the trust of the community, particularly if you're not from the same area. To show you're committed to supporting the community and to build trust:

- build personal relationships
- be present – at local events, community and council meetings, and day-to-day
- be consistent – follow through on what you promise, be there for support when needed
- maintain confidentiality of any personal information shared
- if things go wrong, own your mistakes.

Know your community. Walk and talk to everyone to get to know the local history, knowledge, organisations and services, and the assets and strengths of the community. Connect with community leaders and gatekeepers – attending interagency and council meetings can help with this. Look for people and organisations working towards similar goals to you and see how you can get the most of your resources by pooling together.

Remember distance. When planning an activity, don't forget to think about the time, distance and transport options available. Think about using email, phone or video-conferencing technology to communicate to overcome distance barriers but remember that some people might have poor or no internet connection.

Have a can-do attitude. In communities with limited supports and services available, persistence in trying new and creative avenues is important. If it's hard to get people on board, provide the information and support they need rather than ending ties or burning bridges.

25 Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Data by region*. 2016. http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?databyregion
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.

7.4.2. Case studies

Boys Group

Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

What is the project?

The Winanga-Li boys group is designed for young Indigenous boys in Gunnedah, NSW. It involves regular excursions to a country property to socialise and do activities such as fishing or cooking. Community workers from Winganga-Li meet the boys at their school and take them to the property.

What is the aim?

The excursions do not focus on disability but rather on the individual's interests and strengths, with an aim to help the boys feel more comfortable and confident.

How is community involved?

The boys are heavily involved in how the program is designed and run. Together, they think about the activities they'd like to do, based on their interests and abilities, and then work to plan and lead them.

How are partners involved?

Winanga-Li has a long-standing relationship with a local school that helps to identify boys who would be interested in attending the excursions, and assists in communicating any details about the timing and location of them.

Winanga-Li also has a strong relationship with a local community member who lets the group use their property for the excursions.

How is the project promoted?

The program is primarily promoted through the group's local school.

What are the main challenges?

Overall, the program has been very successful. However, the timing of activities can be a challenge as sometimes group members decide on the day that they can't/ don't want to attend.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

The workers and boys involved evaluate the group informally, by having conversations to reflect any ongoing improvements that may be required and to ensure everyone involved enjoys themselves.

Why is the project sustainable?

The project is made sustainable by:

- trusting and enabling the boys to own and run the group activities
- having a strong relationship with the local school, and with the property owner where the excursions take place
- having dedicated, non-judgemental and flexible workers to support the group.

7.5. Working with young people

While, there is not a single agreed definition of young people, the United Nations defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Youth can be a stressful and challenging period for many and may give rise to mental health concerns. These issues may also intersect with drug and alcohol consumption. Young people's health, safety and sense of inclusion can also be affected by bullying (online through social media platforms and/or face-to-face), racial harassment, indecent and sexual assault, issues surrounding sexting and consent, and physical safety in public places and on public transport (particularly for women and girls).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the rights of all children and young people up to 18 years of age. The Convention has four key guiding principles, which are ratified in Australian policies.

1. Non-discrimination
2. Respect for the best interests of the child as the primary concern in decision-making
3. The right to life, survival and healthy development
4. Respect for the views of the child in decision-making.

7.5.1. Top tips

Have a draw card. It can help to have a fun or engaging incentive for young people to participate, such as food or activities.

Stay on trend. Understand what is 'in' with young people, and what issues are concerning them. Capture their interests by knowing what's relevant, trendy or interesting to them.

Use technology appropriately. Social media and the internet can be an effective way to reach out and engage with young people. It is a major part of their lives and can offer useful tools for managing mental health or other issues. At the same time, screens can be addictive, distracting or isolating in face-to-face activities.

Be authentic. Don't pretend to use their slang or speak in a way that you wouldn't normally. Find common interests to connect in a genuine way. Don't assume all young people will have the same interests – try to target sessions to meet their needs.

Build capacity and empower. Understand and value the perspectives, ideas and contributions of young people. Don't be directive – negotiate and meet them in the middle. Support and guide them to develop and meet their goals, and find opportunities to build their skills and confidence. Support their right to have choice and control of their decisions that affect them and to take risks to achieve their goals.[28]

Create a safe space. Create an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality, giving young people the space to voice their opinions, feelings, interests and experiences. Be respectful, empathetic and responsive. Be clear about roles, responsibility and boundaries within the project.

Understand support needs. Get to know the young person's background or family situation to better understand their needs. For example, some young people may need support getting to and from an activity. Where appropriate, try to support the family as well as the young person.

Get consent. It's important to get the assent of young people to participate (and consent of their parent or guardian, depending on their age).

28 NSW Department of Family and Community Services: Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Addendum to the Standards in Action Manual: Guide for Services working with children and young people with disability and their families. 2014. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591398

7.5.2. Case studies

Cook, Eat, Yarn

Mid Coast Communities and North West Alliance

What is the project?

The Cook, Eat, Yarn Project is a Mid Coast Communities initiative to bring isolated young people aged 12–25 together once a month to cook dinner, make friends and be part of an inclusive 'family' environment. The project aims to support members to build connections and confidence and develop their communication and general life skills.

The idea originated from a Linker with an Italian background, who recognised the power that large family dinners could have in connecting and supporting people. After successfully trialling a one-night 'learn to cook' event, the Cook, Eat, Yarn project grew. It also took on a cultural focus, with young people planning different meals based on their cultural backgrounds or cultures they're interested in learning more about.

Linkers support the group by buying groceries, organising the room setup, facilitating topical group discussions, and organising cultural guests to help teach the cooking and lead the discussion.

What is the aim?

The project aims to support members to build connections and confidence and develop their communication and general life skills.

How is community involved?

Through their existing contacts, Mid Coast Communities identified young people who might want to get involved.

After the trial session, participants were asked what they liked about the event, if they would attend again, and what they would like to see on the cooking agenda. This gave the members ownership of the direction of the group. Often, group members will choose to showcase a dish from their cultural background and will help to lead the session.

How is the project promoted?

Group coordinators and members promote the sessions through Facebook, tagging group members in the posts, and via email.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenge to date has been predicting attendance, as young people would often not RSVP. Over time it has become clear that 12–15 people usually attend the sessions, so Linkers cater for this number and group members are free to take home any leftovers.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Group coordinators conducted an initial evaluation of the project by surveying group members. Since then, the project has been evaluated by collecting regular feedback either verbally or through a suggestions box.

Nexus Con

Mid Coast Communities and North West Alliance)

What is the project?

Nexus Con is an annual, one-day pop-culture convention which involves different activities, gaming, entertainment, panels, competitions and special guests, held at the Coffs Harbour Showground. Nexus Con has been particularly popular among autistic young people.

What is the aim?

The project aims to create a place where everyone belongs—a safe and inclusive space to socialise and make new friends. It is intended to be affordable, fun and inclusive, with both indoor and outdoor activities.

The project also builds the skills and confidence of the young people involved in organising the event, which has led to some finding paid employment.

How is community involved?

The project idea came from Nexus HQ, a committee of young people from Coffs Harbour who meet regularly to organise activities for young people in the region. The committee got the project up and running, driving the event management each year. They have also established clear roles and responsibilities, drawing on the advice and support of Mid Coast Communities and other local organisations (known as the 'High Council') for event insurance, governance, risk management and other concerns.

Originally conceived as a small event, Nexus Con has grown in size and scale, from an anticipated 400 participants in 2015 to 1,500 in 2017, with an increasing number of interstate visitors. The wider community of young people support the event by purchasing tickets and attending; running activities such as a guest panel, Cosplay competition, workshop, video game competition, demonstration or performance or an outdoor event; or becoming Nexus Con volunteers.

How are partners involved?

Mid Coast Communities supports and builds the capacity of the committee to manage the logistics of the event. They have also involved other organisations, including Groundworks Youth Centre, headspace Coffs Harbour, Coffs Coast Autism, as well as local and online businesses. Organisations have attended and sponsored the event, paid for exhibition spaces, supported event management and helped with marketing and promotion. As well as supporting inclusion, sponsors benefit from selling their products at the event and

building relationships with the local community.

How is the project promoted?

Nexus Con is promoted online, through a dedicated Facebook page, the Mid Coast Communities (and Northwest Alliance) websites and local news and media websites. It is also promoted through word-of-mouth.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges have involved managing:

- turnover—while successfully building the capacity of committee members, it has been difficult to continue to find equally enthusiastic young leaders to replace them when they leave. Ongoing changeover in the committee has also required lots of training and support from Linkers.
- sponsors—it has been important to manage the expectations of sponsors.
- risks—the High Council develops an extensive risk management strategy each year to ensure the event is positive and safe for everyone.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

At each event, a team of staff armed with electronic tablets tries to approach all participants to complete a survey before they leave. The committee and High Council debrief after the event and use the survey data to discuss what worked well and what could be improved. They also draw on attendance numbers and social media analytics to monitor engagement.

Why is the project sustainable?

The event continues to thrive each year because it:

- is youth-led and needs-based, providing an opportunity for young people to share their unique interests
- creates a fun, safe and welcoming environment
- is supported by a range of supportive and ongoing sponsors and organisations.

Find out more: on the Nexus Con Facebook page or by watching the 2017 video.

7.5.3. Useful resources

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Office of the Chldren's Guardian's website and online resources
- Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People's website and online resources
- beyondblue's information resources, videos and Practice Guidelines for working with young people
- Youth Action's (the peak body for young people and youth services in NSW) website and online resources.

7.6. Working with LGBTQIA+ communities

LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive term for anyone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, intersex, asexual or other sexuality and genders. NSW is home to Australia's largest LGBTQIA+ community (estimated at 500,000).[29]

Historically, the LGBTQIA+ community has faced severe discrimination and social isolation, particularly in regional and remote areas. Since 2013, under the Commonwealth Government Sex Discrimination Act 1984, it has been illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

However, stigma remains in some communities and people identifying as LGBTQIA+ can face verbal and physical abuse, exclusion and school or work-based harassment. Many LGBTQIA+ people, particularly young people, do not disclose their sexuality or gender identity when accessing services[30], or choose not to access mainstream health and support services for fear of discrimination or breaches in confidentiality. LGBTQIA+ people are also three times more likely to experience depression compared to other Australians.[31]

7.6.1. Top tips

Maintain confidentiality. Confidentiality is essential for building trust and supporting people to feel comfortable to disclose their sexual identity or gender. Many people may not want to disclose, so may not want to join an LGBTQIA+ specific group or may prefer the anonymity of online supports.

Be visible. Making yourself known as LGBTQIA+ friendly (for example, by using a rainbow symbol) and taking an informed and non-judgemental approach can help to reach people and make them feel safe to disclose.

Connect to supports and services. Get to know the LGBTQIA+ friendly supports, services and practitioners in your area that you can partner with or refer people to, such as ACON, the NSW Government-funded LGBTQIA+ health and information service.

Use inclusive language. Use gender neutral terms, ask for people's preferred pronouns – don't make assumptions, and be sensitive to labels. Listen to and reflect the language people use to describe their own identity, gender and relationships. And be aware that some communities may reclaim derogatory terms, but you should not use them.

Recognise inter-generational differences. People within the LGBTQIA+ community may have different experiences and perspectives about needs and goals, based on their generation.

29 ACON. *About ACON*. 2018. https://www.acon.org.au/about-acon/

30 Leonard W. et. al. *Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians. 2012*. Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians

31 Ibid.

7.6.2. Case studies

Queer and Disability Community Group

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

What is the project?

The Queer and Disability Community Group is a social support group for people with disability who identify as LGBTQIA+ and their allies. The group meets every two months and connects daily on the Facebook group page. It is led by the Rainbow Working Party, which includes Ability Links NSW representatives from the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, Settlement Services International and community members. The Working Party has provided ongoing funding for Auslan interpreters, catering, meeting rooms, and organised the meetings including the content. This is being handed over to community group members to lead and look for future alternative funding arrangements.

What is the aim?

The key aims of the group are to:

- identify gaps in disability and LGBTQIA+ services
- advocate for policy change
- partner with services
- share information
- help establish safe spaces
- improve accessibility
- create an opportunity for peer support and a way to make new friends.

How is community involved?

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has consulted with community members throughout the project—to gauge an initial level of interest in starting the group, and determine the group's direction by identifying interested participants and their needs and goals. This included a queer and disability community event and a Fair Day stall to engage members and enable ongoing consultation with existing members.

How are partners involved?

Ability Links NSW consulted the Rainbow Bridge Social Club, a group for LGBTQIA+ people with intellectual disabilities, for advice on how to establish and run a sustainable community group.

The Council for Intellectual Disability has also been engaged to provide funding and training to members of the group, including peer support and facilitation skills.

ACON's newly appointed Disability and Inclusion Officer has secured a free meeting room for the group. He is also hoping to consult with the group on ACON's Disability and Inclusion Action Plan, and will be attending future meetings to further avenues for collaboration.

How is the project promoted?

The Rainbow Working Party is responsible for promoting the group. They:

- designed a poster for local cafés and restaurants in areas with high numbers of LGBTQIA+ people
- attended the Fair Day stall to conduct face-to-face outreach campaigns and sign up new members
- participated in and delivered a speech at the Mardi Gras Film Festival cinemas and distributed flyers
- regularly post on personal and group social media accounts.

What are the main challenges?

The Working Party has faced some organisational challenges, including finding time to meet, organising and promoting group meetings, and hiring Auslan interpreters. They have had to manage their time carefully to prepare for each meeting.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Group members and Linkers monitor levels of engagement, using attendance numbers and social media analytics. They have also used feedback boxes at each meeting, meeting observations, and an online survey to think of ways to collaborate and communicate with new members and decide on the future direction of the group.

Why is the project sustainable?

The group aims to be sustainable by:

- building the capacity of group members for future management of the program without the support of Ability Links NSW, including through facilitator training
- developing a 'How to' guide and Project Plan in consultation with the group, to be shared state-wide for setting up a community group for people with disability identifying as LGBTQIA+
- identifying (and learning from) other community groups
- developing formal partnership arrangements for ongoing support from key partners
- working collaboratively and sustaining formal partnership arrangements with other community groups who have crossover participants, to cross promote, and organise crossover events and meetings, such as ACON, Twenty10, Northcott, CID, and Family Planning NSW.

7.6.3. Useful resources

- ACON's website and online resources
- Reach Out's directory of LGBTQIA+ support servies

8. Working with local organisations

You might want to work with different organisations in your local community to support them to be more inclusive. This chapter outlines our top tips for approaching and working with different organisation types, and provides successful project case studies, drawing on the experiences and documentation of ALNSW providers.

8.1. What are the main considerations when working with local organisations?

While each type of organisation will have different needs and obligations, there are some top tips for getting organisations on board with inclusion.

- Gauge where the organisation is at – everyone will have different levels of knowledge about and attitudes towards disability and inclusion – and work at their pace.
- Advocate, but don't be adversarial.
- Involve people with lived experience – individual stories often resonate the most.
- Frame your project as 'win-win' by demonstrating the community-wide benefits of inclusion and explaining how inclusion aligns with their values or will help them to reach their goals or objectives.
- Provide low- or no-cost ways of becoming more inclusive.
- Find someone in the organisation who is passionate about what you're trying to achieve.
- Clearly outline roles, responsibilities, timelines, capacities and limitations of everyone involved. It might help to develop a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or agreement to set these things out and ensure accountability.
- Develop a communications strategy (including how and how often you will touch base).

8.2. Working with local businesses

An inclusive business is one that provides products and services everyone in the community can access and in which everyone is treated equitably. Often, businesses are keen to get on board and be part of the community but simply aren't sure what they could be doing better.

You might think about working with local cafés, restaurants, retail stores, cinemas or other recreational businesses. Projects could focus on improving:

- **customer service**, including staff attitudes and language
- **communications**, including accessible websites; Easy Read, braille and translated text; and video captioning
- **employment opportunities**, including recruitment processes and reasonable adjustments
- **physical access**, including accessible parking and toilets, ramps and handrails, counter heights, signage and sensory spaces.[32]

It makes 'business sense' to be inclusive of all potential customers. If businesses are not accessible and inclusive they limit their customer base, potentially missing out on the business of people with disability, carers, people with temporary injuries, people with strollers, older people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

8.2.1. Employing people with disability

You might work with local businesses to help them understand their obligations to have inclusive and accessible employment practices and suggest ways they can make reasonable adjustments for employees with disability.[33]

People with disability are valuable employees, bringing new skills, abilities and perspectives to a wide range of jobs and industries. An Australian Government review of research found that workers with disability often have higher attendance rates, lower turnover, and are no more likely to be injured at work than other employees. It also found no difference in performance, productivity, or cost of employing people without disability.

Under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW), employers have to make reasonable adjustments for people with disability who apply for, are offered or have a job; or who require them in a recruitment process or to perform the job. These are changes to the workplace that allow people with disability to work safely and productively, such as arranging flexible working hours or purchasing screen reading software or desks with adjustable heights. The Australian Employment Assistance Fund offers employers and employees financial assistance to make workplace adjustments.

8.2.2. Top tips

Start out right. Businesses that you have already built relationships with or are personally connected to are more likely to get on board right away. If you're cold calling or directly approaching a business for the first time, make sure you:

32 North West Alliance. Creating Inclusive Communities Business Toolkit. 2017. https://socialfutures.org.au/creating-inclusive-communities-business-toolkit/

33 Australian Network on Disability. Employing people with disability. 2018. https://www.and.org.au/pages/tapping-into-talent-employing-people-with-disability.html

- pick a time that won't be busy for the business, for example avoid lunch time at cafés
- talk to the decision-maker, such as the Manger on Duty. If they are not around, ask the best way and time to contact them.

Develop an effective pitch. It can help to develop and memorise an 'elevator pitch' – a 30–60 second persuasive summary of what you're trying to do and the benefits – to spark their interest. The pitch should be tailored to the type of organisation and should:

- start with an open-ended question, for example 'What does your business do to ensure inclusive customer service?'
- tell a personal story
- explain your goal
- end with a call to action, explaining what you're asking of them.

Ideally, the pitch should be delivered by someone with lived experience. Providing real life examples and putting a face to the story is an authentic approach that often resonates most.

Demonstrate what's in it for them. You'll need to have a clear understanding of the business and how you can support them. Give them an incentive to get on board by demonstrating 'what's in it for them', such as increasing their customer base and profitability or improving their community reputation.

Create FOMO. It can help to point out similar businesses that are getting on board and making changes to be more inclusive. This can create a sense of 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) or 'fear of getting left behind'. Supporting projects to promote their access features, for example through storefront signage or phone apps that map accessible venues, can help with this.

Offer practical solutions. Often, businesses will assume that improving access and inclusion is difficult, time-consuming and expensive. It's important to come with some practical, low- to no-cost solutions that are easy to integrate and maintain within their current operations.

Remind them that inclusion does not just mean improving physical access. Check out North West Alliance's 'Creating Inclusive Communities' Business Toolkit and the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW's How to Guide: Approaching Businesses for a range of inexpensive, practical ideas, such as clear signage, easy read menus, inclusive language guides and portable storefront ramps.

Work from where they're at. Remember that it can take time to understand what genuine inclusion looks like. Be patient and provide information and resources relevant to where the business is at.

- If they think that they are already doing a great job at being inclusive, praise them and ask how they could better promote what they're doing.
- If they have questions that you don't know the answer to, be honest and let them know that you will call or email them later, once you've spoken to someone else.
- If they say 'no thanks', politely thank them for their time and walk away. Hopefully, you've got them thinking about inclusion and they might take action in the future. They may feel greater pressure to get on board later down the track, as other businesses that are more ready start to make changes.

8.2.3. Case studies

Access at a Glance

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

What is the project?

Access at a Glance displays accessibility stickers on shopfront windows across NSW so that community members can tell if the space is accessible 'at a glance'. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW developed 14 accessibility stickers; guidelines with criteria for each sticker; a signage template to indicate accessible features; and additional access information for businesses, including a price list of accessible features to purchase and a guide dog etiquette fact sheet. They also developed a guide for Linkers on how to determine sticker eligibility; and provided training on how to approach businesses, complete project administration and conduct follow-up surveys.

What is the aim?

The project aims to make it easier for people with disability to find accessible spaces and feel welcomed in their community.

It also aims to increase the awareness of local businesses of how they can promote accessibility features, increase their customer base and community recognition, and start conversations about how to be more inclusive, including through disability awareness training or employment of people with disability.

How is community involved?

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW conducted focus groups and interviews with people with disability, including people with vision impairments and who are deaf or hard of hearing,

to gather their feedback on the pilot project. This led to changes to the original stickers and guidelines, and the creation of four new stickers.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is currently devising a strategy so that 'Inclusion Champions'—people with lived experience of disability who have worked on other projects—can work alongside Linkers to approach businesses and deliver the project.

How are partners involved?

A number of disability peak bodies and advocacy organisations such as The Deaf Society and the Council for Intellectual Disability have been approached to help promote the project more widely to the disability community to bring their attention to the project.

Locally, teams that are delivering the project have approached their local councils to discuss opportunities to collaborate.

How is the project promoted?

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW promoted the project in its pilot stage by designing a poster (used online and in print), a brochure that featured the project, and digital images of stickers for businesses to use on their websites.

Following the pilot, they have plans to promote the project online, through an ALNSW Facebook campaign; an article series on local businesses in the City of Sydney by Concrete Playground; endorsements in local council, disability services and peak body newsletters and the Destination NSW and Tourism NSW websites; and a media release featuring businesses involved in the pilot. Team members also promote the project to their professional contacts.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges have been in engaging local businesses owners, who can be very busy. To get them on board, Linkers have had to make multiple follow-up attempts to find the right person to talk to and organise a suitable time.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Team members monitor the project by reporting the number of stickers and signage they hand out (and where) in an Excel spreadsheet. This helps identify patterns in take-up rates, such as the types of businesses and locations that are most engaged.

Team members also collect qualitative feedback from businesses 6–8 weeks after providing the stickers and signage, using a short survey (delivered face-to-face or over the phone by Linkers). The survey explores the impact of the project on the business's customer base, customer and staff responses, whether further actions were taken to improve accessibility or employ people with disability, and how confident staff feel serving people with disability.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW also hosted two focus groups after the pilot to gather feedback from people with disability involved in the project.

Why is the project sustainable?

By offering low cost suggestions and working at businesses' pace, the project hopes to improve access and inclusion in ways that are easy for businesses to manage and sustain.

In the longer term, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW plans to ask local councils to hold an annual day for volunteers, including people with disability, to review existing stickers and hand out new stickers. They are also looking to involve Inclusion Champions in the delivery of the project.

Cinema Captioning

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

What is the project?

The national Cinema Captioning project enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who are learning English to access and enjoy mainstream cinemas. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW engages cinemas across Australia in discussions on ways to make their cinema more inclusive and accessible. They advocate for cinemas to introduce open-captioned sessions, and offer strategies and training.

So far, two independent cinemas have implemented regular, open-captioned screenings as a result of the project, and this has been enthusiastically received by the local communities. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is now working to increase the number of cinemas involved by engaging major cinema chains.

What is the aim?

The project aims to support individuals to feel more valued and included in their local community. It also benefits the cinemas involved by providing access to disability awareness training and support to employ people with disability, promoting their business as inclusive and accessible, and increasing their customer base.

How is community involved?

The Deaf Society of NSW has supported the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW to promote the project to the deaf community. The cinemas involved in the project also encourage participation from the community by inviting people to nominate which movies they would like screened in open captions.

How are partners involved?

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW engaged the Octopus Group to conduct independent market research on public perceptions of cinema captioning. This formed the basis of their business case for getting cinemas involved. They also offered cinemas free disability awareness training and follow-up advice on employment and recruitment practices.

How is the project promoted?

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW promoted the project through a media release and a public infographic, endorsements by The Deaf Society of NSW and social media pages within the deaf community. Cinemas involved also promote their involvement in the project by advertising open-captioned films on their website using the letters 'OC' for screenings.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW also arranged an open-caption screening event during Social Inclusion Week. This was a turning point for the project and led to the community directly requesting open-captioning from local cinemas. It also demonstrated to cinemas the demand for (and potential profits from) open-captioning.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges have been:

- engaging cinemas—it was difficult to convince cinemas to trial open-captioned films with no data to demonstrate the value. To overcome this, Linkers drew on the Octopus Survey results and focused on community-focused, independent cinemas.
- captioning films—cinemas have no control over whether a film is distributed with captions or not and are not given much notice about whether an upcoming film will be available in open caption.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

To track the progress of the project and measure its success, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is using administrative data and a feedback survey for cinema staff and customers.

They are collecting data on:

- the benefits of having open-captioned sessions at cinemas
- the percentage of mainstream viewers who would watch a captioned movie
- the number of people who have attended open-captioned sessions
- the percentage of contacts with cinemas that led to more inclusive policies and procedures
- the number of training sessions delivered, and follow-up sessions booked.

Why is the project sustainable?

Once cinemas come on board, the project is self-sustaining—the demand for open-captioning from the community remains, no ongoing involvement from Linkers is required, and cinemas have an economic incentive to stay involved.

Find out more: by reading project media release and survey results infographic.

Inclusion Champions

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

What is the project?

Inclusion Champions are people with disability who work as consultants, visiting local cafés with a Linker to provide information on inclusion, and support café staff to be more aware of diversity in the community and how they can offer inclusive customer service. They share their experiences and answer any questions staff might have. They also offer printed resources, such as signage or braille materials, to improve physical access. Cafés can then be featured on websites that list accessible businesses and be promoted in local media.

What is the aim?

The Inclusion Champion project aims to improve the customer service and physical access of local cafés.

How is community involved?

In 2017, Linkers approached 10 local cafés in inner-city Sydney to be involved in the pilot of the project. Before the pilot commenced, two Inclusion Champions underwent informal training and induction. They each attended five cafés with a Linker over a six-week period. This included holding weekly sessions with café staff, as well as conducting pre- and post-session surveys to monitor change.

Since the pilot, community members inducted as Inclusion Champions have been able to share their experiences and become self-advocates for inclusion and diversity within the mainstream community. These paid positions have also allowed the Champions to build their confidence and skills and gain useful work experience.

In 2018, an Inclusion Champion who was part of the pilot project worked alongside trainers from the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW to co-design and co-deliver new training to an additional five Inclusion Champions. Having increased confidence from the pilot they were also involved in approaching businesses, alongside a Linker, for sign up.

How are partners involved?

The pilot was developed after consulting with the NSW Business Chamber, People With Disability Australia (PWD), City Of Sydney Council, IDEAS, Beehive Industries, The Factory Community Centre, Weave Youth and Community Services (Social Enterprise Worker), and BaptistCare HopeStreet. These organisations have provided guidance and support, as well as media publicity and promotion.

In partnership with Settlement Services International (SSI) Ability Links' Ambassador program, Inclusion Champions were given the opportunity to attend three peer workshops focused on professional development and peer reflections. The Centre for Intellectual Disability was involved in two workshops focused on sharing stories safely and how to start a peer group.

How is the project promoted?

Cafés involved in the pilot stage were approached directly by Linkers in the community. Since then, an Inclusion Champion has also been involved in approaching cafés in the area. The project has used several promotional strategies, including:

- A press release
- Social media channels
- Television and radio interviews with Inclusion Champions
- The ALNSW website
- Incorporation of the project into other St Vincent de Paul Society NSW projects, such as Access at a Glance
- Advertisements in the Vinnies Ability Links Business Brochure as a free service for local businesses.

The Project has successfully nominated businesses for local business awards (through local councils), to raise awareness and offer an incentive to be involved.

What are the main challenges?

The key challenges have included:

- inducting Inclusion Champions and managing teething issues around professional expectations as a paid consultant
- engaging reluctant cafés, which sometimes believe they are already inclusive
- coordinating the availability of Inclusion Champions, café staff and Linkers.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

To monitor the success of the project, Inclusion Champions conduct pre- and post-surveys with the cafés, assessing changes to improve inclusion and changes in staff confidence to provide inclusive customer service to people with disability. Inclusion Champions and Linkers also debrief and reflect on the next steps, before and after each session with a café. Linkers are using the survey and debrief data to inform the ongoing rollout of the project and to conduct a formal evaluation.

Why is the project sustainable?

The project is designed to be simple to deliver—facilitating informal conversations with people with lived experience, and offering tips and resources that are low-cost, time-efficient and easy for local businesses to maintain. Based on feedback from cafés and Champions, the project has been successful in its mission of shifting attitudes and suggested accessibility changes.

To ensure the sustainability of the project beyond ALNSW's involvement, the Inclusion Champions have been trained to establish themselves as consultants, start their own business and establish their own peer support group if they choose. ALNSW is also working on using the learnings of this project to support the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW more broadly to improve their employment and practices of supporting and employing people with disability. A position for a 'Peer Linker in Business Engagement' will be reviewed in the future.

8.2.4. Useful resources

- The North West Alliance's 'Creating Inclusive Communities' Business Toolkit
- The St Vincent de Paul Society's online resources to support businesses to diversify their customer base
- The NSW Business Chamber's online resources to support businesses to diversify their workforce
- The NSW Business Chamber's guide for small businesses to attract more customers through better acess, Missed Business
- The Australian Government's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- The Australian Government's website for driving disability employment, Job Access
- The St Vincent de Paul Society's Access at a Glance online resources
- The St Vincent de Paul Society's How to Guide: Approaching Businesses

8.3. Working with schools

An inclusive school is one where students of all social, cultural and geographic backgrounds, identities and abilities have the support they need to meaningfully engage in learning with their peers and feel a sense of belonging in the school community. Inclusive education is not only beneficial for children with disability but for all children,[34] and embedding inclusion in schools is important to developing more inclusive societies in the long-term.

However, students with disability can face barriers to inclusion at school, including discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, and a lack of supports and professional education for teachers to facilitate inclusive education.[35]

You might want to help schools to meet their obligations. The Australian Disability Standards for Education outlines the rights of students with disability and the obligations of education providers to ensure equal access and participation in schools. There are three types of obligations for education providers—they must consult, make reasonable adjustments, and eliminate harassment and victimisation. Schools can embed inclusion through their policies, staff training, classroom adjustments and curriculums; and their every day practices, activities and language.

Inclusive sports, game-based and arts activities are common, effective and fun ways to promote a message of inclusion among school students.

8.3.1. Top tips

Get on their agenda. Getting on schools' agendas can be difficult. They have a curriculum to deliver, full schedules and receive frequent emails offering programs. Some are particularly wary of having external providers come to the school.

Schools that you already have relationships with or are personally connected to are more likely to get on board right away. However, if you're cold calling or directly approaching a school for the first time, it can help to:

- find someone at the school who shares your passion – whether going straight to the school principal, or finding the right teacher, school administrative and support staff (including counsellors, Learning Support Officers, Aboriginal Education Officers and chaplains), or parent/ carer
- approach the school in person – this can be more effective than emailing or phoning
- know their busiest time of year and work around their schedule
- be persistent – follow up if you don't get a response initially.

Understand the school. You'll need to do your research to understand the specific needs of the school, their values, goals and curriculum capacity.

Deliver an effective pitch. You should approach the school with a clear idea of what you want to achieve. This might mean providing them with a plan or proposal that outlines the project's aims, how you'd like the school to be involved, and how the project aligns with their agenda

34 Cologon, K. *Inclusion in education: towards equality for students with disability.* 2013. http://www.cyda.org.au/inclusion-in-education

35 Ibid.

and will benefit them. It can also help to:

- demonstrate what you've achieved at other schools
- provide written endorsements from other principals
- have people with lived experience involved to share their experience.

Work around their schedule. Remember that schools generally have tight curriculums and timetables. You'll need to be flexible when finding a time to run your project, adapting how and when it is delivered to suit the school's needs and availability. For example, you might deliver your project with each Year group back-to-back over two days, or once a fortnight over three months.

Be organised. This means coming with the right paperwork, such as consent forms and Working with Children Checks; and keeping track of when you've been in contact, so you know when to follow up or send reminders.

Support teachers. Teachers have different levels of knowledge about and attitudes towards disability and inclusion. Make sure you read your audience and tailor delivery to work at their pace and meet their needs. Also understand their perspectives, before you suggest inclusive strategies they might try.

Create a safe space for students. You'll need to read the room and tailor delivery to the age groups, needs, energy and attitudes of the students. Remember that some students might be new to diversity and might feel confronted or ask personal questions. It's important to create a safe, non-judgemental space for them to have these conversations in order to break down barriers to inclusion. Help them to understand the importance of inclusive language and the barriers that people with disability can face. Having people with lived experience interact with the students or lead projects can help with this.

Make it fun and engaging. Use your project as a vehicle for delivering a broader message, by making it fun and engaging. It also helps to have activities that are collaborative, rather than competitive, when delivering a message of inclusion. If students don't want to participate, try to modify the activity to make them comfortable or simply let them observe.

8.3.2. Case studies

Sports Ability

Mid Coast Communities and North West Alliance

What is the project?

Sports Ability is a disability inclusion program run at primary and high schools across the NSW Mid North Coast region. Since its establishment, it has been run at over 40 schools for almost 6,000 students. It is led by two Linkers from the region, who visit schools to facilitate games with each Year group. The games are inclusive of all abilities. Teachers observe and interact with the program, and at the end of the day the school is given a sports kit and a pamphlet with instructions so they can continue to incorporate the activities into their curriculums.

The project idea came from a Linker who was actively involved in community sports programs and wanted to promote inclusion more broadly to children across the region. The

Linker uses a wheelchair and draws on his lived experience to build a sense of commonality between the students, change perceptions of disability, and send a message of inclusion.

What is the aim?

The Linkers use three short games as the vehicle for increasing awareness of disability, improving attitudes in schools, and building the capacity of teachers to better include students with disability. The project also aims to create longer-term social change by embedding ideas of inclusion and equality among children in their formative years.

How are partners involved?

The Linkers systematically approach every public, Independent and Catholic school in the region to deliver the program. They provide an information package detailing the agenda and benefits of the program. They then liaise with a school contact person to arrange the best times to deliver the program to each Year group.

How is the project promoted?

Initially, the Linkers found that 'cold calling', emailing and approaching schools directly with information about the program was the most effective method of promotion. Now that the program is well-established in the region, it is generally delivered on demand.

Other promotional channels include stalls at community events, the Mid Coast Communities and Ability Links Facebook pages, and a promotional video published by ABC Local – Coffs Coast.

What are the main challenges?

- The right person to deliver the program—the Linkers have found that the person running the program should have a visible disability, be engaging and keen to connect with the students and answer questions, and be passionate about sport/ the activities.
- Engaging schools—schools are busy. They have full curriculums and receive daily invitations to be involved in community programs. To get on their agenda, the Linkers learnt to:
  - go straight to the school principal
  - approach schools in person rather than via email
  - provide clear information about what the program involves, its aims and how these align with the school's objectives
  - demonstrate the benefits of the program, drawing on feedback from schools already involved—recommendations from other principals have been a major motivator
  - be flexible when finding the best method of delivery within schools' timetables—be it 'back to back' sessions over a few days, or separate sessions over a few months
  - be organised and persistent, recognising that it can take some back and forth before locking in a time.
- Adapting to different skills and attitudes—students and teachers can have different levels of knowledge about and attitudes towards disability. Teachers can also have different levels of comfort and skills in supporting students with disability, and different approaches to disciplining. To manage this, the Linkers tailor their delivery to suit the needs of the room, provide gentle tips, and role model how to do inclusion well. One Linker, who uses a wheelchair, often has to respond to personal questions about his lived experience.
- Managing the emotional impact—at times, the program can be confronting or challenging for some teachers and students. The Linkers draw on their counselling backgrounds to manage this – giving people time and space to react or express their opinion before supporting them to change their perspective and embrace genuine inclusion.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Mid Coast Communities evaluates the project through a feedback survey, which the school contact person and/or principal completes at the end of the program. The survey assesses:

- how well the program was organised and delivered
- the likelihood of integrating the games into the school curriculum, and recommending the program to other schools
- the benefits of the program for the children
- whether the program has improved inclusion.

They also capture anecdotal feedback and stories from students, teachers, principals and (sometimes) school newsletters.

Why is the project sustainable?

The impact of Sports Ability extends beyond the program delivery because it:

- draws on the lived experience of the Linker to deliver the message of inclusion in a way that is authentic and resonates with students
- targets students in their formative years, recognising that they are agents of long-term change
- supports teachers to better understand inclusion
- is incorporated into schools' curriculums in an ongoing way, using the sports kits.

The demand for the program is increasing and there is potential to extend it across more NSW regions, with further resourcing.

Find out more: by watching ABC Coffs Coast's video.

8.3.3. Useful resources

- The Australian Government's Disability Standards for Education
- Children and Young People with Disability's 2013 issues paper, Inclusion in Education: Towards Equality for Students with Disability

8.4. Working with councils

An inclusive local council is one that enables people with disability to engage in and get around their local community like all other members of the community; makes information and doing business with council accessible; and is an inclusive employer. To facilitate this, all NSW councils were required to develop a four-year Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) by 2017, under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014.

To support councils to meet their obligations and understand the needs of the community, project ideas could focus on:

- raising awareness to encourage positive community attitudes and behaviours
- improving physical access to the built environment
- becoming an inclusive employer, but addressing attitudinal, physical and prescriptive barriers to applying and working for council
- supporting access to supports and services by improving systems, processes and communications.

8.4.1. Top tips

Align with their agenda. Get to know your council's policies, plans, projects and legislative obligations, including their Disability Inclusion Action Plan. Take a collaborative, 'win-win' approach by finding ways you can support them to meet their objectives and build on the projects they are already passionate about. Clearly articulate how your project can benefit them, respond to the needs of their community and deliver value for money.

Find an ally. Build relationships with councillors and staff within council to get past the gatekeepers and identify those who share your passion – this might be a Disability Inclusion Officer or Community Development Officer, an Access Committee member, or a councillor with lived experience of disability. Councils that have had DIAPs in place for longer can be readier to engage. It also helps to have the Mayor on board.

Build relationships. Attending interagency and other council meetings and events is a good way to build positive relationships and learn about the culture and needs of the council.

Understand council processes. Remember that each council will have different processes, priorities and internal cultures. You'll have to navigate the political and bureaucratic arms of council. Often, councils (particularly those that have undergone recent amalgamations) are busy, have competing priorities and have strict processes to comply with. Communicate regularly to stay on track and try to forward plan around their schedules. And be patient and realistic about their timelines and capacity to help.

8.4.2. Case studies

Beaches for Every Body

St Vincent de Paul Society Hunter/ Central Coast

What is the project?

Beaches for Every Body is a framework for social inclusion capacity building with Surf Life Saving NSW (SLSNSW) clubs and their local communities in the Hunter/ Central Coast region. Examples of projects that have been led under the framework include:

- the procurement of appropriate beach access equipment and relevant training to ensure sustainable use and management
- inclusion awareness training for SLSNSW members at local, regional and state levels
- modifications to the built environment to improve inclusion and access
- upgrades to club websites to better promote access and inclusion across the community.

What is the aim?

The project aims to create more accessible and inclusive clubs, beaches and beach precincts by improving:

- the built environment and equipment
- communication and interaction with Lifesavers and Lifeguards
- attitudes towards disability within Surf Life Saving clubs
- the promotion of inclusion and accessibility in the community.

How are the community involved?

The project idea came from a Linker in 2016, who had started conversations with local Surf Life Saving clubs and identified the need to do more work towards inclusion with clubs across the Hunter/ Central Coast region. In 2017, the St Vincent de Paul Society invited all 27 clubs in the region, as well as local community members, to help develop the project framework. Together they discussed potential capacity building projects to increase beach access and inclusion.

Recognising that each club and local community would have different needs, the St Vincent de Paul Society decided to host five Beach Inclusion Conversations across the region for club members with disability, local club members, council representatives and other interested members of the community. The conversations were collaborative, world café-style forums held at accessible venues, with Auslan interpreters available. Participants brainstormed solutions to local challenges and identified focus areas for action.

How are partners involved?

Following the Beach Inclusion Conversations, interested clubs developed project plans to increase action and inclusion. The St Vincent de Paul Society also contracted a Disability Access Consultant to conduct professional accessibility audits to inform clubs' inclusion plans and create a platform to advocate for change with local councils. Clubs were encouraged to obtain the contact details of people with disability who were keen to have ongoing input into the plans, and to engage their local Council to progress their plans.

How is the project promoted?

The St Vincent de Paul Society promoted the Beach Inclusion Conversations widely—contacting clubs in person and over the phone, distributing flyers on community notice boards, using social media and advertising in the local newspaper. They also engaged Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH), a local peer support organisation, to ensure interested people with lived experience of disability could contribute to the project.

It is hoped that as clubs roll out their inclusion plans, they will promote their activities and achievements to the wider community.

What are the main challenges?

- Engaging clubs—clubs are volunteer-driven and often have limited time and resources to engage. To get clubs on board, Linkers took time to build relationships and find the right person to talk to. Linkers also found that clubs associated the word 'disability' with costly, physical access requirements. To get some clubs on board, it was important to explain what genuine inclusion looked like and that 'access' was not restricted to the ocean, but the wider beach precinct. It also helped to suggest more manageable and less costly actions that could support access and inclusion.
- Engaging councils—councils are busy. To get councils on board, Linkers took the time to find the right person in council to talk to; continued to keep council updated on what clubs planned to do; and linked this work back to relevant council plans, offering to collaborate on shared objectives. Some councils were keen to collaborate, particularly around the professional audit reports where these aligned with their Disability Inclusion Action Plans.
- Maintaining community involvement—sometimes it was difficult for clubs to maintain involvement of people with disability in the development and implementation of their inclusion plans. Linkers considered whether an online platform or social media could facilitate ongoing conversations between clubs and community in future.
- Ensuring Linkers had the right skills—the project required Linkers to 'cold call' organisations and make a case for their involvement. It was important to build Linkers' communication, negotiation and persuasion skills to do this effectively. Linkers also had to be tenacious, patient and open-minded about the different levels of knowledge and awareness in the community and about the many potential outcomes of the project.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Following the five Beach Inclusion Conversations, the St Vincent de Paul Society randomly selected and contacted club representatives and community members for feedback about their experience of the forum, and if anything had changed or happened as a result of participating.

Clubs (and councils when they're involved) are responsible for rolling out and monitoring their inclusion plans. However, Linkers maintain ongoing conversations with the clubs to monitor change and provide guidance.

Once more tangible actions have been taken by the clubs, the St Vincent de Paul Society plans to use the 'Most Significant Change' approach to evaluate what was achieved and identify learnings.

Why is the project sustainable?

The project represented a shift in how clubs approached disability inclusion. Rather than developing new programs targeting people with disability, clubs found ways to make their existing programs and beach precincts more inclusive of people of all abilities. This was as a result of the project taking a collaborative and non-prescriptive approach and suggesting actions for change that weren't too costly but were easy to manage and maintain.

The forums also enabled participants to share experiences and challenges and build new connections, including between people with disability and clubs.

The project will also contribute to longer-term outcomes by connecting with the Surf Life Saving NSW state body—sharing learnings, identifying inclusion champions within clubs, and supporting the development of a more strategic approach to improving attitudes, access and inclusion in clubs across the state.

8.4.3. Useful resources

- The NSW Government's Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Local Government NSW's resources for developing Disability Inclusion Action Plans

8.5. Working with community organisations

Inclusive community organisations are those where everyone feels safe, welcome and accepted, regardless of their background, identity or ability. They include local clubs, arts, sports or other recreational organisations.

8.5.1. Top tips

Building relationships. Spend time getting to know and building rapport with the community organisations in your region. This might be through informal contacts and personal introductions, by attending community and council events, or by directly approaching them.

Have shared values. Before you start working in partnership with a community organisation, make sure you share the same values and goals. Having a similar ethos and motivation can go a long way.

Complement each other. Understand their services, what they can contribute, and how you can help them work towards their vision. Be flexible and creative when thinking of ways you can help each other.

Work around their schedules. Find ways to share the workload and resources to suit everyone and establish clear timeframes that fit everyone's schedules. Remember that community organisations can have unusual working hours, and that transport is a challenge in regional and rural locations.

8.5.2. Case studies

Blue Fringe Arts Festival

Settlement Services International

What is the project?

The Blue Fringe Arts Festival is a community-based arts exhibition that has been held annually in the Blue Mountains since 1992. Originally known as the Adrienne Brown Awards, participants submit works under four main categories—Art, Photography, Sculpture and Textiles. More recently, a youth category has been established to encourage high school students to participate. The event is organised and run by a committee of community volunteers, who all have lived experience of mental illness.

Settlement Services International (SSI) became involved in 2016 to grow the volunteer base of the Festival committee, restore the committee's grassroots ownership and decision-making of the Festival, and involve local businesses to help fund and support the event. They have also worked to renew collaboration with the Festival's sister event, Blue Fringe Literature, by sharing the planning, branding and messaging for the 2017 Festival.

What is the aim?

It aims to celebrate the creativity of people with lived experience of mental illness, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, promote a more inclusive society, and provide an opportunity to exhibit the work of emerging artists.

How is community involved?

Members of the community are involved in the Festival in a number of ways.

- People with lived experience can join the Festival committee to develop skills, experience, confidence and relationships to run the event.
- Local artists and artisans with lived experience can contribute their works to a public exhibition.
- Members of the community (both those with lived experience and those without lived experience) can attend the exhibition and show their support for the event and the artists.

How are partners involved?

SSI has collaborated with representatives from Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre, Springwood Neighbourhood Centre Cooperative, Wentworth Falls TAFE, and local mental health and generalist services including Aftercare, Healing with Creativity, Mountains Community Resource Network, Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre and the Blue Mountains City Council.

Other partners have been involved in:

- organising and hosting the Festival
- making financial or in-kind contributions
- contributing exhibition space
- hosting marketing and/or the Festival's launch event
- providing judges and curation advice.
- local businesses are invited and encouraged to buy a sponsor package and to present an award in their chosen category. This builds the business's reputation within the community and increases the likelihood of their ongoing involvement in future events.
- Blue Mountains' federal, state and local government leaders are also invited to speak at the Festival and talk openly about their own personal mental health experiences.

How is the project promoted?

While the Festival is well known in the local community, the committee promotes the event each year by:

- updating the Festival's website and promotional materials
- managing the Festival's Facebook page
- distributing Festival entry forms and posters through local networks and partners
- using existing materials, including art catalogues, a literature compendium and banners for the exhibition and awards day
- running community outreach events such as BBQs and children's art activities and being present at local festivals and community events.

What are the main challenges?

The challenges facing the Festival include:

- the risk of being discontinued based on funding constraints placed upon local community organisations
- maintaining a strong, skilled volunteer base with adequate succession planning and opportunities for peer mentoring.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

SSI monitors the success of the Festival each year to identify learnings for future events via:

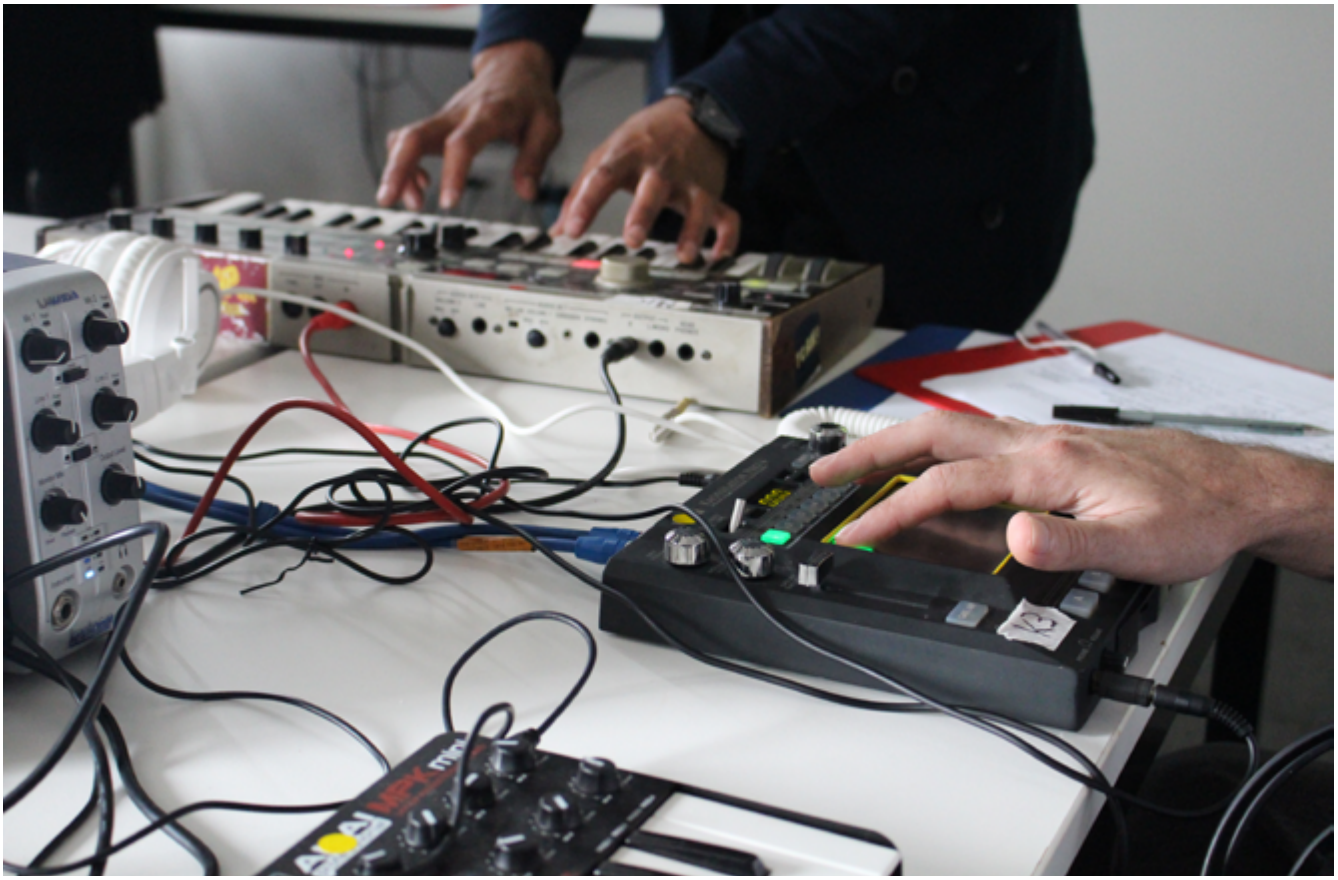
- event feedback forms exploring the experiences of both exhibiting artists and visitors to the Festival
- informal debriefs with the committee, local organisations and contributing artists.

Why is the project sustainable?

SSI aims to increase the sustainability of the Festival by:

- developing the skills and confidence of local people with lived experience to manage the event in the future
- building relationships with local businesses to ensure ongoing funding and support structures are in place
- supporting the development of volunteer-led fundraising and team building initiatives to develop the skills and resources of the committee.

Find out more: on the Blue Fringe Arts festival website.



Hack Sounds

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

What is the project?

Hack Sounds was established in 2016 as an entry point into the local music community, specifically electronic music production, for people with disability and people without disability living in Sydney.

The idea came from a volunteer at 107 Projects, a multidisciplinary arts space. The volunteer identified a gap in the availability of accessible music courses, workshops and programs for people with disability across Sydney. Access barriers include cost, location, physical accessibility and teaching capabilities. Starting with the premise of a successful program that began in London to assist children with autism to interact with music, 107 Projects comprehensively re-designed the program in consultation with Ability Links and Accessible Arts, to adhere to inclusion and co-design practices.

What is the aim?

The project aims to grow people's music creation and performance skills, support them to find career development pathways and build their social skills and networks.

How is community involved?

The core project group was formed by 107 Projects with a call-out for members, after community consultations had been conducted for participation in the pilot term. Through the ensuing terms, new members have applied and been incorporated into the program.

The weekly sessions are run by two Associate Producers. Experienced musicians, producers and educators, and music software and hardware developers are approached by the

program to give advice on implementation and approaches, as well as provide support.

'Come & Play' sessions have also been set up to expand the reach of Hack Sounds into new communities, offering social events for people to get a hands-on experience of the program. These are conducted in community spaces, music/ performance venues or at music festivals.

How are partners involved?

Funding for Hack Sounds was initially provided as part of the Delineate program—a partnership between Accessible Arts and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services' Don't DIS my ABILITY campaign.

Current partners include Create NSW (primary funder), APRA AMCOS, City of Sydney Council, Roland Corporation, and Northcott.

How is the project promoted?

Hacks Sounds is promoted through:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Meetup – a social media site for users to schedule and promote public events
- the City of Sydney Council website
- Hack Sounds website
- 107 Projects website.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges for Hack Sounds have been:

- including and meeting the needs of all types of disability, including the provision of an accessible space and audio equipment
- marketing the program appropriately
- monitoring the impact of the program to demonstrate outcomes for people with disability, when people without disability also participate.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

Hack Sounds draws on anecdotal feedback and informal conversations, session observations, post-session debriefs and participation numbers to monitor and inform the project direction. Hack Sounds also uses an evaluation plan to assess the success of the project's collaboration, music composition, knowledge and techniques of technology, and frequency of participation.

Why is the project sustainable?

While reliant on a space like that of 107 Projects to run the group, Hack Sounds is made sustainable by:

- taking a flexible and inclusive approach, allowing any interested participants to be involved and explore their intrinsic creative talents in a space that is safe and welcoming
- having a supportive and committed core group and production team
- having clear and demonstrated benefits to both general and musical communities, clear value for sponsors/ partners and a clearly expressed vision, which can all be provided to grants and funding entities.

Find out more: on the Hack Sounds and 107 Projects websites or by watching Accessible Arts' video.

Inclusive Rugby Club

Uniting

What is the project?

Mount Druitt's Inclusive Rugby Club is comprised of over 30 teams, with around 500 players. It was started in 2018 by a local community member who identified that rugby league was a common passion among people of all ages in the area, but no local club existed. The teams are inclusive of all people, regardless of age, sex or ability. The club also has a specific team for people with disability, which Uniting supports.

Teams come together for a friendly competition and to support each other. They also take turns organising and running a Bunnings sausage sizzle with the help of coaches and volunteers to fundraise and learn life skills.

What is the aim?

The club aims to support community inclusion and collaboration (rather than competition) and to inspire and engage young people through a common passion.

How is community involved?

Since its inception, the club has been led and informed by the local community. Local parents, businesses, organisations, council, and schools come together at regular consultations to offer ideas, support and funding.

The club relies on community volunteers to coach teams and organise games; for grounds keeping; for fundraising; and to manage the administration.

How are partners involved?

A number of local community organisations are involved in supporting the club. The club employs two youth service counselling advisors to attend the training and games, talk to the players to identify their needs, and link them to relevant partners when needed. Partners include:

- Rebaya Indigenous support—assisting players with their homework before training
- headspace—providing youth mental health support
- MAX Employment—supporting older players to transition to work
- Graceades Cottage—providing meeting facilities
- MacKillop Family Services—providing family support and counselling.

Uniting was engaged to support the disability-specific team and provide ongoing funding for equipment.

The club also works closely with schools to ensure that children are only able to play if they are performing well at school and are rewarded for good school behaviour through a voucher system.

Local businesses and community members are also involved in sponsoring the teams by investing in equipment and uniforms.

How is the project promoted?

The project has primarily been promoted through:

- Graceades Cottage
- social media
- word-of-mouth.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges so far have included:

- Getting local schools on board—it was important to explain the club's focus on supporting players' community participation and academic achievement.
- Purchasing equipment—the club has worked to get local sponsors onboard to provide funding and has established a roster of fundraising activities, and always seeks to purchase durable equipment.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

To track what has been achieved, the club has used:

- informal debriefs and reflections
- attendance numbers
- a feedback survey for players and their parents
- an evaluation of early outcomes and funding used.

Why is the project sustainable?

The project is sustainable because it was established in response to genuine local community needs and interests. Many young people in the area are passionate about rugby league, idolise celebrity players and see sport as a potential career path, so are keen to stay involved. The project also aims to have a longer-term impact on players' academic and wellbeing outcomes, by linking to local supports, services and schools.

The project is also made sustainable by having passionate community volunteers leading the club, and by building strong partnership with local organisations to provide ongoing support and sponsorships.

8.5.3. Useful resources

- The NSW Office of Sport's website and online resources for running an inclusive and diverse club or organisation
- Accessible Arts (the peak arts and disability organisations in NSW) online resources

8.6. Working with early childhood organisations

You might work with playgroups, pre-schools and early childhood recreational activity centres to support them to be more inclusive.

Inclusion in early childhood is key to inclusion throughout life. Inclusive early childhood education benefits not only children with disability but all children. However, families of young children with disability can face barriers to accessing mainstream early years services.

8.6.1. Top tips

Connect. You might reach out to organisations informally, through personal and social connections, by attending community and interagency meetings and events, or by approaching them directly. When approaching them, remember that early childhood organisations have busy schedules and strict requirements, such as staff to child ratios. So, don't just drop-in – find the right time to engage and look to speak with the centre Director.

Understand the service system. When working with children and their families, it helps to have a good knowledge of the service system and what supports are available in your local area. This includes the early childhood intervention services; education and support services for families, carers and siblings; GPs; counselling services; and social activities, playgroups and parent groups. Take time to get to know and build relationships with these services.

Support families. It can take time for some families to come to terms with their child's diagnosis. Working with families at their pace, Early Linkers can encourage families to connect with mainstream and community supports and services, as well as early childhood intervention services.

8.6.2. Case studies

Lego Clubs

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

What is the project?

St Vincent de Paul Society Linkers support schools and community groups across NSW to set up Lego Clubs. Lego Clubs involve students working collaboratively in small groups to design and build Lego sets. Following the Lego Club events, students who participated received a Certificate and show bag.

Building on the success of the Ability Links Lego Club at Paddington Public School in 2016, St Vincent de Paul Society Linkers also worked with the school to host a 'Little Builders' event to celebrate Social Inclusion week.

What is the aim?

Based on the principles of Lego Play Therapy, Lego Clubs provide a space for young children to make friends; build their confidence and social, communication and problem-solving skills; and have fun. They also promote social inclusion, including of students who may struggle to interact with others or have a disability.

How are partners involved?

Linkers engage local schools or community groups to set up Lego Clubs, generally asking to speak with the Learning Support Coordinator to explain the benefits of the project to

students and schools.

St Vincent de Paul Society also coordinates funding for the Lego Kits, for example, by looking for sponsors, suggesting the school/ organisation hold a fundraiser, or reaching out to the schools' Parents and Carers groups. Sometimes, they will borrow a kit for the first session before purchasing their own.

How is the project promoted?

Linkers promote the Lego Clubs using:

- local and social media
- a promotional brochures and video
- a How to Guide for Supporting schools to start a Lego club or host a Lego event.

What are the main challenges?

The main challenges have been:

- organising the day—Linkers need to organise a quiet space at the school and teachers to supervise the activities, and allow plenty of time to set the room up at the start of the day
- engaging students—Linkers have found it helps to provide instructions before handing out the Lego, using Lego sets appropriate to the age of the students, and rotating 'stations' every 15 minutes
- organising sponsors to supply the Lego kits.

How is the project monitored and evaluated?

To monitor the project, Linkers ask for feedback from students and teachers at each Lego Club event and send surveys to teachers within one week of each event.

Why is the project sustainable?

The program has a sustainable impact because it:

- promotes the development of communication and collaboration skills, confidence and awareness of inclusion, which children can use for life
- requires minimal equipment, which can be repeatedly used
- supports teachers and staff to deliver Lego Clubs independently.

Find out more: by watching the Lego Club ***video*** or accessing St Vincent de Paul Society's How to guide: Supporting schools to start a lego club or host a lego event.

8.6.3. Useful resources

- All In!'s Inclusion Guide website and online resources
- Early Childhood Intervention Australia's website and online resources

9. Monitoring and evaluating your project

Monitoring and evaluation are key components of good community development. They support a cycle of ongoing planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Being 'evaluation-minded' will help you to assess your progress, understand whether you've achieved what you set out to achieve, and continue to learn and improve.

However, the terminologies and technicalities of monitoring and evaluation can feel overwhelming. And community projects usually operate on small budgets with limited time and resources to conduct large-scale data collection.

This chapter provides basic guidance on how you can approach monitoring and evaluation in a way that's right for your project. For smaller projects, we suggest you use the sections on the principles that guide monitoring and evaluation (section 9.1), how to develop a simple monitoring system (sections 9.2 and 9.2.1), and options for data collection (section 9.3).

For larger projects, we suggest you also read the sections on how to develop a comprehensive monitoring system (section 9.2.2), and options for evaluation (section 9.4).

9.1. What principles should guide monitoring and evaluation?

These principles are key to keeping data collection to a scale that you can manage, is appropriate to your project, and will be useful for you in delivering, refining and (if relevant) seeking funding for your service. They should guide your thinking about monitoring and evaluation at each stage.

- **Build in monitoring and evaluation from the outset.** Evaluation is not something that is done only at the end of a project, looking back. It can be more useful if done during implementation, so you can inform ongoing improvement. You also need to build in data collection from the start to assess outcomes at the end.
- **Get the scale right.** Scale your data collection to the scale of your initiative. If your project is small and short-term, don't make your data collection 'bigger than Ben Hur'.
- **Keep it simple and stage it.** If you are starting a new monitoring and evaluation system, start small. Introduce new elements in stages, don't try to do it all at once.
- **Pilot before launch.** Test data collection with partners and participants so you can ensure it is feasible and meaningful.
- **Collect what is useful.** Collect what information is useful to inform delivery of your project. If you are seeking additional funding, you will also need to think about the data that will help you make a case for your project.
- **Keep an eye on the benefits and the burden.** Capture feedback from participants but minimise the data collection burden. Remember your participants are likely asked to complete surveys from multiple organisations.
- **Manage the process ethically.** This includes gaining informed consent and managing data securely (see Box below).

- **Understand outputs and outcomes.** Make sure your regular monitoring data includes both outputs (for example, number of groups and number of attendees,) as well as outcomes.
- **When you evaluate, choose an appropriate evaluation approach for your purpose.** See section 9.4.

Ethics and data management

You will need to think about ethics and data management in both monitoring and evaluation. This includes the following:

- Provide participants with a clear explanation of the purpose of the research and how their information will be used.
- Make it clear to participants that participation is voluntary and they can continue to participate in the project even if they don't want to participate in the research.
- Get informed consent from participants; get a guardian's consent when working with children and young people and people with a legal guardian.
- Allow participants to change their mind about participating.
- Ensure everyone has equal opportunity to participate.
- Provide consent forms and interview guides in formats that people can understand.
- Keep data collected in a secure place.
- Use de-identified data (where names, addresses, etc. are removed), where possible.
- Do not identify any individuals in your reports, use pseudonyms and aggregated data.

Resources

- Australasian Evaluation Society. 2013. Guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluations https://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/membership/AES_Guidelines_web_v2.pdf
- The Australian Privacy Principles website: https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy-law/privacy-act/australian-privacy-principles
- NHMRC, 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research', 2007. https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72_national_statement_may_2015_150514_a.pdf
- NHMRC, 'Ethical Considerations in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities', 2014. https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e111_ethical_considerations_in_quality_assurance_140326.pdf

9.2. How do you develop a monitoring system?

No matter the size of the project, it's important to keep track of what you're achieving by developing a monitoring system. Monitoring is often a part of evaluation but monitoring by itself is not evaluation and is less in-depth than evaluation. Monitoring is ongoing, while evaluation is typically periodic.

The main purposes of monitoring are to provide:

- project managers with ongoing performance information so they can ensure that the services they are responsible for are on track
- data for analysis as part of evaluations.

You should tailor your monitoring system to the appropriate scale. For smaller projects, you might develop a simple monitoring system (see 9.2.1), while for larger projects, you might have a more comprehensive plan, including a logic model and outcomes matrix (see 9.2.2).

Regardless of the scale, for your monitoring system to be successful you will need:

- a well-articulated plan, setting out your intended outcomes and data sources
- a system for collecting, collating and reporting on data
- support from all the stakeholders who will play a part in the monitoring system.

9.2.1. How do you develop a simple monitoring system?

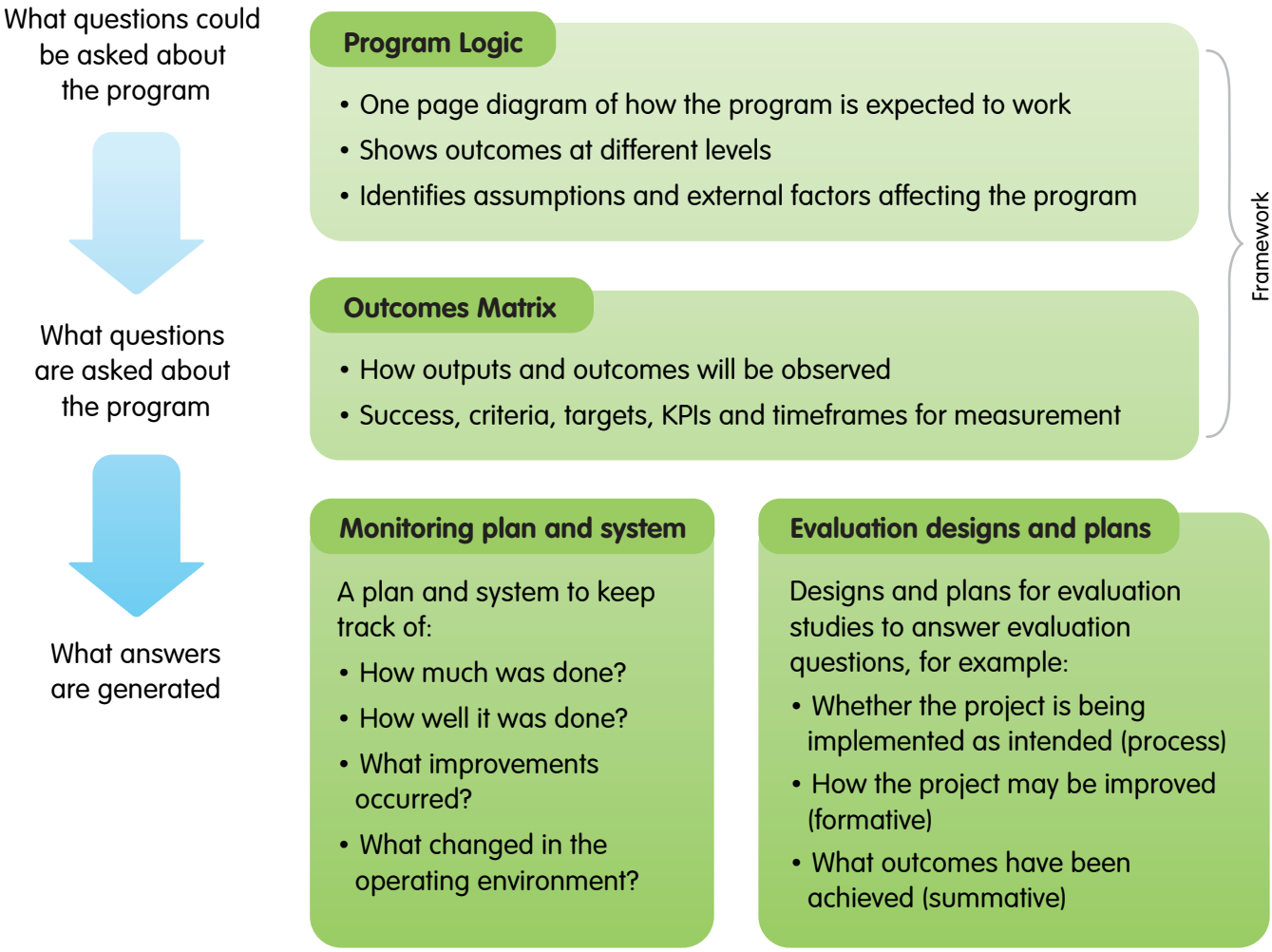
The data you collect for small projects should focus on answering the following three questions.

1. **How much has been done?** For example: How many groups were run? How many people attended?
2. **How well was it done?** For example: To what extent did we engage our intended target group? Did community own the project? Were participants satisfied with the activities?
3. **Is anyone better off?** For example: Do participants feel more included in their local community? Do people with disability feel like they have a voice in their community?

For guidance on how to select and collect data, see section 9.3.

9.2.2. How do you develop a comprehensive monitoring system?

For larger scale projects, you might develop a more comprehensive monitoring system, including a program logic and outcomes matrix. This can also support evaluation. The diagram below shows how the elements of a monitoring and evaluation framework relate.



A program logic

Your **program logic** forms the basis of a monitoring system and evaluation framework. See chapter 5 for guidance on developing a logic model. If you don't think that a logic model is right for your project, try to outline the key steps in your process and the outcomes you want to track – this can inform your outcomes matrix.

To better understand what an outcome is, see this one-minute video by Evaluation Support Scotland.

An outcomes matrix

An outcomes matrix systematically maps how you will measure each individual outcome identified in your program logic. Outcomes matrices also go by different names, including performance measure tables, outcomes frameworks, indicator frameworks and evaluation plan methods grids.

Your **outcomes matrix** should identify the indicators and data sources for each of the outcomes in your logic model. See below for a simple outcomes matrix template.

Logic level	Outcome	Indicators	Method or data source
Long-term outcomes			
Medium-term outcomes			
Short-term outcomes			
Process outcomes			
Resourcing and design			

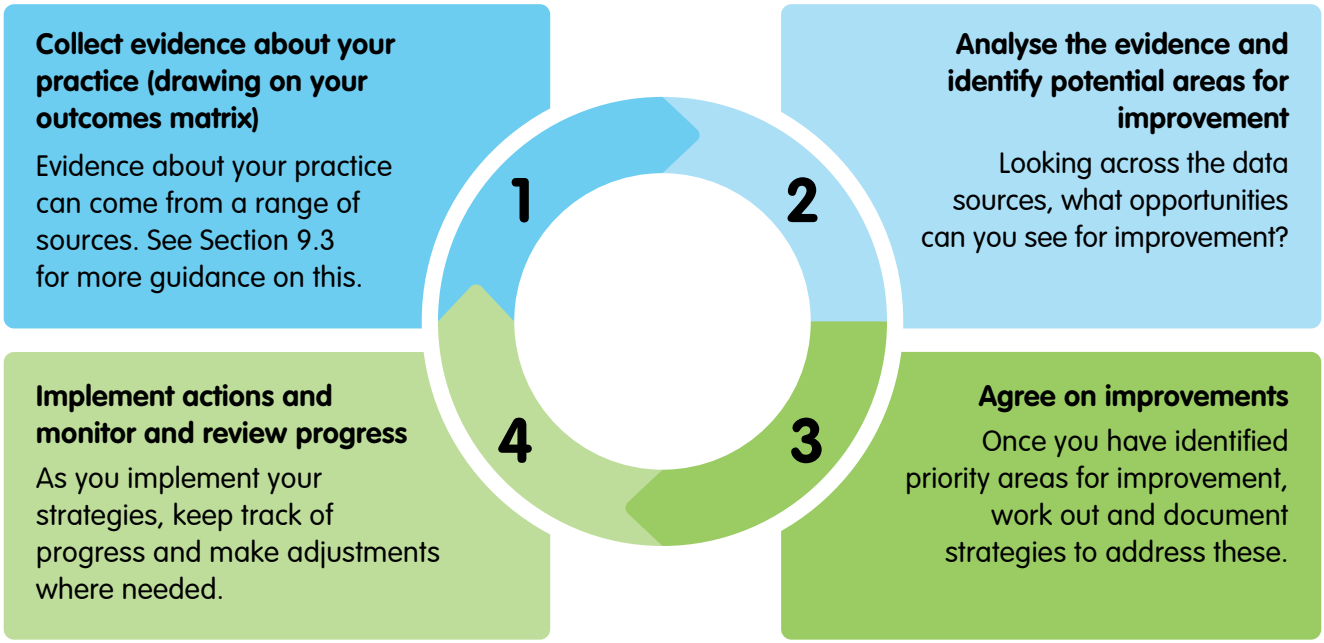
Indicators are often numerical values such as percentages of target audience who take up a program or service. It is useful to apply the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Accepted, Relevant and Time-bound) guidelines when thinking about deciding on an appropriate indicator.

- **Specific:** The indicator clearly and directly relates to the outcome. It is described without ambiguities. Stakeholders have a common understanding of the indicator.
- **Measurable:** The indicator has the capacity to be counted, observed, analysed, tested, or challenged.
- **Achievable:** Realistic to expect as a result of the initiative.
- **Realistic:** The indicators selected must be realistic in terms of your ability to collect the data within available resources.
- **Time-bound:** The indicator is time-referenced and is thus able to reflect changes. It can be reported at the requested time.

See section 9.3 for more guidance on selecting appropriate **data sources** and tips for collecting data.

9.2.3. How do you use monitoring data?

Monitoring data is important for keeping track of what you're achieving. Feeding back and reflecting on monitoring data can support continuous improvement of the delivery and outcomes of your project. There are four steps to the continuous improvement cycle.



9.3. What data could you collect and how?

9.3.1. Common data sources

To understand how you're tracking, you'll need to think about the most appropriate data sources. Think about collecting both quantitative data (think numbers – these sources generally tell us what happened and *how much*), and qualitative data (think stories – these sources generally explain why something happened).

You might draw on data that is already available, such as:

- administrative data (for example, from your project database)
- external statistics and surveys (for example, ABS Census data)
- existing reports or literature reviews.

You might also need to collect additional data. Common data collection methods used by ALNSW providers include:

- questionnaires/ surveys
- interviews
- focus groups
- observations
- case studies
- diaries
- suggestion boxes.

This United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) video provides more useful guidance and key considerations for collecting and analysing data for evaluating the impact of a project.

Collecting stories

While quantitative data is commonly collected, qualitative data—including stories and case studies—can be powerful in demonstrating a project's impact at the individual or community level. Think about how you might quantify your qualitative data, for example by counting how many stories demonstrate improved community attitudes, or how many interviews discussed increased accessibility.

Some Linkers use the Most Significant Change approach to monitoring and evaluation. This involves collecting people's personal stories of change (as a result of being involved in the project) and sharing and discussing these with stakeholders to learn what works well and what values people hold.

9.3.2. Top tips for designing a questionnaire

Questionnaires are a common method of data collection. But poor design can make it difficult to understand your results. Here are our top tips for designing effective questionnaires and surveys.

1. **Make sure a questionnaire is the right method.** If you know what you need to measure and have specific questions about perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour, a questionnaire is the way to go. Questionnaires can also be useful if it's important for

people to provide feedback anonymously. But if you don't know much about the subject, you could be better off starting with semi-structured interviews. A focus group would also be better if you're hoping to get a group perspective.

2. **Think about use at the outset.** You need to design questions that respondents understand and that produce clear data for analysis. You also need to think ahead about what you're going to do with the results. For example, if you're asking whether group members are happy with the group they are attending and you find that they're unhappy, you'll probably also want to know what the issues are and what changes they'd like to see. Open-ended questions (or even follow-up interviews) might be needed.

3. **Keep it short.** Think about how much time people have to complete your questionnaire. A long questionnaire can be the difference between a reasonable and a poor response rate.

4. **Scale it right.** There are many different options for scaling questions (that is, including questions with a range of answers rather than a 'yes/ no' option). When using scaled questions, make sure the possible responses are balanced (for example, if you start the scale with 'strongly agree' make sure you end with 'strongly disagree'). Also, check that the questions you ask match the words in the response scale (for example, if you ask 'How likely are you to return to the group?', make sure the responses range from 'unlikely' to 'likely', not 'agree' to 'disagree'). It also helps if you consistently use the same scale (for example, an 'agree to disagree' scale).

5. **Know the difference.** You need to be able to discern between ignorance (the respondent doesn't know enough to provide an answer), and indifference (the respondent doesn't have a strong opinion one way or the other). When it comes to analysis, these are important differences and can skew the results. Without an opt-out category (such as 'don't know' or 'not applicable'), respondents who might understand what's being asked will often leave the question blank.

6. **Choose your words carefully.** Don't ask double barrelled questions (such as 'Were you satisfied with the venue and the catering?'), or questions with a double negative (such as 'Do you agree that the venue was not appropriate?'). Avoid acronyms and jargon, particularly when asking customers for feedback. For larger projects, it's a really good idea to test your questionnaire with a small sample of participants to see if they understand your questions in the way you intended.

9.3.3. Top tips for conducting interviews and focus groups

Conducting an interview or running a focus group can be challenging because people are people – with different values, beliefs and experiences, in different contexts. While there are no hard and fast rules on how to conduct interviews and focus groups, and how to respond to challenging situations (besides being authentic, respectful and non-judgmental), we've developed some top tips for keeping interviews and focus groups on track and ensuring participants feel comfortable sharing their views.

1. **Choose the right method for the information you need.** While individual interviews are generally best when the subject matter is sensitive or you are interested in individual experiences, focus groups are great for capturing group dynamics and experiences. However, there's also a need for pragmatism. If resourcing and time constraints prevent you from undertaking individual interviews, you can make focus groups work by

specifically targeting your questions.

2. **Start out well.** How you start can make all the difference to how well an interview or focus group runs. Explain who you are and what your research is about. Let them ask you questions; you're about to ask them a lot! In a group, establishing rules can set the foundation for positive interaction and provides a reference point to return to if issues arise. Some key rules include making clear that there are no right or wrong answers, that you want to hear from everyone, that people should refrain from judging others' points of view, and that people need to respect the confidence of the group.

3. **Play out scenarios.** Playing out challenging interview and focus group situations (if you have time) can be a great way to try out different responses to tough situations so you can approach them differently next time, or to prepare for potentially challenging focus groups. It can also be fun! Scenario testing can help interviewers get into the head of their interviewees. It's always important to remember that there's no right or wrong when it comes to testing scenarios and that something that works in one situation might not work again.

4. **Anticipate challenging situations.** There are a few common, challenging responses that you can prepare for.

    a. **Someone who is reluctant**—someone who gives one-word answers or shrugs their shoulders.

        - Get comfortable with silence. If you wait long enough (but not too long), the interviewee may step in to fill the void. It may be that the person needed time to collect their thoughts before responding more fully.
        - Give them the reins. The person may feel your questions are not getting to what matters for them. Ask them what they'd like to tell you about.
        - Lighten the mood, be humorous, if the context is appropriate. This might break the tension.
        - Leave your specific questions aside; discuss a related topic. If the person is feeling uncomfortable with the interview situation, this can provide some time out to build trust.
        - Call the situation for what it is. Note that the person seems uncomfortable being there or that something seems to be bothering them. Give them an opening to share the thinking behind their behaviour. It may be important to understanding how the program or policy you're reviewing is working.
        - It's also important to recognise that sometimes no strategies will work, and the person has a choice not to talk.
        - Be particularly careful when deciding to call on people who haven't contributed in a focus group. There may be underlying group dynamics that you're not aware of that are making the person feel uncomfortable sharing. Sometimes it can be better to catch the person on their own at the end of the group to see if they had anything to add.

    b. **Someone who goes off-track**—someone who needs to tell you about their key concerns before they can get into the interview questions; starts telling you about their entire career history when you asked them about their current role; or talks about all of their friendships when you asked them if they enjoyed a particular social activity.

- If a person needs to get something off their chest at the start of an interview be respectful and listen. Sometimes taking an extra 10 minutes for this can mean the rest of the interview just flows.
- Generally, don't cut someone off in the middle of a sentence. But sometimes you may need to, particularly in a focus group where one person is dominating and others are feeling uncomfortable.
- Recognise that sometimes a person on a tangent is actually trying to tell you something. After a while you may find them looping back to the topic at hand.
- Tell the person that you want to come back to something they said earlier (that was on topic), which was really interesting for the evaluation. This can be a good way to gently steer things back on track.
- Tell them that you are conscious of their time and other commitments but you want to make sure you capture their views on the key questions, so you would like to focus on these so that you have their full input for the evaluation.

c. Someone who becomes emotional or distressed.

- If you think an interview context could potentially raise an emotional response, be prepared and prepare your interviewee. Let them know that some questions may be confronting, that they can choose not to answer and can take things at their own pace. Have contacts for supports you can refer to in place, if needed.
- Give the person space. Ask if they'd like to take a breather or a longer break, come back to the interview at another time or end it there. Give them the choice. Don't decide for them.
- Lower your voice and slow things down.
- Have boundaries, but remember you're human. An emotional response can sometimes be appropriate when interviewing people experiencing life challenges.

5. **Find time to reflect.** With competing priorities and volunteer-based delivery, it can be difficult to take the time to collect data, let alone reflect on data collection. Setting up both informal and formal opportunities for reflection on qualitative data can help team members learn from each other's wealth of experience.

9.4. What are some options for evaluation?

For larger scale projects, you might conduct an evaluation. Evaluation is a type of applied research to determine the 'merit, worth and value of things'. Evaluation can have many purposes – accountability, learning, and program improvement and knowledge building about how interventions work.

Unlike monitoring, which is undertaken regularly, evaluation is generally undertaken to answer key questions to inform decisions at critical times.

Effective evaluation involves an investment of time and resources. This section provides a high-level overview of several evaluation approaches that may be useful for community inclusion projects. However, small-scale projects may find the concept of developmental evaluation useful for framing how you review your monitoring data.

We have chosen not to include randomised control trials (RCT) and other experimental and quasi-experimental methods as these are generally not considered appropriate for the constantly changing nature of community development projects.

9.4.1. Developmental evaluation

When to use it

This approach suits social innovations with interdependencies, which are being continuously developed and adapted, and implemented in a changing and complex context. It can assist as you are evolving your project and its intended outcomes in response to the needs and preferences of members.

How it works

Taking a developmental approach to evaluation means regularly looking at the data you're collecting to explore.

- **What?** What does the data tell us? What is changing? What is remaining the same? What are the cues there to understand emerging patterns?
- **So what?** What is the value of what we are doing? What do these findings mean to us now and into the future? What effects are current changes likely to have on us, program participants and broader communities?
- **Now what?** What does this mean for how we should act to optimise opportunities now? What are our options?[36]

Taking a developmental approach means you may need to refine your data collection over time to better reflect your evolving outcomes.

Resources

- Gamble, J.A. A developmental evaluation primer. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.
- Patton, MQ, 2010. Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use. New York: Guilford Press.

36 Adapted from Gamble, J. A Developmental Evaluation Primer. 2008 and McKegg, K. and Wehipeihana, N. *Developmental Evaluation: A Practitioner's Introduction.* 2008.

9.4.2. Principles-focused evaluation

When to use it

This approach is useful to evaluate social interventions that are guided by principles rather than a standardised service model.

How it works

Principles-focused evaluation grew out of developmental evaluation. In a principles-focused evaluation, principles are the focus of evaluation.

The GUIDE framework outlines the characteristics of a good principle.

- **Guide:** provides advice and guidance on how to think, what to value and how to act to be effective; provides direction and supports priority setting.
- **Useful:** is interpretable, actionable, and feasible; can be used to guide decision-making.
- **Inspirational:** makes values explicit; provides motivation and inspiration by identifying what matters in how to proceed and the desired result.
- **Developmental:** is adaptable and applicable to diverse contexts over time, providing a way to navigate complexity and uncertainty, and adapt ongoing changes in context.
- **Evaluable**: is possible to document and assess whether the principle is being followed and what results occurred (that is, if implementing the principle took you in the desired direction).

In the evaluation, you consider whether the principle/s identified for your program:

- are meaningful to the people they are supposed to guide
- are adhered to in practice
- support desired results.

These are important questions because the way some principles are constructed means they fail to provide clear guidance, and because there can be a gap between rhetoric and reality.

Resources

- Patton, MQ, 2017. Principles-Focused Evaluation: the GUIDE. New York: Guilford Press.
- Patton, 2018, Principles-focused evaluation: newest approach to evaluating complex change efforts. Tamarack Institute.

9.4.3. Rubric-based evaluation

When to use it

You can use a participatory approach to develop a rubric – identifying the criteria that matter and establishing standards as a group. A rubric can be useful if you want to get people on the same page about what matters. Rubrics are also useful if you want to systematically rate similar projects, for example the same project delivered in many different locations.

How it works

Rubrics allow for explicit judgements about the quality, the value, or the importance of the intervention based on an agreed set of criteria and performance standards. They make evaluative reasoning explicit.

The criteria selected need to be relevant to your project and discreet (i.e. not overlapping). Performance standards can then be set for each criterion based on a shared understanding. For more complex rubrics, criteria can be given different weights depending on their level of importance.

It's important to gain agreement about the key criteria to be measured and the performance standards for each. Your criteria could be based on the evaluation questions or evidence-based criteria for the program. See chapter 2 for Milner and Kelly's criteria for inclusion, which you might consider using in your rubric.[37]

Rubrics can and should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data.

Criteria	Performance standard
Project member decisions are made through a process of self-determination	**Excellent:** The project was developed in response to demand Members are empowered to design the project Members negotiate and agree on the time of the activity collaboratively Members negotiate and agree on the location of the activity collaboratively **Good:** Members are empowered to decide on the activity the group does Members are involved in the initial design of the project Members are consulted on the time and a time is chosen that suits most Members are consulted on the location and a location is chosen that is suitable for most **Average:** Members are consulted on the activity the group does and a preferred activity is chosen Members are given a limited choice of times to attend Members are given a limited choice of locations to attend **Poor:** Members are informed what activity the group will be doing Members are informed of the time of the activity Members are informed of the location of the activity

Resources

- The Rubric Revolution: Jane Davidson, Nan Wehipeihana & Kate McKegg, presents a view of rubrics based on their use in giving voice to Indigenous values in New Zealand. https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/AES-2011-Rubric-Revolution-Davidson-Wehipeihana-McKegg-xx.pdf

37 Milner P. and Kelly B. *Op. Cit*

9.5. Useful resources

- Evaluation Support Scotland's guide to embedding evaluation into organisations' everyday practice, Making it Stick
- The NSW Services for the Treatment and Rheabilitation of Torture and Taruma Survivors (STARTTS) 2012 guide to planning and evaluating community developmeny work with refugee communiuties, the Community Development Evaluation Manual
- UNESCO's guide to monitoring and evaluating community-based projects, On Target
- Life Changes Trust's Toolkit for evaluating initiatives to support people affected by dementia