

GOVERNMENT PREPARATION TOOL

How to use this tool

Use this Tool if you are in a Government Department with responsibility for commissioning services or for engaging community service organisations in tackling an issue or meeting a community need, and you have assessed that Co-Design is appropriate.

Preparing for Co-Design

Before seeking to procure new services or put existing services out to tender Government agencies should plan for a Co-Design process, if appropriate. It will be appropriate in most cases where new services are being commissioned, innovation is being encouraged and a wider range of potential providers is being considered.

Co-Design can be most effective in developing new approaches to difficult problems. It can be used to design new models prior to allocation of Government funding, or it can be used to ensure funded models are designed with input of all relevant stakeholders.

In preparing to undertake a Co-Design initiative, it is especially important to spend some time ensuring that everyone involved has a clear, commonly agreed understanding of the **scope** and **intent** of the process.

Relevant considerations for the Department include:

- ▶ whole of Government policies on partnership

with the community sector and the related procurement reforms¹

- ▶ nature and conditions of any budget allocation to the program or services
- ▶ the timeframe for commissioning programs or establishing services
- ▶ existing policies and procedures which may need to be reviewed to enable Co-Design
- ▶ the interface between the program and other services delivered by the Department
- ▶ the degree to which internal practices and services may need to change to work effectively with the newly designed services
- ▶ the role of the Department in monitoring or evaluating outcomes

Stages of planning for Co-Design include:

1. Obtain in principle **commitment** from agency executive (and in most cases the Minister) for a genuine Co-Design process, recognising that it may lead to models different from those initially envisaged.

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2. Decide on the **scope** of the Co-Design, in particular what is in and what is out of scope.
3. Ensure all relevant areas of the Department are **fully briefed** on the intent and process of the intended Co-Design, including staff in areas of strategic policy, research and evaluation, procurement, information services, service delivery and corporate services (and that they have access to the Co-Design process as far as possible)².
4. Establish a **Co-Design Team** with representatives of each of the areas of the Department. The Team should be led by a person who then has overall responsibility for carriage of the design process and subsequent procurement to ensure continuity from design through to implementation.
5. Circulate Co-Design **Principles** to all staff involved.
6. **Consult** with existing and potential service providers and others (including consumer and carer representatives) about the type of Co-Design process to be entered into, including:
 - a. Their requirements for data and other information
 - b. Timeframes for each stage
 - c. Structure of workshops and other engagement processes
 - d. Extent of service user engagement, **and** whether there are separate, or combined and separate, processes involving service users³
7. Allocate **funding** for the Co-Design project, including funding for facilitation, consultancy services, venue hire, catering and consumer engagement.
8. Decide on **timeframes**, including time between workshops (or other engagement strategies) for reporting and responding to what has been done.
9. Ensure staff from all areas involved have **time allocated** to fulfilling their responsibilities to the Co-Design before, during, between and after the workshops and other engagement processes.⁴
10. Prepare the **data** required for informed decision-making about the potential services, including:
 - a. Statistical information on the nature of the problem
 - b. The historical trend data on the issue, including regional variations
 - c. Relevant demographic data
 - d. Projection data on likely demand for services over the term of the future contracts
 - e. The original business case on which the allocation of funds was made
 - f. Outcomes data from existing services (de-identified if necessary and if possible)
 - g. Relevant research that has informed the Department on its planning for services
 - h. Information on other services and supports that may interact or be of relevance to the service users
11. Compile the data into **presentation** format to share with participants in the Co-Design, including (if appropriate) simplified summaries and graphics for service users and others involved.⁵

12. Identify **potential stakeholders** to invite to be involved in the Co-Design. It is recommended that the relevant community sector peak bodies be engaged to advise and assist in getting invitations to relevant stakeholders.
13. Decide on the extent of **independent facilitation** required⁶. This can be as simple as engaging a workshop facilitator for each of the Co-Design processes, or engaging a consultant to work with the Department on scoping up and delivering the Co-Design. Or it can involve contracting a consultant to partner with the Department in all elements of the process including through to the development of service specifications.
14. Seek expressions of interest or otherwise procure the services of an independent consultant or facilitator to manage the Co-Design process (as required). Ensure that essential requirements include the capacity to effectively engage with Aboriginal people and service providers, as well as cultural competencies in working with diverse cultural communities and communities of interest.
15. Work with the consultant/facilitator to **plan an engagement process** that encourages active participation, creativity and open, non-judgemental communication with a consistent focus on outcomes for service users and the community.
16. Prepare a **communications plan** for the Co-Design process, including:
 - a. Content for invitations
 - b. Invitation list – including internal Departmental participants, service providers, service users, consumer and/or carer representatives, other sources of specialist expertise such as researchers and academics
 - c. Clear statement of scope of the Co-Design
 - d. Pre-workshop information pack
 - e. Post-workshop reporting (capturing what was heard during the workshops)
 - f. Feedback prior to further workshops on the Department's response to input received so far, including consensus elements of the service model, agreed process matters and any areas where the Department differs from views expressed
 - g. Internal Departmental communications to ensure all areas of the Department are aware of progress and issues arising, including regular briefing of Departmental executive team
 - h. General newsletter-style feedback to a wider audience to keep people informed as process proceeds
 - i. Acknowledgement to participants
 - j. Formal communications once process enters the tender phase, including circulation of draft specifications for comment and lodging of appropriate notifications on Tenders WA
17. Establish a plan to **document** the Co-Design process and evaluate its effectiveness⁷.
18. Set a **date** for initial workshop that allows for it to be opened by the Director General or Minister to give high level endorsement to the process.

Once planning has been completed, **invitations** to participate should be sent from the Director General (or equivalent) to the CEOs of community sector agencies, consumer representatives and advocacy groups.

In addition to community sector agencies, it may also be important to invite representatives of other Government agencies who have expertise in the particular area or whose services might be affected.

¹ The Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy and the Partnership Forum Principles and Behaviours provide a useful guide to the underpinnings of Co-Design in WA. These can be accessed at https://www.finance.wa.gov.au/cms/Government_Procurement/Policies/Delivering_Community_Services_in_Partnership.aspx and <https://partnershipforum.dpc.wa.gov.au/Pages/Partnership-Principles-and-Behaviours.aspx> WA Labor's Supporting Communities Policy supports co-design processes and ongoing partnership between the public and community sectors and commits to trialling more collaborative funding models.

² If Co-Design is driven by one part of the Department to the exclusion of others (or if it assumed that key staff can fully represent all interests within the Department) then there are likely to be significant difficulties when it comes to implementation of the service model. For example contract managers have unique insight into legalities of management of complex contracts, while service delivery staff have on the ground knowledge about what they see working and not working, and research and evaluation staff will be well-placed to advise on service outcomes and measurement. All should be at the table in the Co-Design process if unintended consequences are to be avoided.

³ Generally, service users and service user representatives should be invited to be part of the main Co-Design workshops and these should be structured to ensure their input is encouraged and valued. However it may also be useful to engage a broader range of service users and others in focus groups, interviews or different format workshops as well. If this is done then there needs to be a mechanism for the outcomes of those processes to be built into the Co-Design and feedback shared.

⁴ For example, they may need to respond to data requests, answer research questions, clarify IT capability issues, conduct scenario modelling or clarify policy matters arising from one workshop in time for the next (in addition to writing up outcomes, refining models and preparing for next stages.)

⁵ Note: In more complex Co-Design it may be necessary to take a consultative or Co-Design approach to the data issues before undertaking any planning of the service models. Reaching a common understanding of what data is relevant/important and what it means can be important in getting common understanding of the community need and of the language describing need and the desired social outcomes.

⁶ Independent facilitation puts all parties to the process on equal footing. This works well when the facilitator has been well-briefed by the Department, service providers and service user representatives prior to the workshop phase. It not only puts service users, providers and the Department on an equal footing, it also has benefits within the Department where all directorates and work areas also see their roles as being equal and the process not being driven by any one section.

⁷ A sample invitation is included in the Toolkit.