

# COMMUNITY SECTOR PREPARATION TOOL

## How to use this tool

This Tool is to assist Community Sector organisations in preparing to respond to an invitation from Government to be involved in the Co-Design of programs and services relevant to their areas of expertise.

## Deciding whether to participate or not

The primary consideration is whether or not you believe that clients or service users will be better off as a result of your contribution to the design of the services available to them.

You need to ask: Is this Co-Design relevant to my organisation? Are we likely to be delivering the services being designed or is there a link to our clients i.e. are we getting clients from or referring them to the services?

Other key questions include: Is this 'core business'? Can we spare the time? Will it help us grow in directions we want to go? Do we have the expertise to add value in the Co-Design process? Will there be an advantage to us in the subsequent procurement process (or any disadvantage from not participating)? Is it a legitimate Co-Design process or is it just going through the motions? Is the scope wide enough to make a difference... or am I wasting my time by going along? Is the proposed funding sufficient and sustainable?

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.

By inviting you to participate, the Government (or Department) acknowledges that your organisation has expertise and experience that will be valuable in the Co-Design process. However, it is up to you to decide whether to share that expertise and experience in the Co-Design phase or wait to demonstrate it in the subsequent tender stages. There are pros and cons to both approaches.

## Benefits of participation in Co-Design

There are benefits flowing directly from participation for individuals involved, organisations and potentially for clients of your existing services. These include:

- ▶ The personal professional development that comes from creative engagement in in-depth discussion of matters of shared passionate interest

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- ▶ The exposure to ideas that can add value to current practice or challenge existing ways of working
- ▶ Exposure to a broader range of service users and their representatives than you may normally have (outside of your direct service provision)
- ▶ In-depth exposure to the background to, and Departmental thinking about, the proposed services (which may be useful in responding later in the procurement process.)
- ▶ Clarification of whether the proposed programs and services are ones you should pursue through the procurement process or not, potentially saving significant wasted effort
- ▶ Identification of elements of the service models discussed which can form part of your bid for whatever tender or grant follows the Co-Design process
- ▶ Opportunity to showcase the organisation's expertise and experience among a group of peers and Government decision-makers
- ▶ Opportunity to influence the design of programs or services that you may end up delivering, ensuring alignment with your organisation's values, objectives and ways of working
- ▶ Opportunity to influence the design of programs or services to improve outcomes for service users regardless of who ends up providing the services
- ▶ Incidental networking benefits from spending quality time with peers and relevant officials from various parts of Government or the Department
- ▶ Specific networking benefits related to the Co-Design and subsequent procurement process, including identification of potential consortium partners, collaborators or sub-contractors
- ▶ You may convince others to pull out of tendering or to decide to collaborate rather than compete.
- ▶ Small organisations have an opportunity to demonstrate their specialist expertise in working with particular cohorts and show how they could add value to a model led by one of the larger organisations
- ▶ Intelligence gathering about the nature of the market for services and the strengths and weaknesses of potential competitors

## Potential costs of participation in Co-Design

- ▶ Actual cost of staff time involved, including preparation and reading time
- ▶ Risk that contributions will not impact the development of the specifications for the program or services in any meaningful way (wasted time.)
- ▶ Risk of loss of 'intellectual property' as information shared in the Co-Design process may be used by competitors

For most organisations the benefits of participation will outweigh the potential costs. Perhaps the most compelling reason for participation is the altruistic one of contributing to the design of better services leading to better outcomes for the people we work with.

# Preparing for Co-Design Participation

Before committing to involvement in a Government or Department-initiated Co-Design process, there are a number of things to check:

- ▶ Is there a commitment to conduct the Co-Design in line with established Co-Design Principles?
- ▶ Is there sufficient time for a thorough process to be undertaken?
- ▶ Is the Co-Design brief clear, including a clear statement of what is in scope and what is out of scope for consideration?
- ▶ Is there sufficient engagement of service users, consumer representatives, carers and/or families?
- ▶ Is there an opportunity to contribute to the planning of the Co-Design process?

If you are satisfied with the answers to these questions, then you can proceed with some confidence that the process will be of value.

Further preliminary steps include:

- ▶ Decide who will **represent** your organisation. It may be helpful to have more than one person attend so that you have input from a strategic organisation level and from a practical service delivery level. It is often valuable to have the CEO or other senior executive attend the first stage of the Co-Design to provide the organisation's official position and to assess whether the ongoing process should have the organisation's involvement.
- ▶ Assess the **information requirements**

necessary for your effective contribution and convey those needs to the organisers of the Co-Design. For example, if you need demographic information about the people the program will work with, data on the level of service need, existing service levels or evaluations, request that information from the Department in advance.

- ▶ Similarly, you can ask the Department to provide access to research and independent reports from other locations or similar circumstances, or source those for yourself.
- ▶ Discuss the **scope and intent** of the Co-Design internally with staff to ensure your organisation's representatives have an informed perspective on the policy, service delivery and potential contract management aspects of the Co-Design.
- ▶ It may be necessary to **inform your Board** about the upcoming Co-Design, especially if the outcomes of the subsequent procurement processes may have a significant impact on the organisation (either contraction in the event of loss of contracts, changing service models in the continuation of contracts or expansion of the organisation to respond to new contracts.)
- ▶ Engage with your organisation's **consumer representatives** (and/or service users themselves) about their interest in participation or in having input through your organisation.
- ▶ **Negotiate** the participation of your consumers/consumer representatives with the organisers of the Co-Design process. Depending on your internal policy on

payment for consumers you may need to allocate a budget for this or seek funding from the organising Department.

- ▶ Notify **other stakeholders** and interested parties through your usual communication channels (website, newsletters, email, etc.) about the Co-Design and provide opportunity for them to provide comment or other input.
- ▶ Identify any proprietary or **confidential matters** relevant to the Co-Design which you do not want shared in workshops with other organisations.
- ▶ Decide what things related to the proposed program or services are '**non-negotiable**' for your organisation and what are the areas where there can be a flexible approach to service delivery.
- ▶ Conduct whatever **research** or other inquiries you think would be useful in adding to the organisation's experience and expertise (for

example, in looking into local factors if the service is to be delivered outside of your usual service area.)

With this level of preparation, you should be able to enter into the Co-Design with confidence that your contribution will be highly valued and that you will be able to influence the outcome to the benefit of your organisation and the people you work with.

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<sup>1</sup> See Co-Design Definitions and Principles Tool