

# THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS IN MORE DETAIL

## How to use this tool

Use this Tool to match the Co-Design process to the scale, scope and purpose of your program or service design, and to ensure your Co-Design workshops are comprehensive and effective.

## Essential Elements in Co-Design

While each Co-Design project will be different from any other, there are common elements which will apply in most cases where funding has been allocated to a particular issue and the focus is on design of the program or services to address the issue.

A major series of contracts for multiple services across all regions of the State will necessarily involve many more participants and take a longer time with more planning sessions than a revision of an existing contract for a single service to a targeted group of service users.

Most processes will however involve some workshops (not necessarily with the same participants at each); documenting, reporting and feedback on outcomes from the workshops; and additional engagement with service users and other experts.

These common elements include:

- ▶ The comprehensive preparation described in the preparation Tools for Government and

the community sector, including clarification of scope; identification of Co-Design participants; collection of relevant historical, demographic and planning data; decisions about the role and method of engagement of service users; and commitment and mandate for use of Co-Design as the preferred planning model.

- ▶ Pre-workshop distribution of documentation and invitations to participate.
- ▶ An initial workshop with establishing actions, exercises or activities which will build a willingness to cooperate, a common sense of purpose and shared understanding. These typically include:
  - ♦ A welcome to participants, including Aboriginal Welcome to Country, with a focus on respect for the wealth of knowledge, experience and skills in the room and on shared commitment of participants to getting better outcomes from human services.
  - ♦ A (preferably very brief) formal or semi-formal opening address from a senior

**CO-DESIGN  
TOOLKIT**

person with the authority to pass on the mandate to participants to be genuine decision-makers in the Co-Design process. Sharing this opening address with a consumer representative who can also pass on the mandate from service users would be a powerful demonstration of the equal partnership that genuine Co-Design requires.

- ♦ An exercise of some kind to build personal rapport<sup>1</sup> among the participants, usually through some sharing of personal experience or an 'ice-breaker' activity;
- ♦ A brief presentation from funding body on the proposed program or service, and further exploration with participants, particularly with a focus on reaching common understanding on the intent of the funding provided and the scope<sup>2</sup> for variation in the design of the proposed program or services.
- ♦ A presentation and discussion on the proposed process and timelines for workshops, feedback and program or service model development. This should also be used to reinforce the scope of the co-design - what is in scope and what is not.
- ♦ A knowledge sharing activity<sup>3</sup> or activities to explore: the nature of the issue; the characteristics of the potential service users – their issues/problems, their strengths/assets, the nature/history of their service use; the current related service environment (i.e. what is already there); and what has worked

and not worked in the past. This activity may be in several parts, depending on time available and nature of the issue. For example, the 'issue' might be explored in a brainstorm; service user characteristics explored with each group allocated a 'brief profile' to expand on; service use explored in role play; and service environment explored through expansion of a previously prepared chart or diagram.

- ♦ An opportunity for the participants as a whole to reflect on the descriptions which have emerged from the workshop so far. Having the facilitator or others in the room identify themes and patterns, and testing those back with the group can be useful in making sense of the mass of detail which typically emerges through these kinds of activities. This stage may also include decision-making or consensus-seeking around the implications for service provision of some of the elements identified.
- Once the basic parameters of the issue, the people involved and the service environment have been explored, it is time to focus on key aspects of the proposed program or service model. Depending on the complexity of the issue, this may be a separate workshop on a different day. Recent examples of Co-Design planning in WA have involved three workshops (either full or half day) with additional consumer engagement outside of the workshops. This typically involves separate but related sessions on:

- ◆ High level outcomes
  - ◆ Target groups for service provision
  - ◆ Types of service and service delivery model required
  - ◆ Skills required of service providers
  - ◆ Mechanics of service provision
  - ◆ Links to other programs and services
  - ◆ Relationships between funder, service provider and service user (and carers/families and others where appropriate)
  - ◆ Key performance indicators and other measures<sup>5</sup>
  - ◆ Program or service reporting requirements
  - ◆ Means of ensuring ongoing Co-Design through the implementation of the program
  - ◆ Ongoing governance arrangements
- ▶ Each workshop must have a process for capturing the outcomes. This includes the notes and other documentations created by participants and summary notes covering the whole group feedback and decision-making. Having at least one person whose main purpose is recording the outcomes can be very useful.
  - ▶ Workshop participants should be provided with a record of the workshop outcomes as soon as possible after the event. This lets people know their voice has been heard and gives them an opportunity to add or correct.
  - ▶ Between workshops it is important for participants to know how the program or service model has changed as a result

of their input. This can either be included in the report of the previous workshop or distributed separately prior to the next.

- ▶ If separate processes are being used for service user engagement in the Co-Design then there needs to be an effective way of sharing outcomes from both processes. Ideally there should be overlap of participants in both as well as documented exchange.

- ▶ The conclusion of the workshop phase of Co-Design should include summary of outcomes achieved, confirmation of agreements reached and celebration of the valuable contributions made.

As far as possible the post-workshop phase where more detailed specifications are drawn up should also involve the sectors represented in the workshops.

It is critical to genuine Co-Design that the specifications drawn up be sufficiently flexible to allow further innovation and creative approaches to be proposed by service providers bidding for the work.

The specifications should also include provision for the continuation of Co-Design principles in the implementation phase.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is important because all the research on collaboration emphasises the importance of inter-personal relationships and the social nature of working together. There is a great deal of potential variation in exercises which can be effective, with most involving an element of fun. It is recommended that the particular model be discussed in advance with representatives of service providers and service users to ensure its appropriateness.

<sup>2</sup> While a clear statement of the scope (what is in and what is out of scope) should have been distributed prior to the workshop, there are several reasons for revisiting it with the participants in the room: ensuring common understanding; providing opportunities to test the limits of the scope; and uncovering unanticipated consequences flowing from decisions already made (including those which may lead to the scope being revised.)

<sup>3</sup> Typically a small group activity with key points documented and reported back, either verbally or through prominent display. Providing structure for the discussion and documentation will assist in maintaining focus and in providing notes which can be more readily shared and analysed.

<sup>4</sup> Depending on the complexity of the issue, this may be a separate workshop on a different day. Recent examples of Co-Design planning in WA have involved three workshops (either full or half day) with additional consumer engagement outside of the workshops.

<sup>5</sup> This can prove to be difficult to progress in a large workshop and may benefit from work being done between workshops by a smaller group with specialist expertise and consumer representation. If this is done, then the KPIs drafted need to be brought back to the main group for consideration and endorsement.

