

update

Issue 66 • Summer 2013-14 •
Co-Design

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ACTCOSS newsflash

The ACTCOSS office will close over the holiday season from 23 December 2013, & will reopen on 6 January 2014.

www.actcoss.org.au

For closing & reopening times of ACT emergency relief providers & community services, please see the Citizens Advice Bureau ACT website: www.citizensadvice.org.au



Co-Design

By Susan Helyar, Director, ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS)

This newsletter showcases several perspectives on 'co-design', an approach to developing policy and service models that is being used by government, the community sector and philanthropic organisations around Australia and across the world.

The theory and values that underpin co-design align closely with those that underpin community development. ACTCOSS welcomes adoption of approaches that preference the voices of people most affected by decisions, build shared understandings of challenges and priorities for action, and open our minds to the insights and techniques of other disciplines not usually associated with development of social policy and service models.

ACTCOSS also welcomes the healthy scepticism of many who ask, 'Is this just consultation dressed up differently?' If employed rigorously and properly, co-design has the potential to genuinely transform assessment of need and

identification of preferred responses to inequality, vulnerability, discrimination and exclusion. If applied tokenistically, it carries the risk of further disengaging people who feel their expectations and insights are sought, but do not truly influence decisions.

ACTCOSS commends the ACT Community Services Directorate decision to invest significant resources into applying the techniques of co-design to development of a more coherent and effective approach to providing human services (community services, health, education and criminal justice services) to people in Canberra. The community sector has also invested substantial resources in bringing the perspective of service users and service providers into the Human Services Blueprint co-design process. ACTCOSS will be watching closely to make sure the community, and our constituents in particular, see a good return on these investments.

Co-design: More than sticky notes & goodwill

By Mel Edwards and Justin Barrie, Design Managers Australia (DMA)

DMA is a Canberra-based service design agency working with private, public, community and volunteer organisations.

The following piece, based on a recent presentation to the ACT Youth Affairs Conference 2013, is intended to demystify the 'buzzword'.

What is co-design?

Co-design is the process of deliberately engaging users of the system, including both those who receive and deliver services, being led by process experts (such as Designers), to actively understand, explore and ultimately change a system together.

Co-Design is effectively collaboration through a design process. It sits within a continuum of engagement:

- **Communicate:** Informing the public and deliverers of service about what is going to happen
- **Consult:** Engaging with multiple people to indirectly influence outcomes
- **Coordinate:** The bringing together of different and multiple working elements for consolidation towards a shared outcome
- **Collaboration through Co-Design:** Multiple people working together in a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship to achieve a common goal

What is key about co-design is that it is about designing with people; the right people.

Co-design principles

- It's about moving from a current state to a better state
- It's a conscious process to ultimately make something to effect change
- It's about building up ideas through synthesis and analysis
- It's collaborative and inter-disciplinary
- Has techniques that are to intended to engage and humanise the problem-solving activity.

Key co-design tools & techniques

Co-design is a rich process, but we want to highlight two techniques and two artefacts that anyone involved should either be involved in the creation of, receive, or have access to.

Technique: Research

Design research utilises a variety of techniques—such as interviews, indirect observation, background research—to explore directly with users their experience for the purpose of understanding what people think

(motivations, perceptions, expectations), do (activities, interactions, relationships), use (products, services, messages). The result is a deep understanding from a human perspective of what it is like to interact within a service, policy, process or social/service system.

Technique: Prototyping

Prototyping is about visually and tangibly putting together a working model of a concept in order to quickly test out various aspects of a design, illustrate ideas or features, and gather early feedback. This includes simple sketches and visual representations of working models all the way to mocked-up service components such as websites, apps, or physical environments.

Artefact: Customer experience map

A map is the representation of the service journey of a customer. It shows their perspective from the beginning, middle and end as they engage a service to achieve their goal, showing the range of tangible and quantitative interactions, triggers and touch points, as well as the intangible and qualitative motivations, frustrations and meanings.

Artefact: User typologies

Typologies are evidence-based descriptions (not fictional personas) of the expectations, behaviours and motivations of types of people who will be using a service:

- Who they are (in relation to the service)
- How they operate (within the system)
- What they expect
- What frustrates them.

The techniques and artefacts of a co-design process can be used by teams involved to:

- Understand the experiences of users
- Communicate to others experiences, barriers and opportunities
- Assess impacts and risks of change and make evidence-based decisions
- Understand the 'end-to-end' big picture.

We hope that this guide offers some assistance in understanding both what you can expect in a co-design process and what may be expected of you.



www.designmanagers.com.au

Co-design: More than just a buzzword

By Rebecca Cuzzillo, Policy and Development Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT

Three weeks ago, when I started with the Youth Coalition of the ACT, I had never heard of co-design. It did not take long however to realise that if I was going to be working in the community sector, I needed to understand and start using this so-called 'buzzword'.

I first came across co-design as a topic at the recent ACT Youth Affairs Conference. From what I could gather, I was not the only person mystified by the meaning of co-design. As such, I attended the co-design session with much anticipation.

Mel Edwards from Design Managers Australia has a wealth of knowledge and expertise when it comes to co-design. Her presentation, called 'Co-Design: More Than Post-Its and Goodwill', explained that co-design is a collaborative design process where service providers and users actively work together. Importantly, it is more than just consultation or coordination—co-design is about deliberately designing *with* service users, not *for* them.

Mel's workshop was followed by a presentation from Nicole Moore of the ACT Community Services Directorate. Nicole discussed her experience of co-design as a member of the Strengthening Families Committee. The Committee is currently undertaking a

co-design project called 'Improving Services with Families', which is aimed at delivering a better service response to families accessing multiple service systems. Nicole's reflection gave a great example of how co-design works in practice and how it is currently being implemented in the ACT.

While I emerged from the session with a much greater understanding of co-design, the session also raised some questions. At the beginning of her presentation Mel asked the audience why we wanted to learn more about co-design. One attendee put it quite bluntly when she explained her reasoning—if co-design was the new buzzword, she needed to know how to use it in order to write submissions to gain funding from government.

Being new to the sector, this raised a number of questions for me. Does the community sector already engage in co-design practice? And if so, does this new buzzword give us the opportunity to articulate an old concept in a new way? Does it change the way we access funding for activities we are already undertaking? Or are we yet to embrace co-design as a sector? And if so, is co-design pure rhetoric or a radical change to our sector's practice?

I suspect the value of co-design is somewhere between these two extremes. Co-design resonates with me as an effective way to design services that promote a sense of shared ownership between service providers and users. As such, co-design could help us address some of the issues faced by the ACT community sector.

The Listening to Families Report released earlier this year identified that individuals and families often face a number of barriers when accessing services. In response, the Improving Services with Families co-design project is about working with families to design changes to the current system that reduce the existing barriers and improve service delivery.

Co-design is thus more than just a buzzword. If done properly, co-design has the potential to create significant and meaningful change in our practice as a sector.



www.youthcoalition.net



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Co-design is cool, unfortunately

By Simon Rosenberg, CEO, Northside Community Service

At this time of year, the media often run filler stories, such as what is 'in' and 'out'. If the human services sector did the same, 'co-design' would definitely be high on the 'in' list. Co-design is cool. I predict that in a year or two, strategic plans and annual reports in both government and non-government agencies will be full of the phrase.

And that's the problem. We are increasingly seeing a lot of uncritical use of the term. I recently heard two senior people discussing what was really a token consultation with a group of service users. They were calling it co-design. The risk is that without some rigour in our understanding, co-design becomes a must-have accessory that no human services leader wants to be seen without. 'Co-design is in danger of being applied to any client engagement activities, and this in turn dilutes its potentially radical contribution.'¹ To some extent, this is already the fate of 'collaboration' and 'person-centred'.

I have been involved with two significant co-designed projects in Canberra recently: the Strengthening Families project (aka 'Improving Services with Families'), and Corrections Throughcare. Both were established with the intent of engaging service users and deliverers in the design process, to try to get a better result. Both were also about the community sector and government engaging together in unfamiliar ways. And both succeeded. This experience provides some lessons for co-design, if it is really going to work, and be worthy of the name.

Be clear on the purpose

This is about a vision that is shared amongst all the co-design players, and a determination to start from there and 'build backwards', rather than focus on current problems. This enables potentially radical thinking about what can be achieved, not the usual incremental approach. For Corrections Throughcare, the problem was obvious: prisoners were being released with little or no supports. So with our ACT Government partners, we went straight to inventing the solution.

Be flexible about the 'who'

One of the exciting things about co-design is the potential to draw on many ideas and perspectives, and to challenge the way we do business. This also means deliberately involving more than 'the usual suspects.' Some of the best ideas emerging through Strengthening Families were from families themselves, and frontline staff, who would not normally have been engaged in what might be seen as policy work. As Burkett notes: 'Co-design processes thrive when boundaries are flexible and

silos are broken down, when real listening and dialogue can occur across unlikely alliances.'²

Be clear on the scope

I would argue that co-design is particularly useful for 'transformative' processes. Strengthening Families has the potential to radically change the way we not only deliver services, but relate to service users. It could shift the focus of control to families as genuine partners in service design, delivery and review, rather than as passive recipients. That said, co-design can equally be applied to something more limited, where the aim is just to improve an aspect of a service experience, such as client access, or how referrals are working. The key thing is to involve all the affected parties in an open way.

Be prepared to work differently, & take risks

Co-design requires a new culture—'getting the soft stuff right'—including enhanced levels of trust. This is about working outside the usual hierarchies and roles, and being prepared to share power in ways that may be uncomfortable and challenging, and require courage. Corrections Throughcare involved a process of 'letting go' by senior policy officers in ACT Government. They let us into the policy development tent, and were very frank about sharing sensitive ideas which ultimately ended up in a Cabinet submission. This worked because the community sector participants were clear about government process and roles, and did not breach the trust that senior officials had invested in us. The result was better government decision-making, which also had sector ownership.

Take time

Co-design is a good tool for the more complex or 'wicked' problems, which are rarely solved through a quick fix. In addition, building effective and trusting relationships with all participants cannot be rushed. This can give rise to concerns about the use of people's time and resources, but is best considered as an investment, which will pay off through improved social impact. The Corrections Throughcare process took three years to get to the implementation stage. The recently commenced Human Services Blueprint process is already incorporating elements of co-design, and will probably take some years to embed.

Acquire the skills

Like collaboration, co-design doesn't just happen. Whether it is service users, community sector staff or government

officials, everyone needs the skills, capacity, support and authority to effectively participate. Strengthening Families involved all three parties, but was aided by a strong consultancy team, who understood co-design and assisted everyone to acquire the skills to participate effectively. Corrections Throughcare took as long as it did partly because we were all 'learning on the job'.

Finally, a plea to ensure that co-design does not stop at design. Too many great ideas have faltered because of poor implementation. Well-designed services and programs will work better if the partnerships created

during the design phase are sustained. This also means involving service users—and all key players—in any review.

1 Ingrid Burkett, 'Co-designing for Social Good: The radical potential of co-design for civil society organisations', The Centre for Social Impact Blog, 4 Feb 2013, <<https://blog.csi.edu.au/2013/02/co-designing-for-social-good-the-radical-potential-of-co-design-for-civil-society-organisations>>.

2 *ibid.*

Benambra: Applying Co-Design to the Development of an Intentional Community

By Sally Richards and Karen Connaughton, Getting a Life Intentional Community

Benambra Intentional Community was completed in May 2013 and consists of 25 public houses located in Alsop Close, Phillip.

The development of the Intentional Community was a long time in the designing. It started as a vision and goal for three families who each have a son with a disability and was realised in collaboration with two government departments, Housing ACT and Disability ACT, and a community organisation, Hartley Lifecare.

Benambra Intentional Community was officially opened with much celebration from all involved by the Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce on 22 May 2013.

The families

Several years ago, we, the families of Jackson, Daniel and Ben, three young men in their 20s, started planning and designing a place for our sons to live, each in their own homes. The plan was to build and then create a 'community of intent'; a place where all the residents including Daniel, Jackson and Ben could feel a sense of belonging; where all residents experience that warm feeling of living in a safe, welcoming and friendly



neighbourhood. We wanted each person living within the complex to acknowledge each other and offer practical support when needed.

None of the families wanted their sons to be in a disability-specific house or to live together in a group house. We did not want the place our sons were to call home to be congregated or segregated from the non-disabled community.

This was very much a family driven project from the beginning through to its final realisation. Jackson, Daniel and Ben are now all living in Benambra with support and are settled amongst a supportive environment in their own home. The young men and the other residents in the Intentional Community all know each other, greet each other and socialise at barbeques, music sessions, afternoon teas, working

bees and parties. In developing this community we have given each resident 'permission' to offer and receive friendliness.

The families and others continue to build community capacity.

Housing ACT

Housing ACT were open to new ideas and opportunities to expand the social housing options in the ACT. They listened to us (the families), read our business plans and after some years agreed to fund the building of Benambra. They also worked with Housing ACT tenants to facilitate the transition of families interested in living in a friendly and caring environment to express an interest in moving to the Intentional Community.

Housing ACT brought to the project its talented and experienced staff, its

knowledge of and skills in building public housing and its expertise in working with the ACT Government, architects, builders and project managers and tenants.

Hartley Lifecare

Hartley Lifecare is a Canberra-based organisation that has provided accommodation support and respite care for children, adults and their families in the ACT and region with physical and complex disabilities for 50 years.

In addition they are an organisation who will listen to people with disabilities and their families and who will take calculated risks to support innovative projects and ideas.

With the Intentional Community Hartley worked with the three families and with Housing ACT to develop and implement a model of support unique to the ACT; that of co-residency. They have also

provided a support role in the development of the 'community' around Jackson, Daniel and Ben.

Disability ACT

Much valued funding for the new model of support was negotiated with and provided by Disability ACT.

Why co-design worked

This project was new to all involved and each person, department and organisation learnt, grew and adapted as the project progressed and developed.

Its success is a testimony to co-design involving each of the four partners, with each bringing their expertise to the table but at the same time being respectful of and listening to the others. There was a strong sense of collaboration and partnership during the entire process. Each partner acknowledged the skills, expertise, needs and

constraints of the others and each took time to understand the concept of working with, rather than doing for.

Each recognised that the concept of an Intentional Community with the co-residency support model was unique and had the potential to:

- Give 25 individuals or families, including three young men with a disability, a home in a friendly welcoming community
- Give three young men with a disability autonomy and a chance to contribute to their community
- Be a landmark development that encompassed best practice on person-centeredness
- Be equitable, cost effective and repeatable.

Find out more:

www.gettingalife.com.au



ACTCOSS AGM, 50th birthday, new Committee, & Constitution

New Committee

At the ACTCOSS AGM on 14 November 2013, new representatives to the ACTCOSS Committee were elected. The 2013-14 committee is as follows:

Executive Members

- **President:** Jenny Kitchin, Anglicare ACT
- **Vice-President:** Darlene Cox, Health Care Consumers Association
- **Treasurer:** Simon Rosenberg, Northside Community Service
- **Secretary:** Cheryl Pollard, DUO Services

Ordinary Members

- Alexa McLaughlin (Associate Member)
- Miranda Garnett (Koomarri)

- Lucy Mitchell (Marymead Child and Family Centre)
- Camilla Rowland, Karralika Programs Inc.
- Fiona MacGregor, YWCA of Canberra
- Brendan Church, Aboriginal Justice Centre
- Nathalie Maconachie, Asthma Foundation ACT

We farewell outgoing members Sandi McGowan, (Marymead Child & Family Centre), and Emma Walter (Woden Community Service). We also acknowledge Paul Cubitt (Associate Member), Dee McGrath (Carers ACT), Emma Street (Associate Member), and Tania Tahana (Associate Member) who resigned during the year. Thank you for your hard work on the ACTCOSS General Committee during 2012-13.

If you would like to contact our committee members, please email actcoss@actcoss.org.au or phone 02 6202 7200 and we will pass on your contact details.

Constitutional changes

At the AGM a revised Constitution was adopted by majority vote of the membership present. Find the new Constitution on the ACTCOSS website: www.actcoss.org.au/about/docs.html

50th birthday & ACTCOSS Jubilee poem

After the AGM ACTCOSS celebrated its 50th birthday with a party, exhibition, speeches, and the unveiling of a poem commissioned by ACTCOSS. The ACTCOSS Jubilee poem was composed by local writer Hal Judge, who spent several months researching ACTCOSS' history and mission. It narrates 50 years of ACTCOSS in rhyming verse. Read the poem here: www.actcoss.org.au/publications/misc/actcoss-jubilee-poem-2013.pdf

Thank you to Richard Tuffin of AtRTPHOTOS who kindly provided pro-bono photography services for the evening. View his website portfolio: www.atrtpphotos.com

Life Membership

At the 50th birthday celebration ACTCOSS was pleased to confer its first Life Membership to Jean Moran OAM. Jean was recognised for her active role in establishing ACTCOSS in 1963 and her ongoing commitment to social justice and reform in the ACT community.

ACTCOSS staff farewells



Julia Gilchrist
Disability Project Officer

Julia Gilchrist has worked in a disability project role in ACTCOSS assisting us with our participation in debates and sector development in the lead

up to launch of the NDIS in the ACT. Julia embodied the personal being political, bringing her experience of living with disability to her policy analysis and sector consultations. Julia's work on sector readiness and consumer voice have made a valuable contribution to our advocacy on disability issues.



Admir Meko
Research Project Officer

Admir Meko has worked with ACTCOSS for the past six months completing two research projects.

The first was a scoping study funded by Disability ACT on the feasibility of Citizen Advocacy in the ACT. This research was published on our website on 6 December 2013. The second was a review of the public administration and policy frameworks that underpins NGO provision of services. This research has informed our advocacy on red tape reduction and sector development. We have valued Admir's strong research skills and his support to colleagues in the ACTCOSS team.

What's ACTCOSS been up to?

Since the Spring newsletter, we have been promoting justice, equity, social inclusion and reconciliation in the ACT by...

Running seminars & forums

- Human Services Blueprint Focus Group for consumers - December 2013
- Board Basics and Financial Management - November 2013
- Aboriginal Culture, History & Heritage - November 2013
- 1 Day Appreciation of Torres Strait Culture Awareness Training - November 2013
- ASU & ACTCOSS information session on advocacy about ERO supplementation - October 2013
- Tailored Governance training for a number of community organisations

Advocating on policy & programs

- Submission on the *Inquiry into Sentencing in the ACT*
- *Disadvantage in the ACT: Report for ACT Anti-Poverty Week*
- Fact sheet: *Reducing energy and water costs in rental properties*
- Submission to the ACT Budget, *ACTCOSS Budget Priorities 2014-15*
- *ACT Council of Social Service Inc Annual Report 2012-13*
- *Exploring the Feasibility of a Citizen Advocacy Program in the ACT Community: A Scoping Research Study*

Other activities & events

- ACTCOSS Annual General Meeting, 50th Birthday Celebration and Exhibition - November 2013
- Published the ACTCOSS Strategic Plan for 2014-18
- Passing the revised ACTCOSS Constitution
- Informing the development of the Human Services Blueprint by participating in the Intensive Design workshop, running a consumer focus group, and being a part of the Blueprint Taskforce

Visit www.actcoss.org.au for publications, upcoming seminars, and other news.

Erratum

ACTCOSS apologises for the error which appeared in Issue 65 of *Update*, published in October 2013. On page 6 in the byline of the article by Kiki Korpinen, we mistakenly wrote Ms Korpinen's position as 'Director' instead of 'Deputy Chief Executive Officer' of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused.

Next issue:

Update Issue 67, Autumn 2014 edition

Women in the ACT Frustrated, Motivated, Activated

Members are welcome to contribute articles on these themes.

Copy deadline: 17 Feb 2014

Space is limited! To guarantee your spot, let Suzanne know as soon as possible.

Email: suzanne.richardson@actcoss.org.au
Ph: 02 6202 7235

Issue 67 will be distributed in March 2014.

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1/4 page	\$30	\$90
1/2 page	\$60	\$150
Full page	\$100	\$225
Flyer insert	\$70	\$100

Dates for your diary

ACTCOSS training

Stay tuned to the ACTCOSS website for upcoming training dates in 2014.

Events

23 Dec 2013-3 Jan 2014 ACTCOSS office shutdown	Mon 27 Jan 2014 Australia Day public holiday (substitute for Sun 26 Jan)
Wed 25 Dec 2013 Christmas Day public holiday	Thu 13 Feb 2014 Anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations
Thu 26 Dec 2013 Boxing Day public holiday	Mon 10 Mar 2014 Canberra Day
Wed 1 Jan 2014 New Years Day public holiday	

For more information on ACTCOSS training and events, please call us on 02 6202 7200, email actcoss@actcoss.org.au, or visit us at our website:

www.actcoss.org.au



The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for people living with low incomes or disadvantage, and not-for-profit community organisations in the Australian Capital Territory.

ACTCOSS acknowledges Canberra has been built on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respects to their Elders and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contributions to the ACT community.

ACTCOSS

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ACTCOSS welcomes feedback. Please visit the 'Contact' page on our website for our feedback form, or contact us using the details above.

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Office Coordinator Lisa Wells	Communications & Membership Officer Suzanne Richardson
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Update is a quarterly newsletter that provides an opportunity for issues relevant to ACTCOSS' membership to be discussed and for information to be shared. Views expressed are those of individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy views of ACTCOSS.