

A Guide to Co-design

Guidebook

*An easy guide to working
with other people in a
genuinely collaborative
and creative way to design
programs and initiatives
based on real human needs.*

**We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander peoples as the true custodians of the land
on which we live and work.**

How to use this guide

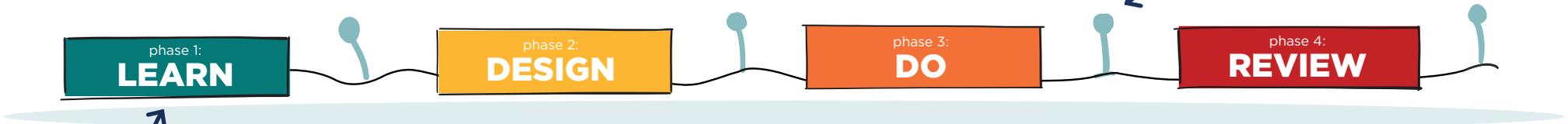
This guide was developed to support a co-design approach in the commissioning process at WVPHN. It's designed to help you work with the people for whom you are designing and to work with partners who will help make that program or initiative come to life. It doesn't replace the other work you do to understand quantitative data. It's about getting to the heart of what matters to people and how that can be addressed. This guide and the steps in it do not replace the commissioning process: it's a way of working within the process that exists.

This guide can also be used to support a co-design approach in other kinds of work at WVPHN.

- You can use it to work differently within your own team
- You can use it to work differently and collaboratively with other teams at WVPHN
- You can use it to work with external partners
- You can use it to work with community members

Milestones check that you and your work are ready to move to the next phase.

Structure of the guide



The four phases have prompt questions to help you work in each phase.

The guide sets out different phases of co-design and suggests prompt questions to help you work in that phase. We encourage you to think about where you are in the process and consider which questions might be relevant to your work, what extra things you might need to learn or understand and the best ways to answer them based on your own context.

This guide is not a recipe. You don't need to follow it exactly...

What is co-design?

Co-design—short for collaborative design—is a design-led method of tackling complex problems that is especially effective in contexts where we:

- are designing for other people with needs and context different from ours
- may not have a complete understanding of the challenge and what underpins it, or
- need to work with other people who have diverse perspectives, experiences, expertise and approaches.

Co-design emphasises three problem-solving qualities—explorative, iterative and collaborative.

It is differentiated from other problem solving approaches by its focus on properly spending the time to fully understand the challenge before even attempting to develop the solution. It also makes a point of identifying and testing assumptions, drawing on real human behaviour and motivators, and testing and refining solutions until they are demonstrably fit-for-purpose in the eyes of those who will be affected by the design or change.



What is not co-design?

Not all processes called co-design are co-design. Sometimes a genuine intent is compromised when we are unable to protect the time and process required for true co-design. Sometimes co-design is mistaken for a process that is really consultation or validation.

So how can we spot “not co-design”?

- If we aren't directly learning from and working with the people we are designing things for, it's not co-design.
- If we haven't carried out any primary qualitative exploration of the challenge, the people we are designing for and their needs, preferences,

behaviours, reality and expectations, it's not co-design.

- If we are going in with a solution, preconceived ideas or untested assumptions, it's not co-design.
- If we are championing, selling or otherwise attempting to persuade anyone of anything, it's not co-design.
- If we aren't testing our ideas and solutions with a genuine openness to changing them, it's not co-design.



Attitudes to co-design

Attitudes are the way we choose to be in our work. They represent what we accept and believe, which influences how we perceive and behave. These attitudes will support you working in a collaborative way and are a good place to start every phase of co-design.



Be flexible



Be clear



Be appreciative



Be curious



Be prepared



Be timely



Be relevant



Explore all the things to help you land on the right problem and design the right program with the right people.



Attitudes

Learn about who to work with and how to work:

- Who is going to be helping us in this exploration?
- What do we know about our intended partners, and how they like to work?
- How can we support them to work with us?
- How can we best work together? (What time do people have, how long will this take?)
- Do we have the skills we need to do this work? If not, how can we build them?

Learn about things that impact how we work and what we come up with:

- How much authority do we have as a team?
- Do we know who our decision maker is?
- What constraints do we have? (Think about time, money, resourcing, physical infrastructure, geographical factors etc.)

- What is the likelihood of something going wrong? What are the consequences?
- What is our time frame?

Learn about the issue or problem:

- What do we already know?
- What more do we need to learn?
- Who do we need to learn from?
- What experiences do we need to understand? How can we learn with sensitivity?
- What are our assumptions?
- Is our plan to learn feasible?
- What do we already know about methods for collecting information? Which ones will work here?
- How will we organise ourselves to learn/ who will do what?

Understand the issue or problem:

- What patterns and connections can we see in the information we have gathered?
- What human needs and values are sitting behind these?
- What are people's current experiences?
- What experience do people want?
- From what we've understood, where can we have the most impact?
- Can we agree on a focus with our partners?
- Have we included our decision maker in our process?

Learn about how to do talk about this work:

- Who do we need to talk to about this? How best do we do that?
- When is a good time to communicate with people?
- Are we clear about why we are communicating to people?
- Are our communications easy to understand?
- Have we made it easy for people to talk to us about this work?





Make and test the program that has the people we are in service with at its core.



Attitudes

Create the space for design:

- Have we set up the conditions to ideate together? (Time, space, materials, mindset)
- Who will we involve and at what stage when coming up with ideas?
- Are we focusing on the experience we want to create when we ideate?

Come up with our ideas:

- Are we being divergent in our thinking?
- Are we exploring all possibilities?
- Have we heard from everyone?
- Have we used different ways for coming up with ideas? (Drawing, talking, making, writing)
- Have we got any wacky ideas?
- Have we looked for inspiration elsewhere?
- Are the people we are in service with here, or at the front of our minds?

Narrow and test our ideas:

- Can we combine any of our ideas?

- Can we do a quick test with other people of our ideas?
- Who can we test with? Are we hearing from the people we are in service with?
- What do we want to learn about our ideas?
- Do we need to take into account cost, resources, time, distance?
- Do we need to check in with the decision maker?
- Which ideas can we eliminate for now?
- Which ideas do we want to take forward?

Refine our ideas:

- What is the best way for us to learn about our idea?
- What kind of prototypes can we make that best represent the ideas?
- How can we enable honest and constructive feedback?
- Who will we test with? How can we make this easy for them?

- Are we open to honest and constructive feedback?
- How are we recording what we learn?
- How do we make sense of what we've learned?
- How are we modifying our design based on what we've learnt?
- Does our design and criteria inadvertently exclude any communities or partners?
- Have we checked in with the decision maker?
- Do we know the best way to talk about our design? Who needs to know about it?

Design to measure:

- Who can best help us come up with measures for our design?
- Do we have clarity and agreement on exactly what we are trying to achieve?
- How will we know we've been successful?
- How will we measure our success?

- How can we facilitate useful information collection without adding a burden to organisations or individuals?
- What tools do we need to do this?
- Can we learn from information that has already been collected?





Work with our partners to implement our program, to achieve agreed outcomes. See the program in action in the communities we are in service with.



Attitudes

Select our partner/s to implement our design:

- What is the most appropriate way to go about selecting our partner/s?
- How do we be clear in communicating our design?
- Who are we making this opportunity available to? Have we considered all possible partners?
- Are we making this opportunity available to all communities and partners that could benefit?
- Have we set a reasonable lead time for selection and communicated this clearly to our partners?
- Have we made it as easy as possible for potential partners to give us information that allows our selection? What can we do to support partners who wish to respond?
- Are our criteria for selecting our partner/s fair? Have we communicated that clearly?

- Have we communicated our decision to everyone in a clear and timely way?
- Do partners that weren't successful know why they weren't? How can we support them to be more successful with future opportunities?

Do the work:

- How will we set up our relationship with our partner/s to make sure we get good outcomes?
- Are we being timely with our communication and support?
- Are we clear on what we all need from each other?
- Have we planned regular check ins with our partner/s?
- Do our partner/s know who they can get in touch with at WVPHN?
- Are we supporting our partner/s with things we are learning from other work?

- Are we evaluating the outcomes of the program as we go?
- Can we tweak or change the program if we need to?
- Are we focussed on the outcomes of the program so we can respond to things that don't go to plan? (Not just throughput process etc.)
- Are we acknowledging, sharing, celebrating things that go well?





Understand how the program went and what it achieved to build into future work.



Attitudes

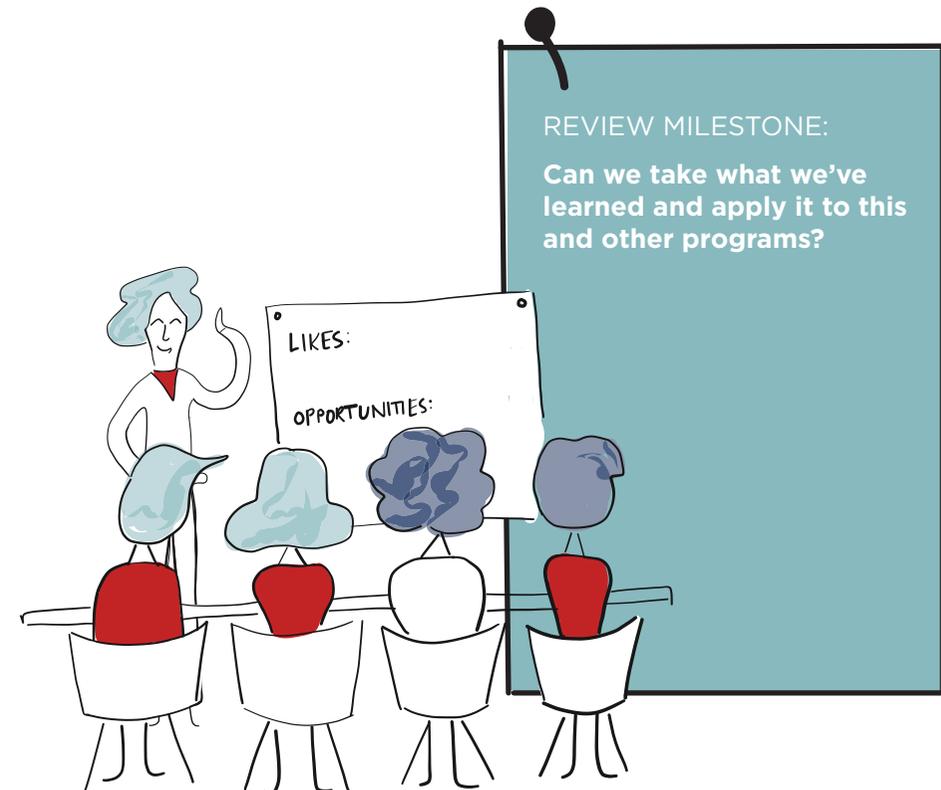
Set up the review:

- Who can we include?
- What timeframes make sense for everybody involved?
- Are we going to do it ourselves or get someone else to do it? (Facilitate, independent review etc.)
- Have we checked back in with what we said we wanted to learn? And is there anything we want to add in?
- Have we clearly communicated the purpose of our review?
- Do we know what specific questions we need to ask? Have we got a mix of open and closed questions? Have we got a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions?
- How can we support people to give honest and constructive feedback?
- Have we set up the tools and ways of collecting the information?

- Are we working with our partners to make it as easy and as effective as possible? Are we including them in things that matter to them?
- Is there anyone we need to check in with about how we will review?

Doing the review:

- Are we well prepared to get feedback? Have we prepared those who will give feedback?
- Are we being open and curious to feedback?
- How we allowing everyone to be heard?
- Are we being flexible in response to people's needs?
- Are we asking people to review things that matter to them?
- Are we showing appreciation for people's time and contribution?



Acknowledgement of everyone

We'd like to acknowledge and thank everyone who shared their experiences, supported and participated in the co-design of this guide. We appreciate the time taken and careful consideration of what co-design means in your own context. We acknowledge the honest and openness shown during our co-design process.