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Foreword

Strong, vibrant and successful communities are built by people who live in them. They are underpinned by networks of social and economic connections, involving all levels of government, and a broad range of local interest groups and community service providers.

Local government, as the closest form of government to the community, has a key role to play in bringing organisations together to facilitate community development.

By working effectively with individuals and community organisations, local governments can add value to existing programs, create new opportunities and deliver ongoing benefits for communities.

This guide, developed by the Community Development Roundtable, provides elected council members with information about the benefits to the community of establishing and having community development as core business. In addition it provides practical examples of effective collaborative partnerships between local governments and community organisations that directly benefit Western Australians.

I thank the members of the Community Development Roundtable – the Department of Local Government and Communities, the Western Australian Council of Social Service, the Western Australian Local Government Association and Local Government Managers Australia (WA) – for their strategic guidance and work in delivering this important resource.

I encourage local governments to make use of this guide to assist in forming new partnerships and new ways of delivering improved outcomes for local communities.

Tony Simpson

Hon Tony Simpson MLA
Minister for Local Government; Community Services; Seniors and Volunteering; Youth
The Community Development Roundtable

This publication has been developed by the Community Development Roundtable, established in 2014 as a forum to:

- connect State Government, local governments and the community sector;
- identify and champion opportunities for innovation and strategic alliances;
- oversee strategies to achieve place-based outcomes, including partnerships and community capacity building;
- use data and evidence to inform discussions of trends and scenarios and establish joint priorities and a common agenda; and
- review results of evaluation of initiatives undertaken by members of the partnership.

The Roundtable comprises the Chief Executive Officers from:

- Department of Local Government and Communities (DLGC);
- Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA);
- Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA WA); and
- Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS).

Left to right: Irina Catallini (WACOSS), Ricky Burges (WALGA), Jennifer Mathews (DLGC) and Warren Pearce (LGMA WA)
Community development

What is community development?

Community development is a process in which community members come together to take collective action and develop solutions to common problems. It involves engaging communities in policy making, planning, program development and evaluation. It is about government providing the opportunity for community initiatives in a ‘bottom up’ approach.

Building resilient communities that can support themselves is a crucial factor in today’s modern society where local governments deal with increasingly complex social issues, as well as the need for modern facilities and services.

Facilitating a community development process and a partnership approach with communities, community organisations, local businesses and all levels of government can help local governments meet these challenges. Cooperation and collaboration are valuable tools in achieving shared objectives and outcomes.

Many local governments have embraced community development as part of their core business and built strong and effective partnerships with the community sector to enhance their communities.

They are continuing to realise the benefits of working together with local people and community organisations to create better outcomes for their communities.

Community development needs to:

- allow for the identification of local needs;
- support the voicing of local concerns;
- facilitate flexibility, autonomy and local control of community groups; and
- enable people to ‘do things’ at a local level to improve their communities.

Community development progression

Strong, vibrant, inclusive, resilient, sustainable communities

Working in partnership with all levels of government, community sector organisations, community groups, local businesses and the community

Developing community capacity
Building relationships and partnerships with the community sector

Delivering community services based on agreed priorities
Listening to, and planning in response to, community needs
The role of local government in community development

As the closest of the three levels of government to the community, local government plays a key role in facilitating community development to help meet the needs of their community.

Local governments can implement a community development approach to empower and strengthen communities, encourage collaborative practices and celebrate the diversity of our communities.

In doing so, they can take on a leadership, planning and coordination role to facilitate the best outcomes for their communities. By engaging effectively with the community and considering demographic trends, local governments can assess community aspirations and develop a strategic direction.

Providing funding or grants for community programs and events is one of the ways in which local governments can support community organisations. Others include providing access to venues and facilities, administrative support and assistance with marketing and publicity.

Elected members also have a key role in community development. They represent the interests of all electors and residents and, as members of the community, play a crucial role in facilitating communication between the community and the council.

Their close interaction with the community through their work, family, social, sporting or other activities, gives them first-hand knowledge of ongoing issues and concerns and an understanding of community aspirations. This leads to much better awareness of community needs and enhanced community planning.

Community development in the IPR process

Under the Local Government Act 1995, all local governments have to comply with the requirements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework.

As part of this, local governments must engage with their communities in developing their 10-year Strategic Community Plan.

The Strategic Community Plan outlines the community’s long-term vision, values, aspirations and priorities, with reference to other local government plans, information and resourcing capabilities.

The IPR process supports community development by integrating community objectives and outcomes in the local government’s planning and resourcing processes.

Many local governments have embedded community development in their strategic planning processes. This means community development becomes part of the engagement process and that funding is allocated in the annual budget process for the community development initiatives.

Adopting community development principles strengthens local government commitment to consultation processes and facilitates planning by the community for the community.

As more complex demands are placed on local governments, a collaborative approach between local governments and community sector organisations will be required to deliver community programs and services.
Links to Strategic Community Plan

By reflecting their approach to community development in the Corporate Business Plan, and providing funding in the annual budget, local governments can broaden their role from allocating grants and providing services, to being active participants in the community development process.

The Department of Local Government and Communities has published a range of resources relating to the IPR Framework to assist local governments. These include FAQs, manuals and case studies and are on the department’s website at www.dlgc.wa.gov.au
Community development examples

There are many examples of communities working with local governments to build capacity and improve outcomes for their communities.

The following examples are a glimpse of the many activities that are currently taking place in our communities. People are working together with government, community organisations and the business sector to build communities that are inclusive, connected and sustainable.

The Social Connector Program: Taking the loneliness out of living

The City of Rockingham developed this program in response to the issue of social isolation. Social isolation was identified, through talking with the community, as a significant issue in building a strong, resilient and connected community.

It has long been recognised that loneliness has significant impacts on individuals and communities in terms of health and the development of strong connected communities. Loneliness can affect people’s mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health with associated costs to the community.

Social isolation affects people from the following groups in Rockingham:

- seniors;
- people with disability;
- FIFO families;
- Navy families;
- independent living residents; and
- people living in the wider community, as a result of changes in their personal circumstances, such as the loss of a partner.

There was a shared concern across the community services sector, particularly in the aged care and the disability services areas, that many people were not connected to their community.

It was agreed that, as a group, it would be possible to develop a pilot to reconnect such people. The group identified that the social connector approach was the most appropriate.

Bethanie Group Inc. was identified as the lead agency, with support provided by the City of Rockingham.

Implementation

The program was funded through the State Government’s Social Innovation Fund and the Disability Services Commission. It was managed by Bethanie Group Inc. with support from the City of Rockingham and the Social Connector Steering Group.

Social connectors work one-on-one with a participant to map their history and then connect them to activities and interest groups in their local neighbourhood, aiming to build their confidence to maintain the connections independently.
Each referred participant is matched to a social connector who, as part of the process:

- considers age, gender, interests, personality type, availability of groups, activities, spaces, places in the local area;
- maps their individual connections by being part of their journey and helping them to identify barriers to future connections; and
- accompanies the person to identified activities or events until comfortable and confident and then undertakes a graduated withdrawal (transition to independent connections).

The program is demonstrating a different way of approaching the strengthening of community ties. By focusing on individuals and small groups and by building connections to and between people, activities, groups, spaces and places, the threads that bind communities together and strengthen their ability to thrive are enhanced. Individual members feel a part of their community, feel ‘counted in’ and respond by valuing and contributing to that community.

Outcomes

The program has achieved positive outcomes for individual participants, improved independent sustainability for a number of groups and respect from the sector.

Communities with a good stock of connections among individuals are more likely to benefit from better health, higher educational achievement, better economic growth and lower crime figures.

There is also more evidence of altruism, such as volunteering, which leads to stronger groups and organisations able to respond to community needs, which leads to greater community resilience.

Strong, inclusive communities also better appreciate diversity and welcome differences, leading to greater social trust and membership.
Project Robin Hood

In 2013 the City of Melville ran a pilot project, Project Robin Hood, in which they provided $100,000 in grants of up to $20,000, to projects developed by the community.

The project explored the concept of ‘participatory budgeting’ for community-driven projects. The community voted on the projects using an on-line budget allocator tool to distribute the $100,000 for 12 projects they selected for funding.

City of Melville Mayor Russell Aubrey said the objective of Project Robin Hood had been to encourage community participation, support the creativity of community-owned project ideas and build a greater relationship between the community and the City of Melville.

“In using a ‘participatory budgeting’ approach we are actively seeking to return the decision-making authority and responsibility to the community and, assuming the project applications meet some simple funding criteria, they are then open to the public, who can vote for the projects they want to see implemented in their community,” he said.

“While the City of Melville Youth Advisory Council is facilitating the project, we as a local government have no influence over the projects that are submitted by the public or finally voted for. We simply provide the funds and the framework, and the community decides on the outcome. Ultimately the community will also implement the projects, once again with some support from the city.”

Following an overwhelming response from the community, Project Robin Hood is continuing in 2015 with $50,000 of small grants to community groups, individuals and local businesses for community projects.

Successful community projects

- In 2014, Willagee residents turned their local park into one of their favourite places with the installation of a community nature-based adventure park.
- The Riseley Centre shopkeepers installed community seating.
- The Murdoch Community Garden added a shed and bought a cargo bike.
- The Roy Neal community installed community picnic tables, new trees and a drink fountain in their favourite park.

All these projects were built by the community, for the community, using Project Robin Hood funding.

More information can be found at: www.werelisteningmelville.com.au/projectrobinhood
Wadjak Northside — Mooro Country Tours

The City of Stirling, in partnership with Wadjak Northside, won the Premier’s Award in 2014 for the Mooro Country Tours initiative.

The City of Stirling is one of the most diverse local governments in Australia and this has created many challenges. As a result of community consultation, the city identified that conflict between Aboriginal community members and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) community members was becoming an issue. This tension was considered to be due, in part, to a lack of cultural understanding and awareness.

With the support of government funding, the city initiated Cultural Orientation Tours which had a focus on educating and raising awareness of Aboriginal culture to CaLD communities. By involving local Aboriginal Elders, the tours were able to break down barriers and allow open discussions and sharing of stories.

Based on the success of these tours, the city has developed Mooro Country Tours which are focused solely on participants learning about Aboriginal culture and history.

The free tours are positive promotions of Aboriginal people and their contribution to the community. The tours provide an opportunity for local Aboriginal people to gain skills and develop educational opportunities for the wider community.

The long-term benefits of the tours are enhanced understanding and respect for Aboriginality. By educating the public, instances of racism and discrimination are expected to decrease.

To maintain the sustainability of the tours, the city is working with local Aboriginal people to involve them in delivering the tours with the city’s support.

Face-to-face education and engaging local Aboriginal people to conduct the tours ensures that participants are impacted and affected more directly than they would be if they were given printed information.

Visiting sites of significance and hearing the stories and history of Aboriginal people makes the experience more tangible. Participants are part of the journey and are free to ask questions. The tours challenge negative stereotypical views and provide an alternative way of thinking.

The tours have been particularly positive for newly arrived migrants who have little or no understanding of Australia’s history and origins.

Because of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land, the tours also challenge participants’ thoughts and views on environmental conservation. The tours offer a greater appreciation for the natural environment and sustainability practices.

Employment and skill development of Aboriginal people is another positive impact of the tours. The Aboriginal people involved in the tours are from the local area. Elders and younger Aboriginal people are invited to contribute by way of a Welcome to Country, history talks, artefact demonstrations and guided tours through Star Swamp. Professional external contractors conduct part of the tours and provide opportunities for local Aboriginal people to build their capacity in delivering some sections to participants. All of the presenters are paid.

Through a link with Balga Senior High School, young Aboriginal people are involved in the tours. Traditional dance, music and dress are exhibited as part of the tour.

Aboriginal Elders and the City of Stirling have been able to capture historical stories and preserve significant sites in the city. By recording and sharing the heritage of Aboriginal people, the community’s stories are not lost and Elders can be confident their stories will not be forgotten.

More information can be found at: www.wadjaknorthside.com
Camp Kulin

The Shire of Kulin has recently been recognised for its Camp Kulin program, becoming the only Western Australian local government to take out a category win at the 2015 National Awards for Local Government. The awards celebrate local government projects that demonstrate leading practice, deliver better outcomes for communities, have the capacity to be rolled out across the country and make a meaningful difference.

The Camp Kulin program, established in 2013, has grown rapidly and has been nationally and internationally recognised.

The program provides local area activities for children across the Wheatbelt region, as well as general camps open to any child in Western Australia, and specialised scholarship camps for children affected by childhood trauma, including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and torture/trauma situations in their home countries.

The Camp Kulin program is run with the support of a team of volunteers from across the state and interstate, who contribute in excess of $250,000 of their time each year. The program is also supported by generous individual, organisation and corporate sponsors who donate towards the costs of scholarship campers attending a week at camp.

The Camp Kulin program is an excellent example of local government working with local businesses, volunteers and the community to develop an exciting, innovative and successful program which benefits not only the local community but the region and young people throughout the state.

www.campkulin.com.au
Collaborative partnerships across local government areas

The following examples show effective partnerships between State Government, local government, community groups and the private sector that are making a difference at the local level.

South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project

The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project (YPP) is an innovative two-year project focused on supporting the community’s most vulnerable children and young people. The project aims to improve collaboration between State and Commonwealth agencies, non-government organisations, local governments and the community in delivering local responses for at-risk young people in the South East Corridor of Perth.

The City of Gosnells, City of Armadale and City of Belmont are participating in the partnership.

The YPP Executive Committee has overseen and managed the direction the project has taken since its inception in June 2013. The Executive Committee comprises representatives from key government departments, community sector organisations and community members.

Youth Collaborative Action Networks (Youth CANs) have been established to build stronger relationships between local service providers to ensure programs are complementary and mutually beneficial while also reducing duplication and identifying where there are critical gaps.

More information can be found at: www.youthpartnershipproject.org.au

South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum

The South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum brings together individuals, groups and organisations concerned about social disadvantage in the local government areas of Cockburn, Fremantle and Melville.

The forum’s objective is to embed a culture of collaboration among all human service providers in the Cockburn, Fremantle and Melville region in order to maximise their collective social impact. Membership includes community sector and government (local, State and Commonwealth) providers of community services, as well as community members, businesses and philanthropists.

The cities of Melville, Cockburn and Fremantle are active members of the partnership.

The South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum is undertaking the following four collaborative, place-based projects over the next three years:

- a collective, coordinated strategy to address a common social issue in the region (starting with vulnerable and at risk young people);
- a collaborative approach to addressing a ‘hotspot’ community area that has urgent and complex human service issues (starting with Davis Park, Beaconsfield);
- a coordinated wrap-around service for individuals with multiple needs; and
- the development of improved tools for social planning.

All of the projects include the identification of shared outcomes, indicators and measures.

More information about the partnership forum can be found at: www.SWMPF.org.au
More information

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