

Glossary

| Term | Definition |
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| Accessible | Activities and information should be inclusive and able to be accessed and used by the whole community regardless of ability, cultural background or identity. |
| Authentic engagement or meaningful engagement | Investing time to build genuine, trust-based relationships that extend beyond individual programs or activities. It centres the expertise and lived experience of communities and treats members as equal partners in all decisions — from inception to completion. |
| Authorising environment or enabling environment | The sources of legitimacy and support that enable a community or organisation to act. It encompasses both formal and informal elements. Formal mechanisms include funding processes, contractual arrangements and governance structures. Informal levers involve influential individuals — such as community leaders, stakeholders and representatives from relevant agencies or departments — who provide crucial relational and political support to a project or initiative. |
| Co-commissioning or collaborative commissioning | The terms are often used interchangeably and represent a shift from traditional and often fragmented commissioning toward a more joined-up, strategic and community-based, place-focused approach. It involves multiple organisations, including government agencies, philanthropy and service providers funding initiatives and providing services or support for a particular community or place. |
| Co-creation, co-design and co-production | These terms are sometimes used interchangeably but are different in practice. Co-creation is a broad term for collaborative problem-solving where the community and their partners work together at every stage, from identifying the problem to implementing and evaluating solutions. Co-design is a specific application of co-creation that focuses on the design phase, where all stakeholders actively collaborate to design a service or program. Co-production involves the shared implementation of a solution that has already been agreed upon. It involves communities and partners working side-by-side to deliver, monitor and refine the initiative in practice. |
| Co-governance or collaborative governance | The formal, collaborative process of genuinely sharing decision-making power between government bodies, funders, service providers and the local community to address issues specific to a defined geographic area. It goes beyond simple consultation and empowers local people to define problems and drive the solutions they want for their community. |

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| Community | A group of people connected by location, identity, interest or experiences who form a sense of mutual belonging. |
| Community connectors | A trusted individual who builds bridges between community members and organisations, services or initiatives. Community connectors are often deeply embedded in the community, whether formally employed or informally recognised, and their legitimacy comes from relationships, trust and lived experience. |
| Community-controlled | When community organisations have direct authority over funding decisions, program design and resource allocation rather than just being consulted or having advisory roles. |
| Community-led | Approaches to local action where communities have genuine decision-making power and control over the strategies, priorities and solutions that affect them. |
| Coordinating role (sometimes backbone or intermediary or glue) | The organisation, team or person that connects, aligns and sustains the collective effort of multiple partners working toward shared outcomes in a specific community or region. This role ensures that local priorities guide action, communication flows effectively between all stakeholders, and resources — such as funding, expertise and time — are aligned to support the agreed goals. |
| Cultural authority | First Nations lore (law) that determines who within a community holds the power and responsibility to make decisions and share knowledge. This authority is guided by cultural protocols, kinship systems and customs, and is deeply rooted in the community's history, relationships and Country. It is not assigned by external systems but recognised through longstanding cultural practices and responsibilities. |
| Cultural safety | Environments and practices that are spiritually, socially and emotionally safe for everyone and respectful of different abilities, cultures and identities. |
| Data | Any qualitative or quantitative information collected by or about a community to track progress, measure impact and inform decisions about an initiative. This includes stories, surveys, interviews, administrative records, observations and other forms of evidence that reflect community experiences, priorities and outcomes. |
| Deep listening | Listening to understand and includes attention to emotions, experiences and needs. It is a way of learning, working and being together that centres community voices and the practice of reciprocity. Deep listening involves a personal disposition and the creation of spaces where a community feels genuinely heard, valued and safe to share their perspective and experience. |

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| Diverse representation | Actively including and empowering individuals from a range of backgrounds, identities and lived experience. It ensures that the breadth of community voices are reflected in decision-making and leadership. The approach is informed by the principles of equity, cultural safety and the valuing of socially marginalised perspectives. |
| Enabling practices | The relational and interpersonal ways of working that foster collaboration and strengthens relationships. These practices should be inclusive, accessible and attentive to differences in background and power. |
| Enabling processes | The practical activities and programs that foster collaborating by making available new ways of working in genuine partnership. They ensure that the voices of community are heard and meaningfully influence decision-making. |
| Enabling structures | The frameworks, spaces and systems that make collaboration and collective action possible and sustainable over time. Rather than being a single organisation or governance body, enabling structures act as the scaffolding that supports partners to work together, share power effectively and stay aligned around local priorities. It is part of the authorising environment. |
| Inclusion | Creating a sense of belonging for everyone, regardless of their background, identity or experience. It is about ensuring everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, and their contributions are valued. |
| Indigenous data sovereignty | The right of First Nations peoples and communities to govern the collection, ownership and application of data that relates to them. This means that communities have control over their own data, including deciding what information is collected, ensuring it reflects their priorities, values and culture, and can use it to support self-determination. |
| Indigenous governance | Systems of leadership, decision-making and accountability grounded in First Nations cultural principles, lore (laws) and knowledge. These systems are deeply connected to Country, kinship and community responsibilities, and reflect thousands of generations of self-governing practices. Key principles include self-determination, collective responsibility, cultural legitimacy and respect for the authority of Elders and cultural protocols. The term cultural governance is sometimes used instead to emphasise governance that is rooted in culture and traditional law. |

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| Lived experience and lived expertise | Lived experience refers to the unique, first-hand insights and perspectives an individual gains through their personal journey and life history. Lived expertise is the knowledge and skills developed by reflecting on and applying that experience to improve systems, support others and contribute to meaningful change. |
| Ongoing learning and reflective practice | Continuous processes of acquiring new knowledge, critically examining actions and adapting approaches to uphold the voice and priorities of the local community. This is an iterative cycle of learning, reflection and adaptation that ensures efforts remain relevant, responsive and effective over time. |
| Participatory budgeting | A democratic process where community members directly influence how funds are allocated to local priorities. It involves meaningful engagement between communities, government agencies and other partners to identify needs, propose solutions and make funding decisions. |
| Peer-learning | A collaborative process where people with shared challenges or experiences support and learn from each other. It is a reciprocal, non-hierarchical approach that leverages the insights and wisdom gained from peers to help others navigate similar challenges and journeys. |
| Place-based | Approaches that recognise that while problems might be caused by big structural forces, they're experienced locally and need responses that fit the specific place, culture and community. |
| Relational practice | An approach that prioritises building and maintaining strong, respectful relationships as the foundation for achieving goals and creating positive change. The focus is on creating warm, responsive and collaborative interactions and spaces where people feel seen, valued and understood. |
| Self-determination | The right of a community to freely determine its own political, economic, social and cultural development, with power, control and decision-making transferred from outside authorities to the community itself. For First Nations communities, self-determination is the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make decisions about their lives, country and future in relation to cultural lore (laws), values and governance systems. It is grounded in the principles of sovereignty, collective identity and cultural authority. |
| Shared decision-making | Communities have real authority over decisions that affect them, not just input or consultation. This means communities deciding their role in decision-making through making information available in accessible formats, deciding on voting rights, influence over budgets and ability to shape how services are designed and delivered. The role of the community is not static and can shift and evolve overtime. |

| Term | Definition |
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| Social marginalisation or social exclusion | The social, structural and systemic processes that push certain people and communities to the edges of society. These processes limit their ability to fully participate in social, economic, cultural and political life, and prevent equitable access to opportunities, resources and power available to the majority. Over time, this exclusion contributes to poorer life outcomes, entrenched disadvantage and reduced wellbeing. |
| Strength-based approach | Focuses on identifying, valuing and building upon existing assets, capacities and knowledge within a community. Rather than defining a community through perceived problems or deficiencies, it emphasises the collective experience, skills, relationships and resources that can be harnessed to drive sustainable change. This approach supports empowerment, builds resilience and upholds the principle of self-determination. |
| Sustainability | The capacity of communities and their partners to maintain momentum, relationships and impact over time. It involves building enduring systems, leadership and local capabilities that allow initiatives to adapt, evolve and remain relevant to community priorities. Sustainability is more than financial and includes environmental, cultural, relational and structural dimensions that support long-term collaboration, shared stewardship and community ownership. |
| Trauma-informed | A strengths-based approach that recognises the widespread impact of trauma and actively works to create safe, collaborative and empowering environments. It seeks to avoid re-traumatisation and promote healing by embedding principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. A trauma-informed approach extends beyond clinical settings to influence every level of an initiative's activities, programs and interactions with community — ensuring that systems and practices are responsive to the needs and experiences of those affected by trauma. |
| Two-way reporting | A feedback loop that fosters continuous dialogue between community members and partner organisations. Unlike traditional top-down reporting, it ensures that community input is actively gathered, responded to, and used to shape future strategy and action. This approach transforms reporting from a passive, compliance-driven activity into an active mechanism for empowering communities, strengthening relationships, and enhancing the long-term effectiveness of an initiative through greater transparency and accountability. |