

Community Wellbeing team

Community Engagement Framework 2021-23

Purpose

The purpose of this framework is to guide the Community Wellbeing (CW) team at Merri Health in our community engagement activities from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023. This framework aims to assist our team in meeting our goals of decreasing discrimination, violence and social exclusion, acknowledging links to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023 priorities of mental wellbeing and violence.

Organisational context

This work aligns with Merri Health's commitment to involving a range of diverse communities in decision making, as well as its commitment to empowering consumers to participate in planning, designing and evaluating programs. It is governed through the Community Engagement Internal Working Group and the Community Engagement Board Sub-Committee, and documented via Merri Health's:

- Strategic Directions 2020-2025
- Consumer Participation and Engagement Policy & Procedure 2019-2022
- Community Relationships Framework 2018

Our team has identified some longer-term aspirations, which underpin our action plan each year and also align with the Merri Health values (see Community Relationships Framework 2018). These aspirations include:

1. Engaging with new people and communities from target groups (Engage)
2. Increasing connections between different community groups to collaborate on and lead work towards shared goals (Respect)
3. Sharing our community engagement practices with others (Motivate)
4. Improving our ability to 'co-design' and 'empower' (Respond)
5. Learning from each other (Innovate)

What is community engagement?

There are many definitions of community engagement. The CW team has developed the following definition of what good community engagement looks like for our team:

“Community engagement puts community in the driver's seat and creates a sense of ownership and empowerment. This occurs through community involvement in a spectrum of activities, from information sharing to decision making.”

Why do we prioritise community engagement?

The CW team utilises the 'social determinants of health model'¹ as a core principle of our work. As stated in a literature review by McCloskey, DJ, McDonale MA, Cook, J, Heurtin Roberts S, Updegrove S, Sampson D, Gutter S & Eder, M 2015, "If health is socially determined, then health issues are best addressed by engaging community partners who can bring their own perspectives and understandings of community life and health issues to a project and if health inequalities are rooted in larger socioeconomic inequalities, then approaches to health improvement must take into account the concerns of communities and be able to benefit diverse populations²

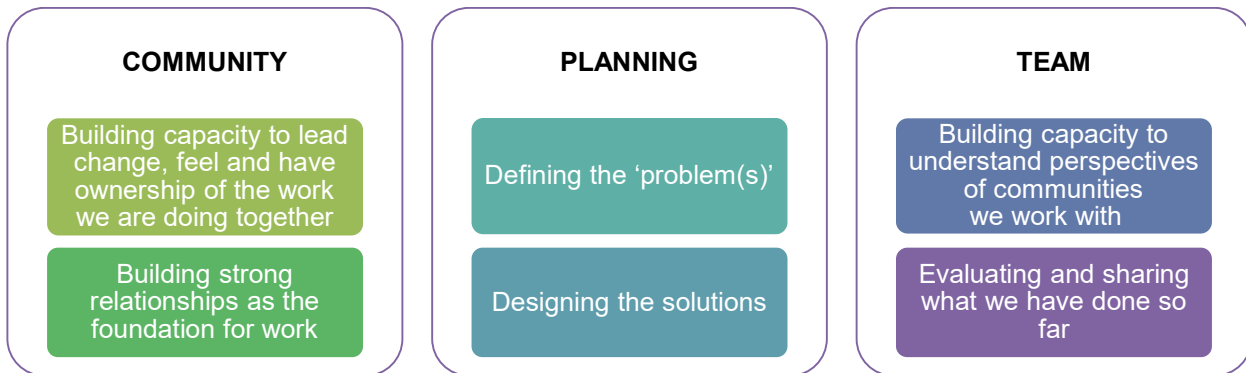
The 'Community Health and Health Promotion Transitional Guidelines 2022-23'³ also emphasises the importance of collaborative approaches, community involvement and community engagement in planning and reporting.

¹The Social Determinants of Health 2022 viewed on 24 Oct 2022 <https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health>

² McCloskey, DJ, McDonale MA, Cook, J, Heurtin Roberts S, Updegrove S, Sampson D, Gutter S & Eder, M 2015, *Principles of community engagement – second edition*, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC, viewed on 20 June 2022
https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_pubdevelopment.html

³ [Community Health – Health Promotion Transitional Guidelines 2022-2023](#)

Within the CW team, we know that community engagement is a key method to inform and improve the quality and efficacy of different aspects of our work. Community engagement has impacts on community, our planning processes, and our team, including:



Our approach to community engagement

a) Planning and principles



When possible, community engagement should be planned from the beginning of CW projects. Merri Health's 'Engagement & Participation principles' guide the way we work (see Consumer Participation and Engagement Policy & Procedure 2019-2022 for full list). The following questions can be used to check the principles have been embedded into community engagement activities:

Participatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How will community members take part in this engagement activity? •Do you have the relationships needed? •Are we at risk of 'over-engaging' with a person/group?
Purpose driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do you have a clear purpose for this engagement activity? •Have you planned your community engagement strategy from the start of your project?
Inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What are the barriers to community members participating? •Are you providing a safe space, and remunerating people for their time?
Encourages diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Which priority community/ies are you working with? •Who else are you talking to? •Who is missing?
Empowers choice and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How are you allowing communities to take ownership? •How much of the 'power' are you able to give to community? •How are you going to feedback to those you engaged?

b) Tools and techniques



Each project should use the levels of engagement from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum⁴ to assist in planning and selecting methods of engagement, as well as its evaluation (further detailed below). It is important to support the expertise of project team members to consider their resources and timeframes, as well as the goals of engagement.

⁴ International Association for Public Participation – IAP2 International
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Increasing community impact on the decision

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Co-design	Empower
When to use	We need to tell people about something. We are not seeking feedback.	We want to gather new ideas or are seeking feedback.	We need in-depth discussion about an issue. We seek input and influence on a decision.	We want to develop a solution in partnership with people.	We want to empower people to generate a solution and manage the process.
What it might include	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – E-newsletters – Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber) – Campaigns – Translations – Flyers/QR codes – Sharing project/evaluation outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interviews – Surveys – Meetings with existing groups – Data ‘sense-making’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community Forums – Support group – Working Group – Most Significant Change – Community advisory groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community champions – Participatory evaluation – Community steering groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community-led projects – Community steering groups – Community champions – Deliberative engagement
What to evaluate	Largely process data e.g. via records or a short poll Participant/staff feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – timing (time of day and duration) – location – challenges to access or inclusiveness Participant/staff data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reach – demographics 		Both process and impact data (consider need to collect baseline) e.g. records/poll plus large-scale survey or Most Significant Change Participant/staff feedback (detailed to left) Participant data (detailed to left) Impact data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – community leadership – staff experience – community member satisfaction Consider participatory evaluation (i.e., including community members when designing and implementing the evaluation – including analysing data)		

c) Evaluation and sharing



There are many reasons that we monitor and evaluate our community engagement activities, including:

- Improving our community engagement practices
- Sharing our experience with internal and external stakeholders, as well as participants.

Where possible, evaluation should be planned from the beginning of a project, with time and resources dedicated to this.

The table above can be used to consider what type of evaluation might be appropriate for engagement activities. (NB: This table provides guidance, but the type of evaluation will need to be planned for each project on a case-by-case basis).

For the CW team, evaluation is often closely linked to community and stakeholder engagement practices such as community surveys, focus groups, interviews etc. The sharing-back of information (or ‘closing the

loop') should also be planned for, to ensure that community members understand how their participation has affected the outcome of a project.

The level of the engagement activities undertaken with community will determine how much detail is provided to community in relation to the outcomes. i.e., the more in-depth the involvement of the community member, the more detail will be provided. The table below provides guidance on how to 'close the loop' for different types of engagement activities:

	IAP2 spectrum level				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Co-design	Empower
Possible 'Closing the loop' mechanism	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Add report / findings to website ✓ Ensure accessibility of information for a variety of audiences ✓ Send link to those who participate ✓ Put into newsletters ✓ Provide payment/re-imbursment as agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Send report/ findings directly to those who participate ✓ Offer opportunities to discuss (if desired) and provide feedback ✓ Provide payment/re-imbursment as agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide detailed information relating to process and results directly to participants ✓ Provide opportunities to be involved in analysis of results ✓ Provide opportunity to hear about findings and recommendations (i.e., presentation or discussion) ✓ Actively seek feedback on process ✓ Provide payment/re-imbursment as agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Involve participants in the development of information documents (e.g., reports, infographics) ✓ Provide detailed information relating to process and results directly to participants ✓ Provide opportunity to hear about findings and recommendations (i.e., presentation or discussion) ✓ Provide opportunities for participants to present/share at 'closing the loop' presentations or events' ✓ Actively seek feedback on process ✓ Provide payment/re-imbursment as agreed

Project teams are also required to contribute to Merri Health data collection for community engagement activities, such as quarterly reporting through the Community Engagement Board Sub-Committee.

Resourcing and budget

Teams will be responsible for determining the allocation of resources towards community engagement and its evaluation, which is encouraged to be considered at project planning stage. The need for resources, including time, can also be included in funding applications.

Developed: September 2021

Updated: October 2022

Next review date: July 2023

Some possible financial aspects to consider are:

- Community Engagement Officer salaries
- External facilitation or consulting
- Catering and venue hire
- Promotion e.g. graphic design and printing of flyers, boosted social media posts, etc.
- Re-imburement with Coles Myer gift cards (\$25/hour)
- Membership to peak body, training and resources (such as IAP2)
- Attendance at events e.g. Fawkner Festa

It should also be acknowledged that good community engagement takes significant time, not just for the activity itself, but also for relationship building, particularly working with diverse communities.

Related documents and resources

- [Community Wellbeing team Community Engagement Framework 2021-2023](#)
- [Merri Health Strategic Directions 2020-2025](#)
- Merri Health Community Health – Health Promotion (CH-HP) Plan and Theory of Change (ToC) 2021-2025 (in draft at time of development)
- [Community Health – Health Promotion Transitional Guidelines 2022-2023](#)
- [Merri Health Consumer Participation and Engagement Policy 2019-2022](#)
- [Merri Health Relationships Framework 2018](#)
- Merri Health model - Healthy & connected communities (in draft at time of development)
- [Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion](#)
- [Moreland City Council Community Engagement Policy 2020](#)
- [Moreland City Council Community Engagement Implementation Plan 2020-2024](#)
- [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\) Spectrum](#)
- Videos of [Tassia Michaleas](#) (CEO, Merri Health) and [Ann Taylor](#) (Board Member, Merri Health) discussing community engagement
- [Merriverse Community Engagement page](#) (contains resources e.g. [The Merri Health Co-design workbook](#), [Organisational Reporting Help Sheet](#))
- Merri Health's Community Engagement Internal Working Group (CEIWG) Direction and Action Plan 2021 – 2023

This framework will be evaluated in July 2023 by the CW team and our priority communities.