

What is co-design?

An introduction to co-design for the
Victorian Public Sector

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Where will this live?

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Purpose of this guide

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and wider Victorian Public Service (VPS) are being called on to do something different to develop new solutions to longstanding social issues. To develop new solutions, the Victorian government have been asked to use different methods to the traditional approaches. Co-design is one of these different methods that we can use to do this.

Public service and community sector leaders, as well as design partners in Victoria have embraced the opportunity to work in this new way with the end goal of generating new insights and innovations more closely linked to the needs of people.

The purpose of this guide is to introduce the concept of co-design and address some of the key challenges being faced in the implementation of co-design, such as those listed to the right.



Communication

Clearly defining what is and isn't co-design, demystifying co-design in practice and sharing visible examples of what it looks like.



Trust

Overcoming cynicism, suspicion, cultural resistance, fear and 'buzzword fatigue' and managing expectations both within the department as well as the wider community.



Methodology

Knowing where to start with co-design, how to access tools and resources, how to define problems and how to overcome barriers to working with the community both through governance and at the 'coalface'.



Impact

Measuring success and impact and knowing if co-design is working.

Collaboration guide



co-define

Co-define means 1) identifying stakeholders, 2) bringing those stakeholders together to create a shared understanding of the issue or problem and 3) describing what success looks like from multi-stakeholder perspective.

co-design

Co-design means that stakeholders involved in delivering and or using the service or product work together in 1) agreeing to and using a shared process to learn and work collaboratively, 2) generating new ideas or prototypes to solve complex problems, and 3) testing those ideas with users to get feedback and refine.

co-decide

Co-design process does not include co-decision-making. While there is a tension in Government between co-design and decision-making, the accountability for decisions ultimately lies with the Government representatives and until we can use co-design in a context of shared risk and responsibility in decision making processes, this will continue to be case in co-design.

co-deliver

Co-deliver means implementing the final tested solution for user: determining the governance structure to do so, agreeing on stakeholder roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and establishing monitoring and evaluation framework.

Why are we using co-design?

Design thinking has evolved over more than a century and has delivered innovation applied in a range of industries related to making products and services to better meet the needs of people.

In recent times, governments around the world have begun investigating how to use design thinking with consumers to improve services and create new and innovative approaches in areas such as transport, social services and education. Governments are now developing tools, resources and evidence about how to use co-design in the public sector – part of a broader global narrative in public sector innovation.

In Australia, we are seeing a similar story. Despite clear efforts to collaborate and consult with stakeholders, traditional approaches used to develop social services are not working effectively. In response, there has been a strong call for government agencies to work more closely with service providers and consumers to design and improve services. The Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria handed down recommendations in March 2016 to improve public service delivery – many of which included co-design as an engagement approach.

We are now seeing a shift in the practice of public service. For example, the co-design work used to deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme with clients and carers is well regarded as a benchmark for meeting the needs of people with a disability, carers and their families. But the challenge remains – while there is now the mandate and good intention to use co-design, we need to raise the consistency and quality of our co-design practice in the public service. This public sector user guide aspires to advance this aim.



“The ‘design’ part of ‘co-design’ is more than a loosely defined term. It involves a rigorous process of experimentation using a proven set of tools and methods.”

Onur Ekinici, Peer Academy

Dictionary

While co-design is not new, it is an emerging practice. To build consistency in practice we need consistency in our use of language. Some new words have been introduced in this document, as well as some words being interchanged. For the purposes of this guide, when referring to specific terms in the context of co-design, we adopt the meanings as follows:

Consultant	This is someone external, such as a design firm or company, who has expertise in co-design who can assist in driving or supporting your co-design project
Consumer	A service user, end user or client of the product or service
Convergent	Moving toward one point, ideas coming together
Deliver	Implement designed solutions
Design	A strategic problem-solving approach to creating a form, structure or outcome
Design cycle	Completing the design methodology from start to finish; from 'inquire', 'ideate' to 'implement'
Design methods/ techniques	Tools and techniques that are commonly used by designers, such divergent and convergent thinking methods, that are used as part of a co-design process
Design team	This is the collection of 4-5 people who will work on generating new solutions using design tools
Divergent	Developing many different ideas, thinking broadly
Stakeholder	This is quite broad from 'internal' or 'external stakeholder', 'community sector representative' or 'consumer'. It depends on the context in which you work, but in general, is used to refer to anyone you may involve in the co-design process, regardless of the role they might play

INTRODUCTION TO CO-DESIGN

Co-design 101

"Co-design is a process,
used to enhance the system's
understanding of user needs
and work in a way that promotes
collaboration and creativity."

*Michelle Stevens, The Magistrates'
Court of Victoria*

1.1 What do we mean by 'co-design'?

Co-design is an approach to design that attempts to actively and strategically involve all relevant stakeholders in the design process to ensure the result meets their needs and is usable.

The 'co' in co-design comes from the word collaborate – to work together to achieve or do something. In co-design, who you collaborate with in a design process depends on the problem you are trying to solve, but will include stakeholders who will deliver or use a service or product.

The 'design' in co-design means using a structured and rigorous set of design tools and techniques to generate new and different solutions. These tools and techniques have been used by designers in a broad range of fields, typically in product design, and are easily translated in other industry areas to deliver innovation. While the use of these tools might be new to most, they are not difficult to adopt and depending on your area of expertise, may have some familiarity with other engagement tools that you have already used.

Co-design = working together with stakeholders + design techniques + controlled experimentation (testing and refining) + mindset

Where:

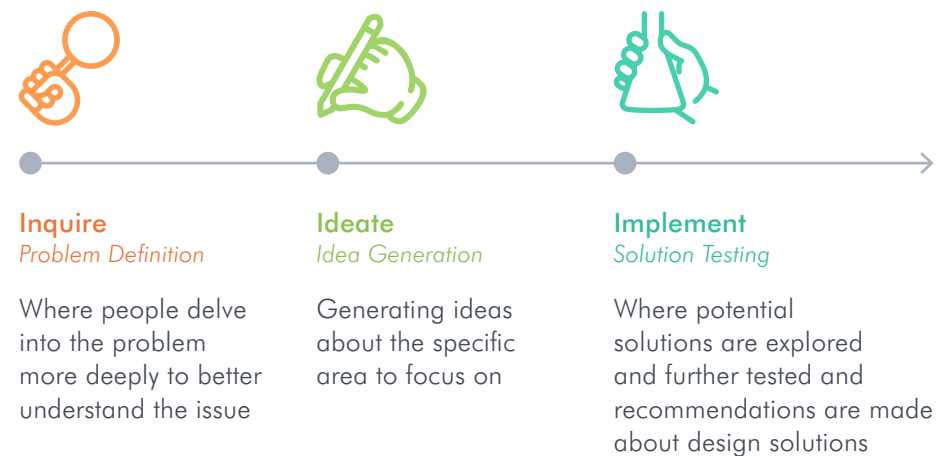
Working with stakeholders means getting the right people in the room together, developing trust and facilitating a conversation based on empathy.

Design techniques means using design methods, such as divergent and convergent thinking, to explore problems and solutions creatively.

Controlled experimentation means developing prototypes and testing whether or not an idea, product or service is what people want and need by testing the prototype in a controlled environment. It means using a scientific method to validate or disprove your hypothesis.

Mindset means a state of mind to adopt when practicing co-design. For example, an attitude of enquiry, trusting other people in the room, committing to the process and preparing to take co-ownership of solutions, are mindsets that will help.

While the co-design process is not linear, there are a range of accepted design methodologies adopted by practitioners of design thinking and co-design, all of which follow a similar framework:



Based on Duell, C., Wright, N., & Roxburgh, J. (2013) *Design minds : an online design education platform for non-designers to enact cultural change*. In Reitan, J.B. (et al), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference for Design Education Researchers (Volume 4)*, ABM-media, Oslo, Norway, pp. 1965-1982.

1.2 What are the benefits of co-design?

The evidence of the benefits of co-design is still evolving. The below table reflects an evaluation of the benefits of co-design in service design projects conducted by academics in the Netherlands.



Benefits for clients

Better fit between service and clients needs
Better service experience
Higher quality of service
More differential service
Better client experience
Educating clients
Higher loyalty



Benefits for Government and Providers

Improved creativity
Improved focus on clients and better dissemination of findings about client needs
Better cooperation between people and organisations and across disciplines
More successful innovations
More support and enthusiasm for innovation and change
Better relations between providers and clients
Better public relations



Benefits for service design and quality

Better ideas
Better knowledge about clients/partners/consumers needs
Higher quality of service definition
More successful innovations
Better decision making
Lower development costs
Continuous improvements through embedding the client experience
Improved longer term effects

Based on Steen, M., Manschot, M and DeKoning, N (2011) *Benefits of Co-Design in Service Design Projects*, *International Journal of Design*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp 53-60.

1.3 Agreeing to common principles

In terms of ways of working, we suggest that you also create some agreed common principles to guide your co-design project. You can do this with your project partners before you get underway. This will help you stay focused on what everyone agrees needs to be achieved as you design together.

As an example, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) agreed on eight principles about how it intended to co-design with stakeholders. For the creation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, principles focused on things such as being 'user-centred' and ensuring co-design activities were accessible to enable meaningful participation. Other principles focussed on ensuring shared understanding of the goals, representation from diverse stakeholder groups and ensuring clear and frequent communication with stakeholders (2015 NDIA Co-Design Framework, pp 5).

As another example, Ingrid Burkett, together with participants from the Outer East Youth Partnerships' co-design workshops, developed fundamental principles that focussed on the process of co-design, such as ensuring co-design begins with questions not solutions, learning from people with 'lived experience' and 'collaboratively designing' – meaning that, ideally, all parts of a service system, not just consumers, would be engaged (Burkett, 2015, pp 8).

Common principles will differ slightly depending on your specific co-design project, however most may reflect themes around communication, engagement, meaningful participation and shared understanding.

1.4 Engagement with stakeholders


From a government perspective, genuine stakeholder engagement enables us to develop long-standing, trusted relationships with our communities, business partners and consumers. It provides opportunities to work together to ensure that products, services, programs and policies will meet people's needs.

Co-design also provides benefits to organisations, such as access to local or specialist knowledge, practical expertise, increased stakeholder buy-in on what is being changed or proposed and an ability for people to have input into decisions that may impact on them.

Many organisations have adopted stakeholder engagement definitions and terminology which are informed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation (2007). These are the most broadly-accepted participation definitions across government and industry.

The IAP2 spectrum shows that differing levels of engagement are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. It's important to understand and be clear about the commitment you are making to your stakeholders, including being transparent about what is on the table for discussion and what changes might be made as a result of their participation.

The collaboration part of co-design cannot be overstated – meaningful engagement is crucial for successful co-design. The co-design process will require a lot of trust from all participants. So ensuring that you deliver on your engagement and co-design promise is really important – this guide will help you to consider the main elements that make co-design work.



	Definition	Promise	Outcome
Inform	Provide information to assist stakeholder understanding	We will keep you informed	Stakeholders are prepared and aware
Consult	To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions	We will keep you informed, listen to your feedback and acknowledge how it has influenced decisions	Stakeholders have contributed to decision
Involve	To work directly with stakeholders, ensure that their concerns and aspirations are understood	We will ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected into decisions	That stakeholders contribute to and guide the project
Collaborate	To partner in each aspect of decisions including the development of alternatives and the preferred solution	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice to the maximum extent possible	Stakeholders have joint commitment to decisions
Empower	To place final decision making in the hands of the stakeholder	We will implement what you decide	Stakeholders have the final decision

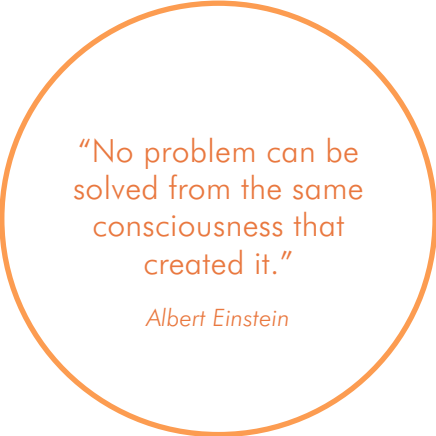
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (2007)

1.5 How is co-design different from the traditional forms of stakeholder engagement?

There remains confusion around what co-design means in practice. Although co-design has clear definitions and processes, the term is still currently being used to describe more traditional stakeholder engagement processes.

‘Co-design’ isn’t just a rebranding of the traditional ways of working with stakeholders. Co-design goes the extra step beyond what consultative collaboration would normally be. Instead of interpreting what stakeholders ‘say’ in relation to the problem, co-design is the vehicle for allowing all relevant stakeholders to explore and create solutions to their existing problem using a design methodology.

The following table below clearly distinguishes ‘co-design’ from other traditional ways of working with stakeholders.



“No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it.”

Albert Einstein

Traditional engagement vs. Co-design

	Traditional approach	Co-design
 <p>Inquire <i>Problem Definition</i></p>	<p>Holding a workshop with stakeholders to discuss their thoughts on the issue/s, and subsequently collating and synthesising the discussions to define the problem.</p> <p>You have defined the problem and subsequently ask stakeholders whether you've defined it correctly or whether the definition has missed anything.</p>	<p>With a focus on empathy, stakeholders are guided to explore a deeper understanding of their problem with fellow co-design participants, highlighting the perspective of a variety of stakeholders using design tools such as visual mapping, ethnographic research and character profiling.</p>
 <p>Ideate <i>Idea Generation</i></p>	<p>Meeting with stakeholders to discuss possible solutions, and then collate and analyse the discussion to develop the solution.</p> <p>You have developed a possible solution/s and then ask stakeholders for feedback.</p>	<p>Working in teams, stakeholders use a variety of design tools to generate a broad range of creative ideas and potential solutions.</p> <p>Co-design teams then test and evaluate the ideas generated and vote on a selection of ideas to develop and test further.</p>
 <p>Implement <i>Solution Testing</i></p>	<p>Piloting the program for a substantial period of time at a usually high cost.</p> <p>Discussing with stakeholders how the program is running, then collating and analysing their feedback to make adjustments; in some cases the program can be defunded and scrapped.</p>	<p>A rough 'prototype' of the chosen idea is rapidly created by the co-design team of stakeholders using tools such as storyboards, role plays or models to convey the general concept of the solution.</p> <p>A low-risk, real world 'prototype' can be tested in a controlled environment for a short period of time to determine the feasibility and viability of the solution in practice.</p> <p>The small-scale, real-world prototypes are constantly refined and scaled in their controlled environments through learning quickly about what works and does not work, and through feedback from stakeholders, including consumers.</p>

What can happen using a traditional approach when working with complex problems is that many of the same solutions will be suggested, such as more resources, more funding, more training and so on. Other times, people can discuss the problems with the current model and feel like the complex problems are too hard to fix. The co-design process can help get past these repeated types of discussions by using design tools to go deeper into the problem and also generate creativity and innovative thinking. When co-design is done correctly, you can generate different solutions that extend past these common solutions.

While some of co-design's key features and requirements reflect components of the traditional approach to stakeholder consultation, there are set features about co-design that make it different to our usual way of developing new solutions.

	Traditional Approach	Co-design
Start with questions and test assumptions	✓	✓
Learn from contextual qualitative research	✓	✓
Learn from the world's best theory and evidence	✓	✓
Embrace new and better solutions	✓	✓
Design teams with eclectic mix of participants, including experts with a lived experience of the problem	✗	✓
Use design methods to generate ideas	✗	✓
Learn from controlled experimentation	✗	✓
Trial the solution	✓	✓
Scale implementation of the solution	✗	✓

"The most valuable learning for our co-design team has been the importance of 'sitting in the problem' and challenging our assumptions before rushing into generating solutions."

Dee Healy – Department of Health and Human Services

INTRODUCTION TO CO-DESIGN

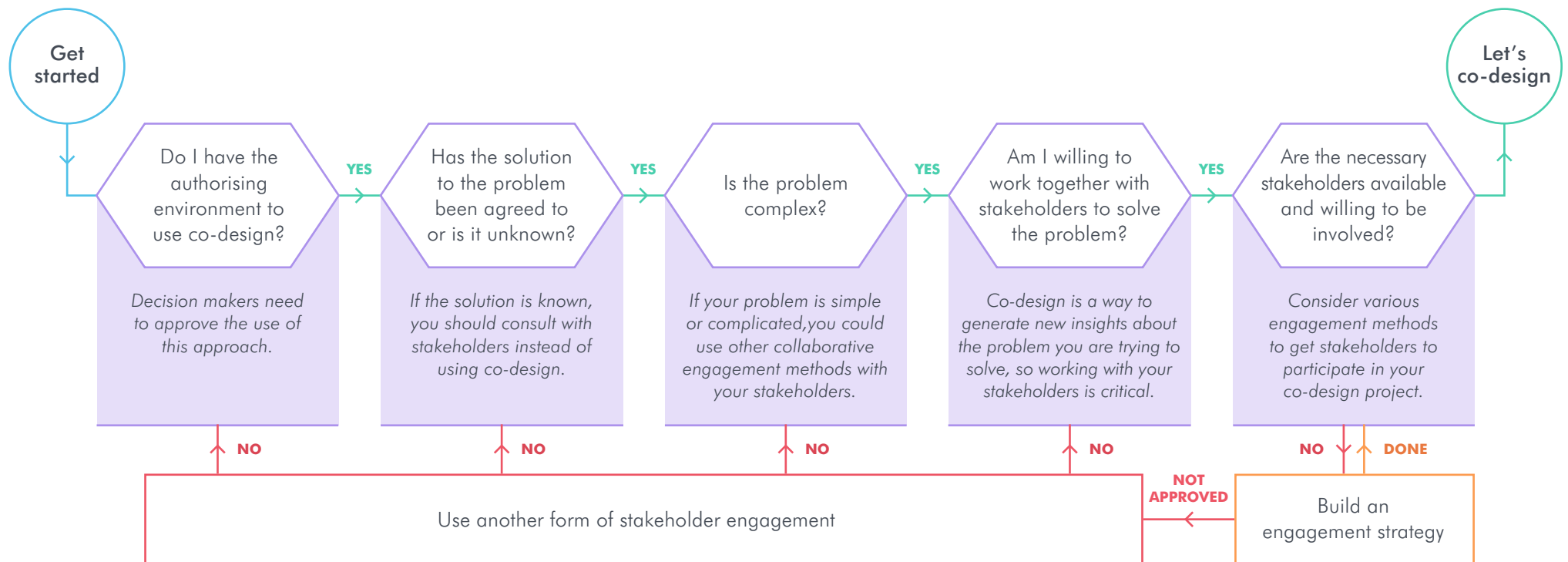
When do I use co-design?

"Co-design means getting out of the office and meeting the users on their territory."

Hailey Austin, Collabforge

When do I use co-design?

Not all problems require a co-design approach, but might be better solved by using other methods to engage with stakeholders. The following provides a brief flowchart that will help you think about whether to use a co-design approach or not.



Copy needs to be cut down
for descriptions 2,3&5

2.2 Do I have the authorising environment to use co-design?

A really important factor to consider before deciding to use co-design is whether you have the authorising environment to use this method. As co-design is different to a traditional approach to develop new solutions, it is important to know whether your decision-makers are comfortable using this approach and whether this method is aligned to any strategic plan or business plans your organisation may have.

2.3 Has the solution to the problem already been agreed or is it unknown?

If the decisions about how to solve the problem have already been made, then it's likely that the best approach for involving stakeholders is through consultation. This usually involves meetings with stakeholders or asking stakeholders for feedback on the options that can be implemented.

The following is a hypothetical example of when a solution to a problem has already been agreed and when stakeholders are consulted:

At Bob's workplace, there is a known problem. Bob's boss has told him how to fix it and has given him the money to do this (agreed solution). Bob wants to make sure this is ok with his customers, so he asks a few of his regular customers what they think (consultation). Customers give their feedback, most say the fix is ok but with minor tweaks. Minor aesthetic tweaks are made and Bob implements his boss's decision with no further consultation.

The following is an example of when a solution to a complex problem is unknown and when stakeholders want to contribute their expertise to generate a solution:

Government has completed three months of consultations with stakeholders about persistent issues related to child and family services, culminating in a workshop where the Minister reports back to stakeholders about the key themes. From this workshop, three main problems are nominated for priority action. Given that there is no known solution to the first problem and that any new model of out of home care would be complex, it is agreed that a co-design project will be created to enable a new model to be designed and tested through a design process. The design process would conclude with recommendations for the Minister to consider based on innovative design and outcomes of the rapid testing.

When you use a co-design process to solve a problem, you'll test your assumptions and it's likely that you'll generate new insights and solutions to that problem.

2.4 Is the problem complex?

The Cynefin Framework, developed by David Snowden, is a useful tool for seeing and categorising problems to determine an appropriate response (Snowden and Boone, 2007). The Cynefin Framework defines problems in five domains:

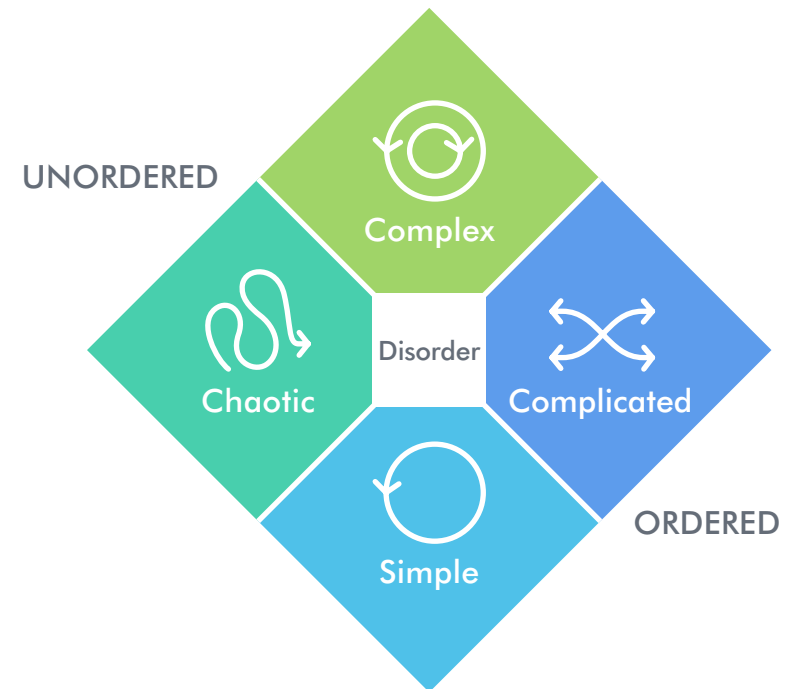
Simple • Complicated • Complex • Chaotic • Disorder

Simple problem types are where there is a clear cause and effect, and a self-evident solution to the problem. For example, a power cord laying in the middle of the floor causing several people to trip over and hurt themselves. In these cases, the right answer is evident and best practice can be applied, for example, moving the power cord away from the walkway. With these problems, the facts about the situation are identified, the facts are categorised, and a response is based on best practice or an existing procedure.

Complicated problem types are when there is a cause and effect, but the relationship between them is not clear without analysis of the situation. Complicated situations usually require an expert, or several experts, to analyse the problem. There can also be several solutions that might solve the problem, instead of one clear answer. As an example, a person may feel unwell but will need to see a health professional to diagnose the problem.

For complicated problems, we suggest working together with subject experts, such as sector or project partners, in a consultative or collaborative way to address the problem.

Complex problems are those which are best suited to co-design. Unlike complicated problems, complex problems do not present one 'right' solution. Often referred to as 'wicked problems', problems in this domain are in a state of unpredictability due to major changes or disruption taking place in the environment. Solving complex problems requires patience, a willingness to experiment and being prepared to fail safely to learn quickly; an approach ideally suited to co-design.



For chaotic problems, such as disasters and emergencies, the relationship between cause and effect are impossible to determine. In these situations, the priority is to respond and recover, rather than identifying patterns between cause and effect. However, while the focus is on responding to the situation, there is also opportunity, in some circumstances, for innovation and therefore co-design.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence is one example of how a chaotic problem can lead to the use of co-design. The Royal Commission sought to establish sense and order in a chaotic environment and system structure, while also paving the way for innovation and co-design.

If you wish to learn more, please see the link to the Cynefin Framework in the [Resources and Training](#) section.

*Do we need to describe
'disorder'?*

2.5 Am I willing to work together with stakeholders to solve the problem?

Working together with stakeholders to solve the problem is a critical part of the co-design process. This means that you have no preconceived ideas of what the solution to the problem would be, and that ideas and opinions from stakeholders are valued and respected. Willingness to work together with stakeholders is important to ensuring the success of the co-design process, otherwise you will need to consider other stakeholder engagement methods to try and solve the problem.

2.6 Are the stakeholders available and willing to participate?

There are many ways to draw on the insights from stakeholders as part of your project. Remember, stakeholders that you nominate for your design team could be project officers, consumers, end users, clients, carers, families or consumers. It all depends on the problem you're trying to solve.

Co-design projects can potentially be quite time consuming and people will need to commit to work between design workshops and across different stages of a project. You also may need to support your design team participants by providing them with training and project briefings ahead of commencing the work. It's important to give plenty of notice to people to enable good participation.

Depending on the context of your work, you may not have direct contact with consumers or end users to know how to engage them or whether they are available. As an example in human services, partners like CREATE Foundation and the Council for Homeless Persons have worked collaboratively to ensure that people who have direct experience of human services are involved. It's important to make sure that you conduct your project in a way that is ethical and that all participants give their informed consent.

INTRODUCTION TO CO-DESIGN

Co-design methods and mindset

“The ‘design lens’ is a refreshing way to look at the collaborative process as it provides us with a methodology to work with.”

*Kristina Bergin, Department of
Education and Training*

Co-design methods and mindset



1. Commitment to the process

To begin a process of cultural change, we must commit to the process of co-design. This means a commitment to working collaboratively with our stakeholders, encouraging emerging solutions, and using empathy.



2. Shift from an expert mindset

The co-design process works best when all participants' ideas and insights are as valuable as each other which is critical when creating new solutions to the problem.



3. Setting up a space conducive to the co-design process

We do not need to have all the answers. The co-design process works best when all participants' ideas and insights are as valuable as each other which is critical when creating new solutions to the problem.



4. Be prepared to experiment and learn from things that don't work

Co-design takes a faster approach to determining what works and what does not work. There is less time and resources put towards 'getting it right the first time'. There is more emphasis on testing the solution and refining as necessary with co-design, so you get to the final solution in a more robust way.



5. Trust the process and sit in the ambiguity

The co-design process will feel different, particularly when you are going through it for the first time. Co-design will make you sit and think about the problem for a lot longer than you may be accustomed to doing, which is an important part of the process to view the problem from many perspectives.



6. Make the space to make mistakes

In co-design, you will need to allow the space, both mentally and resource-wise, to come up with a solution that is not perfect the first time around. It is part of the design process to continue to develop these 'imperfect' solutions through testing the ideas and being open to feedback from your stakeholders so that adjustments can be made to the initial idea.



7. Co-design is not 'co-decision-making'

Another common misconception is that the co-design team will have the ability to authorise the solution they develop – this is not correct. It is important for all participants involved to be clear on who has the ability to authorise the solution at the commencement of the co-design process.

This section sets out key methods and mindsets to use when using co-design. The methods are largely taken from the field of design. The mindset is preparation of mind to a new way of working. These two facets of co-design are important for generating valuable outcomes.



3.2 Commitment to the process

The use of co-design can feel like a significant cultural shift from how we have worked with our sector partners in the past. Because the traditional approaches to developing new solutions have been well ingrained within government, changing how we work with stakeholders can feel difficult. To begin a process of cultural change, we must commit to the process of co-design. This means a commitment to working collaboratively with our stakeholders, encouraging emerging solutions, and using empathy.



3.3 Shift from an expert mindset

When thinking about using co-design for the first time, it is important to understand the mindset required to undertake co-design given how different the process can feel. People can be accustomed to focussing on following procedures and processes only, and forget about the mindset required to undertake a task which is just as important to ensure a successful co-design process.

It is common for organisations to believe that we should have all the answers. While we may have some answers, co-design cannot work if there are entrenched, pre-determined ideas of what the solution needs to be or if we dismiss the experience of people who deliver and use our services. It is important to be open to insights and solutions that come from a range of experts in community service organisations and people who have direct experience of our services. Our expertise, then, can be useful alongside the expertise of people with direct experience.



3.4 Setting up a space conducive to the co-design process

Another thing to consider is how you can support the best participation from these people, such as by using a neutral physical environment and facilitated conversations.

We should recognise that in some circumstances there are issues related to power and authority. Some of your participants might not be comfortable coming into your office. If you're in government, think about how you can create an environment conducive to equal engagement. The best design spaces are generally neutral and fit for purpose. Think about how simple things like a change of space or use of language can help signal to your stakeholders that you really are committed to the process.



3.5 Be prepared to experiment and learn from things that don't work

Historically, policies and projects have been created by policy experts and consultants. Policies and projects are subsequently reviewed and evaluated to determine whether the program or policy achieved its intended outcomes. In this traditional model, there is a long wait before we measure outcomes or start to make improvements.

Co-design takes a faster approach than the traditional model to determine what does and does not work.

Through rapidly testing the idea or solution in a co-design process, you can quickly determine what works and what needs to be refined before expanding on the solution ahead of broader implementation. There is less time and resources put towards 'getting it right the first time'. There is more emphasis on testing the solution and refining as necessary with co-design, so you get to the final solution in a more robust way. In this way, we reduce the risks associated with getting the design wrong, or designing something that will not be easily implemented because it was designed and developed in isolation.



3.6 Trust the process and sit in the ambiguity

The co-design process will feel different, particularly when you are going through it for the first time. At times you may feel sceptical that the process won't come up with new solutions to the problem. You also might feel that the co-design process is too long, or that you already know everything about the problem. Some people may worry that it could potentially be a waste of time, resources and effort because there is no certainty that a new solution will be developed from this process.

It is important to know that this is completely normal – it is uncommon for us to sit in the depths of a problem without trying to generate solutions right away. Co-design will make you sit and think about the problem for a lot longer than you may be accustomed to doing, which is an important part of the process to view the problem from many perspectives.

This is different from our usual approach of consulting with stakeholders to obtain their feedback on a number of options that have already been 'pre-approved'. Having no known solutions when working with stakeholders is where co-design can feel different and co-design teams have to be prepared to sit with the unknown while the solution emerges as part of the process. Managers also have to trust that the design team have the skills to create a new solution, that stakeholders engaged as 'critical friends' will make useful suggestions, and that the design process will deliver robust results.

It's also worth remembering that design processes are built with rigor and have been refined over decades to deliver results – and while it's good to be flexible – undermining the design process is a sure way to deliver poor outcomes.



3.7 Make the space to make mistakes

Design techniques are all about developing, testing and refining insights and prototypes until you get to a final version that works for most people. The same goes for co-design – you will need to allow the space, both mentally and resource-wise, to come up with a solution that is not perfect the first time around.

It is part of the design process to continue to develop these ‘imperfect’ solutions through testing the ideas and being open to feedback from your design team, ‘critical friends’ or consumers so that adjustments and refinements can be made to the initial idea. You may come up with several iterations of the solution that may be quite different to what you initially co-designed – remember this is all part of the design process.

“We’re increasingly being asked to move away from traditional policy cycles of – strategy, design, implement, evaluate. In co-design, strategy will be set, but we’ll design, test and iterate in order to reach our target.”

Angela Elson, Department of Health and Human Services



3.8 Co-design is not ‘co-decision-making’

Another common misconception is that co-design means ‘co-decision making’ – this is not correct. The usual authorisation processes apply to approve the implementation of possible solutions that have been developed by the design team. It is important for all participants involved to be clear on who has the ability to authorise the solution at the commencement of the co-design process. The true power of co-design is in valuing all input equally from a diverse range of participants with relevant expertise.

Typically, design teams will receive feedback from their critical friends and a project steering group at key points during the design process so that adjustments can be made to ensure the proposed solution is on track.

Once the first design process has been completed, final proposals are pitched to business owners, organisations or even approved by government ministers ahead of any implementation. In many cases, there will be opportunity for additional stakeholders to provide feedback on the proposed design solution while it is tested in the community.

INTRODUCTION TO CO-DESIGN

Considerations when setting up a co-design project

"You always think about the user. The key difference is whether you get the user thinking about the problem with you. It is about getting the user in the room and thinking about the problem with you."

Hailey Austin, Collabforge

4.1 Introduction

Like all projects, co-design projects require planning, approvals and budget. You'll also need to plan for recruiting your design team participants, an appropriate physical space and equipment for your design workshops, access to service providers and consumers, time for further consultation with relevant stakeholders, and ensuring adequate time for decision making along the way. Your internal processes for setting up projects will be useful here.

As previously mentioned, co-design will contain elements of traditional consultation and collaboration, but consultation and collaboration on their own are not the same as co-design. When you reflect on how a usual consultation process works, it looks very different from participating in a co-design workshop in practice.

4.1 Progressing a co-design project

Some of you may have experience in co-design, and will be able to design and lead the co-design project. For a number of people, it's a new experience.

You have a number of options to consider in starting your co-design project and building your capability in co-design. If you do not feel confident in your capabilities to conduct a co-design process, particularly if it is your first time or you are running to short timeframes, this may be when you would consider engaging an external co-design consultant or other co-design experts in your organisation instead of conducting it yourself.

Some options on what this could look like include:

Option type	What is this?	When to use this option
1. Engage a co-design consultant	This would mean that the consultant is leading the process.	If your design problem is complex and multifaceted or needs to be done in tight timelines, you may wish to think about whether a consultant will bring the expertise you need go away and do the work on your behalf, including potentially working with consumers. Using this method would depend on your timelines and the problem you are trying to solve.
2. Engaging a co-design facilitator	This means an external facilitator supports the design workshops and manages the duration, frequency and timing of the design cycle.	If you hold the knowledge, have good relationships with your co-design stakeholders and have some experience using design methods, you may wish to work with a facilitator to manage the co-design process so that you can partake in the design work yourself.
3. Participate in an immersive co-design training course	This is an intensive training program in which your team would work on the common problem at hand while building their capability in co-design.	If you have no experience in design, but have a group of enthusiastic experts who are ready to tackle a problem together, you might consider participating in an intensive and immersive co-design course while working on the problem you are trying to solve. The benefit of this approach is that you and your stakeholders build capability together to work in this new way. There are a number of providers that can support this approach.

Guidance note on option 1 – if you decide to hire a consultant to do the work for you or to manage the process, you'll need to factor in time for procurement and ensure you have an appropriate budget allocated. It is critical to the success of your co-design consultant that they are able to demonstrate experience in the type of work you would like done.

It is suggested that co-design consultants have:

- demonstrated and relevant experience of community and stakeholder engagement approaches
- demonstrated and relevant experience in undertaking a wide range of ethical ethnographic research methodologies to deliver insights applied to service design
- technical skills to enable agile measurement of impact in order to prototype and bring to scale suggested design solutions
- knowledge of the policy or organisational context of the sector
- capability in relation to digital engagement approaches, to support long term and short term engagement activities
- demonstrated ability to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- demonstrated ability to work with communities from diverse backgrounds.

Given the skills needed, it is also suggested you think about how to incorporate capacity building activities so that you, your co-design team and stakeholders all learn the co-design process.

Core capabilities of the co-design consultant include:

- ability to deliver on the job coaching and mentoring in the context of project teams
- delivery of standalone workshops and training.

It is worthwhile asking your potential co-design consultants for examples of any resources produced as part of previous co-design projects. You can also consider whether a mix of providers will be required depending on the scope and magnitude of the problem.

4.2 Who needs to be involved and how do I engage them?

Projects are most successful when there is wide agreement about the problem and when stakeholders agree that something different has to be done in creating the solution.

Because of this, it's good practice to conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise with a few colleagues so that you can brainstorm who would benefit from being involved. Consider internal as well as external stakeholders to participate in the design teams, as well as other stakeholders who would benefit from learning about co-design to potentially act as 'critical friends'.

Engagement with people who access services, or 'consumers', can be difficult for workers whose roles are far removed from the service delivery. Consider whether you need assistance from partner organisations to access consumers and whether you need guidance on best practice when engaging with particular community groups. Make sure you consider your stakeholders' other commitments and projects that they might be involved in, particularly if it is with your own department, as you do not want to overcommit their already busy schedules.

It is good practice to have your co-design project sit within a broader stakeholder engagement and project plan.

4.3 What roles are involved in the co-design process?

For design workshops to work well, it's good to be clear on what roles people play in a design process. Below we describe the main roles and responsibilities that people have as part of a co-design process.

Design teams

The best design teams are made up of four or five experts with knowledge or interest in the problem. Any more or less participants may tip the balance and may either be harder to manage the amount of people or not be enough generation of ideas.

The design teams can be handpicked, or you can ask people to express their interest before you select the best participants. It is good to consider having a diverse range of participants, for example as part of a government co-design project, you might have one departmental staff member, one consumer/service user, two community sector representatives and another expert in the field.

The design team will work together for a specific period during the co-design process using tools to arrive at a new solution to the specific problem. Design teams should have access to people and other experts through which they can test their work along the design journey. These people are called critical friends.

Critical friends

The critical friend's role is to be mainly one of encouragement and support to a person in a design team; identifying assumptions when they notice them and asking open-ended questions like 'why?', 'have you considered...?', 'what if...?'.

In selecting the individual critical friends, each person on the design team should, where possible, come together to ensure that there is a representation of the cross-section of various people who are impacted by the problem area. For example one design team member could seek the opinions of someone with 'lived experience', such as a service user/consumer or service provider representative; another could seek advice from a senior manager in government or an academic.

It is important when selecting a critical friend (where possible) that they are not too heavily invested in the problem or a solution; or at least that you are aware of any biases they might bring, including a strong perspective or view on how the problem should be dealt with.

The key role of the critical friend is to provide a fresh and objective outside perspective to the work that is being done by the design teams involved in the program.

Facilitator

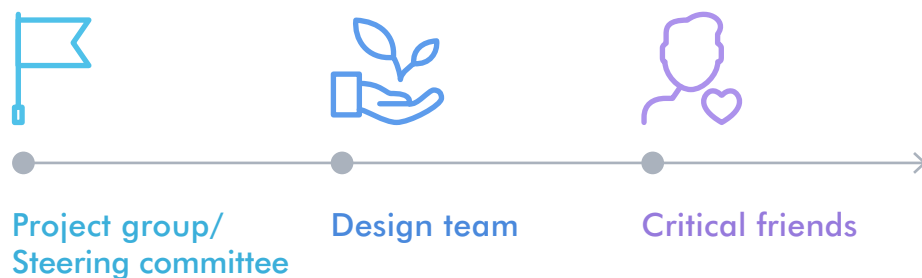
This role will be played by someone who can support you through a design workshop – this person would manage the time, prepare for subsequent workshops, assist participants with using the design tools etc. Facilitators will give participants a framework in which to start their conversations and ensure a safe environment for all participants – it is a fine balance for facilitators to allow discussions to flow but in a focussed way while respecting ideas and challenging participants at the same time. Facilitators do not need to be the same person for each of the workshops – one person could facilitate one workshop as part of their capability building in co-design.

Designer

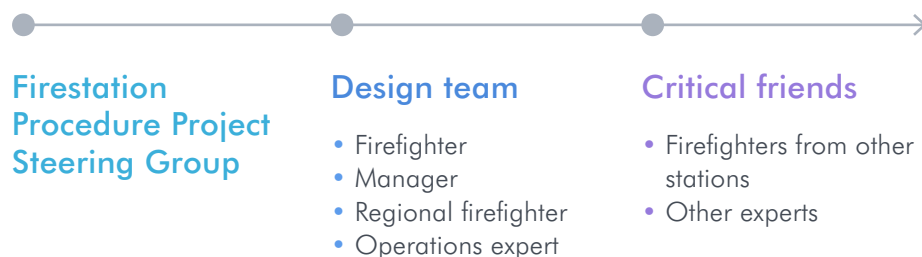
This role is typically for an external co-design consultant who will conduct the co-design process for you with the necessary stakeholders. After the design process, this person would make recommendations of solutions that have come from the workshops to you for your consideration.

4.4 Governance and project structures

Appropriate governance arrangements are necessary for any project, including co-design projects. In setting up your project, there are some easy to follow governance structures that you are able to adapt.



For example, if you were designing a new procedure for firefighters to enable them to do their job better with the focus on the operation of the fire station, you wouldn't need to involve members of the public on a design team. The firefighters themselves will be the 'end users' and as such are experts based on their extensive experience about what does and does not work for them and should be involved on the design team.



The role of the steering group would be to ensure the co-design project is delivering on outcomes and also responsible for managing any issues that could arise with the project.

4.5 Engaging with people ethically

The 'co' in co-design is derived from working together in a collaborative way. This means your co-design project will necessarily involve people. Using co-design puts people at the centre – but who those people are will depend on the problem you are trying to solve.

It's also important to remember that co-design 'participants' or end users does not automatically mean consumers, clients or consumers.

However, if you are working on a service related co-design project, then informed consent is a driving principle of working with people, so you will need to know any ethics approvals you may need in your organisation as well as ensure that all participants have provided consent to participate in your project. Ethics approval is not required for all circumstances in the co-design process, such as general engagement with community service representatives on your design team.

Generally, there is some research conducted as part of a co-design project. Some research techniques, such as observing or surveying clients, will require ethics approval. So you'll need to factor in time to get authorisation as part of your project if needed.

Depending on what you need, some government departments or university human research ethics committees will be able to provide advice in this area. You may also wish to explore the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research:

nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/e72

4.6 Evaluation

It is good practice to think early on about how you might evaluate your project.

For example:

- How will you measure change over time?
- What are the different factors that may influence success (for example, workforce training or information sharing) that you should collect information about?
- Who do you need to collect information from, and how often?
- What do you need to know?

It is easier to establish processes for collecting the information you need for evaluation at the beginning of a project, than it is to try and find it at the end.

Regularly collecting and assessing information on your project can also help identify and address issues or problems early, rather than waiting. This approach combines learning and doing to iteratively understand and improve a project.

If you need help thinking about how you will evaluate your co-design project, speak to your department or organisation research and evaluation unit.

INTRODUCTION TO CO-DESIGN

Resources and training

"It is an approach that is
a mindset as much as a
method as well, centred
in empathy."

Caitlyn Cook, Huddle

5.1 What co-design tools are useful for different situations/questions?



How might I better understand the problem?

The Five Why's

A tool to help uncover the root cause of a problem

Visualise

Tools to help draw, sculpt and build ideas

Empathy Interview

A tool to understand a person's thoughts, emotions and motivations that shape their behaviours

Empathy Map

A tool to help gain a deeper understanding of what a person says/ thinks/does/ feels

Character Personas

A tool to identify the different types of people that would be affected by the problem

Secondary Research

Learning more history and data about the broader context of the problem

Immersion

Observation/shadowing consumers or end users



How might I make sense of my findings?

Download Insights

A tool to share learnings with the group

Affinity Mapping

A tool to help identify, group and analyse information

How Might We

A tool to reframe your problem as an opportunity for innovation and design thinking



How might I generate ideas and develop solutions?

Brainstorm

A brainstorming session with clear rules to encourage broader thinking and collaboration

Journey Map

A framework to help visualise a service/ end user's experience of your service from start to finish

Co-Creation Session

Incorporating other consumers in the design process

Rapid Prototype

Making your idea tangible in order to get feedback in a quick, effective way

Storyboard

A tool to see your solution visually from start to finish

Business Model Canvas

A worksheet that asks you key questions to keep your business model front and centre



How might I test my solutions?

Elevator Pitch

A tool to communicate your idea to different types of people

Live Prototype

Testing your solution for a few weeks in the real world

Pilot

A live, longer term test of your solution

Evaluate

Critical thinking to analyse the assumptions and ideas using qualitative and quantitative evidence

5.2 Further resources and reading

Analysis of design models/processes

medium.com/digital-experience-design/how-to-apply-a-design-thinking-hcd-ux-or-any-creative-process-from-scratch-b8786efbf812#.jkijg5gtx

A how-to article to provide people with a tool to set up and manage challenges in design. This article has great illustrations and graphics to help visualise the design process.

IDEO's design kit designkit.org

Design firm IDEO have led the world in human-centred design approaches. The department draws on the firm's idea that you cannot successfully innovate in a vacuum; you need to explore the ways people live, what they think, and how they feel about things (including the services they receive) before you can understand the problem your new product or service should address. IDEO have produced a free human centred design resource kit that explores design methodologies and how they apply to different problems.

Mozilla's Open Innovation Toolkit toolkit.mozilla.org

The Open Innovation Toolkit is a community sourced set of best practices and principles to help you incorporate human-centered design into your product development process. Whether you have a new idea or a working prototype to test, the Open Innovation Toolkit can help.

Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre westernsydney.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/476330/Young_and_Well_CRC_IM_PD_Guide.pdf

The Young and Well CRC have developed a guide to provide an introduction to the principles of Participatory Design and provide a framework for how Participatory Design can be integrated with evidence-based approaches.

Epic Collaboration: Definitions

epiccollaboration.com/frameworks/collaboration-definition-3-cs-framework

Link provides definitions on the three C's – Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration.

Collaboration in relation to other concepts

epiccollaboration.com/frameworks/roles-collaboration

Link provides more information about the main roles in collaboration.

IAP2

c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf

This links you to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) public participation spectrum – the most broadly accepted definitions across government and industry, including VAGO in relation to stakeholder engagement. This framework is used to guide the Department's engagement activities.

Cynefin Framework

cognitive-edge.com/

Link provides articles and videos about the Cynefin Framework. Includes other resources by Cognitive Edge (founded by Dave Snowden, creator of Cynefin Framework).

LUMA

hbr.org/2014/01/a-taxonomy-of-innovation

Harvard Business Review has published the LUMA institute innovation taxonomy. Design insights and innovation require common conditions for success and utilised human centred design thinking. This taxonomy provides useful direction what tools and resources might apply to specific design or innovation insights.

Toolkits

Design Kit

designkit.org/methods

Service Design

servicedesign.net.au/toolkits/

DIY Toolkit

diytoolkit.org/tools/

Training

80min Stanford Design School

dschool.stanford.edu/crash-course-video/

IDEO Design Thinking Courses

ideou.com/?gclid=CJfu88b5tc8CFUWUvQodu-sCkQ

Coursera – Design Thinking for Innovation

coursera.org/learn/design-thinking-innovation

What is design thinking?

youtube.com/watch?v=0V5BwTrQOCs

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