

Your Guide to Convening a Co-Design Group

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TACSI

Now you've begun a co-design process and are getting close to convening your first co-design group, we've prepared some helpful information. Including:



1. Talking about each workshop
2. Key messages (group specific)
3. Mindsets for co-design
4. FAQs
5. Addressing common barriers

Talking about each workshop

In **workshop one**, we're building a shared understanding of existing knowledge and considering where we want to focus our efforts as a co-design group

In **workshop two**, we're generating ideas based on the opportunities selected during the first workshop, as well as considering who we need to test those ideas with (e.g., consumers and carers, professionals). There will be an option to take part in the 'idea testing' if you'd like to (note there's no expectation to).

It's important the group understands that after workshop two we'll be testing the ideas with others outside the co-design group (consumers, carers, professionals). The group will need listen and learn from their feedback, as well as working with their own insight.

Language also matters. We're hosting 'workshops' and 'sessions', not meetings, panels or working sessions.

In **workshop three**, we'll be looking at the findings from the first round of 'idea testing'. From those findings, we'll improve our ideas and decide on priorities for a second round of testing.

In **workshop four**, we'll look at the findings from the second round of 'idea testing' and make decisions about how best to move forward.

Following **workshop four**, there may be opportunities to stay involved. We'll be clearer on what those may be as we move closer towards workshop four.

Key messages (group specific)

Co-design is a process of mutual learning, understanding, designing and refining together. As professionals, the process is about sharing power and divesting decision making to those closest to the challenges (both professionals and people with lived experience).

Prior to the first workshop, we recommend having a **briefing conversation with all Co-Designers**. The aim of that conversation is:

- Ensuring they're clear on the goal of their participation
- Ensuring they're clear on expectations and logistics
- Socialising the goal of the project
- Understanding what they're motivated by¹

Professionals

Key messages for professionals engaging in a co-design process:

- Their role is sharing *and* learning. They'll be working with others (lived experience and other professionals) through a learning, designing and testing process.

Whilst it's important they share the space with people who have lived experience, it's also important they share their own experience and insight. We're asking for active participation from everyone.

- There is very often a significant power imbalance between professionals and those with lived experience. In particular, if those with lived experience are from one or more marginalised groups (e.g., LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders).

There are practical steps they can take to share power. Some of those things can include:

- Avoiding introducing themselves by their professional roles (instead, introducing themselves by name and talking about who they are, not what they do)
 - Avoiding wearing a uniform, including a name tag, organisationally branded clothing, bringing a large diary and putting it on the table, wearing a stethoscope, etc.
 - Avoiding the use of acronyms all together, and explaining sector-specific jargon in Plain English where it cannot be avoided.
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- It's important we all work together to create a safe environment for those with diverse sexual and gender identities. We'll be asking everyone for their preferred

¹ Understanding what people are motivated by can help us tailoring messaging and look for opportunities to connect to their motivation. For example, if someone is strongly motivated by peer work - we may work with them as a 'peer idea tester' during the loops of learning.

pronoun at the start of the workshop and ask that you don't assume anyone's identity through using gendered pronouns (e.g., 'he,' 'she'). Instead, try them, their, they.

- They don't need to prepare anything prior to the workshop, they only need to bring themselves, a curiosity to learn and willingness to share some of their experiences (what they are comfortable with).
- We don't need to ask anyone else why they're taking part. We're working on the basis of everyone has something to bring and will disclose what they are comfortable disclosing when they choose to do so.

Lived experience

It's important those with lived experience hear the following messages:

- You don't need to prepare anything prior to the workshop. You only need to bring yourself, a curiosity to learn and willingness to share what you are comfortable sharing.
- You won't need to disclose anything and only need to share what your comfortable sharing. You won't be asked to introduce yourself by diagnosis or employment status - just your name and anything else you'd like to share.
- The sessions will all be informal and relaxed (no boardroom tables in sight!)
- Others with lived experience will also be attending, alongside a range of professionals and members of the broader community. Together, we'll form a 'team' and work together across the process. We all have something to bring to the process, no type of experience is more or less valid.
- You can tell us anything that would make your participation easier and/or more comfortable (e.g. access needs, needs around reading and writing, preference to have a support person in attendance , etc.)
- We need and value your contribution. You can let us know at any point of the process if anything is getting in the way of that or could be made better.
- You need to have reflected on your readiness to be involved in a project that explores at mental health and suicide prevention. We have materials that can support that.
- Your participation is voluntary, you can withdraw it at anytime and don't have to tell us why.
- You will be an active participant alongside others, listening, learning and sharing your own perspectives. You'll share your view, as well as listening to others and working

with them towards a better mental health and suicide prevention supports.

- If you'd like to bring along a support person for one or more of the sessions, you're most welcome to do so. Let us know in advance, so we can cater for and welcome them.

Provocateurs

External provocateurs are curious and critical thinkers who sit outside the sectors we're working within. External provocateurs plays an 'outsider role' - supporting the co-design group to think beyond the obvious, often through asking helpfully naive questions.

It's important provocateurs know that:

- They don't need to prepare anything prior to the workshop, they only need to bring themselves, a curiosity to learn and willingness to share some of their experiences (only what they are comfortable with).
- They don't need experience within the mental health or health system. In fact, we'd prefer they didn't and can bring a fresh perspective.
- When they come to the first workshop, they won't introduce yourself as a provocateur. To ensure an equal playing field for all groups, we'll introduce ourselves as people - rather than as professionals or roles. Being a provocateur is something they'll bear in mind and bring to life, rather than sharing with the group.
- They will be an active participant alongside others, listening, learning and sharing their perspectives.
- What we need them to bring is curiosity, critical thinking and compassion. It's important they can bring empathy for a range of perspectives. From those affected by mental distress and suicide, to those working within a system that can sometimes constrain them from acting in the ways they'd like. There is no place for harsh judgements or blame.

Specifically, we hope they will:

- Ask helpfully naive questions, challenging others to think outside their 'boxes.'

For example, "Why does that happen like that?", "does it have to be that way?", "how would people benefit from that?"

- Ask clarifying questions others may be afraid to ask, supporting a shared understanding.

For example, "What does that acronym mean?", "why is that important?", "can you tell me more about what you mean by that?", "how would that work?"

- Seek to understand many perspectives, it's important any new model works for consumers, carers *and* professionals. To do that, we have to be curious about a range of needs, including but not limited to the consumer experience.

Mindsets for co-design

We believe it is important to hold the following mindsets while leading and doing co-design work.

Curiosity

Curiosity involves questioning, wondering and asking more; it can sometimes feel different to expertise, where we depend on our existing expert knowledge and skills instead of questioning. We can use our knowledge and experience to avoid curiosity.

Learning by doing

Talking is good; doing is even better. We evolve and share our ideas by building and testing them, not just discussing them.

Being in the grey

Get comfortable with ambiguity and not being sure. Be ready for surprising and unexpected results.

Valuing many perspectives

It's important any new model works for consumers, carers and professionals. To do that, we have to be curious about a range of needs, including but not limited to the consumer experience.

FAQs

The term co-design is used a lot, how do we know if something is co-design?

Typically, we ask ourselves the following questions to understand if something is co-design. *Are people with lived experience and professionals...*

1. Involved as active participants throughout the innovation process, from problem-setting to problem-solving?
2. Design partners... taking part in idea generation, giving and gathering feedback, as well as making changes?
3. Are proposed approaches evaluated from the perspective of whether they create value for the people they are intended to serve?

How is this different to other projects?

Many projects within health and social care involve:

- Consumers as advisors, with limited agency (e.g. they do not play a role in designing or decision making)
- Consumers and professionals sitting on separate groups, with few/if any opportunities to work and learn together
- Ideas are generated within organisations (as opposed to within a diverse group of consumers and professionals)
- Ideas move straight from ideation to pilot or implementation
- Ideas are tested from one perspective only (e.g. from the consumer perspective without staff, or with staff and without consumers)

By contrast, this process involves:

- Consumers as active partners in designing, testing and decision making
- Consumers and professionals working and learning together
- Ideas being generated by consumers and professionals
- Ideas tested through two loops of learning, before decisions are made
- Ideas are tested through three lenses (desirability, feasibility and viability) with consumers, carers and professionals

What will the output be?

From the co-design process, we will produce a report detailing the process, ideas generated, ideas tested, and the leading ideas from that testing. The report will be shared with all Co-Designers for input prior to being finalised. Input isn't required but is highly appreciated.

Addressing common barriers

Barriers to participation in co-design are often small, and easily overcome through thoughtful planning. Common barriers are:

- Out of pocket expenses for lived experience participants (e.g. travel costs, parking, childcare)
- A lack of easy parking or closeness of public transport options
- Poor physical accessibility of venues
- Venues held in organisational or religious contexts that bring discomfort (e.g. for LGBTIQ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)
- A feeling the sessions will be overly formal (require certain dress, behaviours, no breaks etc.)

Additional barriers can be found within the '[barriers to co-design](#)' card deck.

It is often also important to explain why voucher based payment is offered, as some may take it as a stigmatization of their mental health/alcohol and drug use (e.g. can't be trusted with money).

It helps to appoint someone as the 'Chief Convenor' and advise all participants they can reach out at any time with questions or concerns.