

Contents

Before you begin	vii
Topic 1 Operate within a community development framework	1
1A Work towards the vision and mission of the community development work plan	2
1B Work with communities to achieve their priorities	13
1C Identify and document the interrelationships between the priorities and rights of the individual, the family, the community and society	17
Summary	25
Learning checkpoint 1: Operate within a community development framework	26
Topic 2 Distinguish between private and public issues arising in community development work	29
2A Employ appropriate interpersonal skills to hear individual stories and distinguish between private and public issues	30
2B Identify the individual's willingness to engage in a public process to bring about change and facilitate the move from private concern to public action	36
2C Provide appropriate referrals to support people to deal with personal issues	39
2D Ensure all work reflects and meets duty-of-care responsibilities	42
Summary	44
Learning checkpoint 2: Distinguish between private and public issues arising in community development work	45
Topic 3 Work with groups to achieve community development outcomes	47
3A Research and analyse community priorities	48
3B Identify and document shared community priorities within the public group processes	52
3C Plan appropriate strategies in collaboration with the group to ensure community priorities are addressed	55
3D Document community structures and resources available to maximise outcomes for groups	62
3E Provide advice and information to groups and individuals as required to ensure they are fully informed about relevant issues and opportunities	68
3F Advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes	71
3G Manage group dynamics, facilitate discussions and engagement processes	74
3H Review and modify own work practice within a community development framework	78
Summary	81
Learning checkpoint 3: Work with groups to achieve community development outcomes	82

1A Work towards the vision and mission of the community development work plan

Community development is a term used to describe a particular type of community work that empowers people in to take action to achieve shared goals. Although the terms social action and community organising are also used, the goals are similar. Community development has been the most commonly-used term in Australia since the 1970s, although this type of work has a longer history.

The 1970s in Australia saw a wide range of community activities based on community development and social action strategies. These included green bans to prevent unwanted urban development; Aboriginal, women and gay rights movements; and anti-war demonstrations. Today, community development activities are more likely to focus on improving services and conditions in communities and advocating for specific groups, such as disability groups.



Maintain sustainability in work role

Sustainability is one of the fundamental principles of community development. All development work must be geared towards the ongoing strength and sustainability of communities. The term sustainability is often used interchangeably with environmental sustainability, or reducing the ecological footprint. All of these terms refer to the use of the earth's resources balanced with the earth's capacity to regenerate, without affecting quality of life.

Rather than looking for quick fixes or short-term benefits, support community members to take a long-term view and define both short- and long-term goals. Community development needs this long-term view to support and foster the long-term development of the community, rather than focusing exclusively on present concerns.

Sustainability principles are broadly applied to community development in terms of environmental, economic and social aspects. The commitment is to ensure the continued health, wellbeing and viability of the community environmentally, economically and socially.

Sustainability principles also affect how we work. When considering workforce sustainability, think about how staff are trained and retained. Sustainability policies and procedures may be explicitly labelled or addressed within other policies and procedures within your workplace.

Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability means identifying ways to ensure all resources are used in the most efficient, beneficial and responsible way. In most organisations, economic sustainability is driven by management, but everyone has a role to play. In community development, we need to ensure that the community has the economic support to meet its needs. Working in an economically-sustainable manner supports the ongoing viability, health and wellbeing of the communities you support.

Here are some of the basic principles of economic sustainability.

Economic sustainability

- ▶ The efficient use and acquisition of resources, such as securing ongoing and recurring funding
- ▶ Purchasing equipment that meets quality standards, is fit for purpose and can be reused or recycled at the end of its life
- ▶ Recruiting and retaining qualified staff
- ▶ Establishing effective operational processes and procedures so that work is defined and organised in the most appropriate and efficient way
- ▶ Reducing wasted or duplicated effort wherever possible

Social sustainability

Social sustainability is about ensuring future generations have the same or greater access to social resources. The aim of social sustainability is to create healthy and liveable communities through the development of formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships. Working in a socially sustainable manner supports the ongoing viability, health and wellbeing of the communities you support.

In community services, this is achieved by embracing practices that promote cooperative and effective relationships, such as ensuring all people have equal access to participation in the service, supporting diversity in the community and service and ensuring all people enjoy a safe and healthy environment.

For most workers this involves:

- ▶ communicating clearly with individuals with support needs and carers
- ▶ establishing a trusting, collaborative and professional relationship with them
- ▶ following occupational health and safety policies and procedures
- ▶ incorporating cultural and linguistic diversity requirements.

Managers are responsible for:

- ▶ ensuring all policies and procedures support a fair and equitable workplace that is safe and secure
- ▶ communicating effectively with staff and individuals with support needs to promote the service's social ethos
- ▶ supporting staff to implement sustainability, access and equity in the workplace.

Example**Work towards the vision and mission of the community development work plan**

Northwood is a small rural town, several hours drive from the nearest city. The population has a large number of residents with a disability who have lived most of their lives in and around the town. Most of these residents do not want to move away from the town but many have had to in order to receive residential disability care services. A group of residents decide to take action to have a disability care complex built in Northwood.

They approach the local council and engage the assistance of the council community development worker, who suggests they form an association to make themselves more visible in the community and to foster more community participation. She also assists them to liaise with government departments, council and other relevant authorities. She gives them information and ideas about writing submissions and raising funds by obtaining donations, holding community fundraising events and generally promoting the concept of the care complex. She supports and encourages them when their motivation begins to falter, reminding them that what they are doing will benefit the community for many years to come.

Five years after they formed, the Northwood Disability Care Association is able to purchase land and begin building the facility. Their next project is to raise funds for a social centre on land adjacent to the care facility.



Practice task 1

1. What are two aspects of a needs-based or gap-based approach to community development?

2. What are two aspects of a rights-based or asset-based approach to community development?

3. Name two underlying principles of community development work.

1C Identify and document the interrelationships between the priorities and rights of the individual, the family, the community and society

Workers must have a clear understanding of the way people's lives are interrelated with their community. The wellbeing of individuals and families is essential to the wellbeing of the community and society as a whole. A strong, cohesive community helps to ensure each of its members has opportunities to lead full and meaningful lives.



Many problems that arise in communities may at first appear to be individual problems. Traditional social welfare approaches offer counselling and casework to help individuals cope with problems and difficult circumstances.

Community development workers are more likely to see problems in terms of structural inequalities that result in some groups and individuals in a community, and society in general, being disadvantaged by a lack of access to opportunities and resources.

By providing a wider context for people to understand their experience, you can support communities to uphold their rights and facilitate realistic, achievable change.

Identify interrelationships

Community development workers seek to transform the underpinning structural and social issues that cause individual and community problems. A community development worker in a specific location would not look to remedy the situation by working one-on-one with individuals to help them overcome their individual isolation; they would assume there is an underlying reason for this exclusion and seek to address the issue at a structural level.

The worker may find that an organisation providing services in the area has closed down, which has resulted in a reduction in services. They may also find there are few transport options for people with mobility issues in the area. These factors are likely to contribute directly to the exclusion of people because they are not able to access community activities and may be experiencing neglect and abuse from the lack of services in the area. In consultation with the community, community development workers would seek to develop programs to address these issues.

Individual differences

There are many ways that you can address individual differences, but you should always show respect for all people and treat them equally and fairly. Be aware of your own values and how this may influence the way you work with people. If you have a prejudice against a particular group that you find difficult to overcome, adopt a neutral, non-judgmental attitude to work effectively with individuals and the group as a whole.

The following illustrates some of the individual differences that may present in a community.

Diversity that makes a community



Ethnic groups

Ethnic groups have particular interests, history and cultural features in common. Cultural features include language, religion and the way people interact with each other. An example of an ethnic group is the Jewish people.



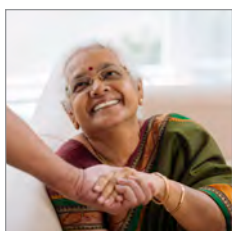
Race

Race refers to a group of people who have similar features such as skin colour, type of hair, eye colour and other physical features. The concept of race is often considered to be a social construct.



Language

Language is the way people communicate with each other. It is a very important part of a culture. Some common languages spoken in Australia are English, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Croatian, Macedonian, Turkish, Serbian and Hindi. Around 60,000 people in Australia speak an Australian Indigenous language. Other individuals may communicate using sign language or use communication aids. Make sure you have access to interpreters, including people who can use sign language.



Older people

In some cultures, especially Asian cultures, older people are particularly valued for their knowledge and age. Treat all older people with respect. This may involve being patient and tailoring your communication to meet their needs.



Dress

The way people dress may be influenced by their religion or culture. Some individuals only want to dress the way they have always dressed. Respect people's choice of dress.

2A Employ appropriate interpersonal skills to hear individual stories and distinguish between private and public issues

As a community worker involved in community development projects, you will do much of your work with groups, but you must also have the skills to communicate effectively with individuals. One of your roles is to listen to and encourage the telling of individual stories. This helps you determine whether an individual's concerns are based on private issues or public issues that others in the community share.

If substantial numbers of people in the community have similar public concerns, you can bring them together to consider if collective action is an appropriate way of addressing their concerns.



Employ appropriate communication and interpersonal skills

Use active and reflective listening communication techniques to maintain a respectful relationship and provide empowerment to people by acknowledging that what they say is valued. Active listening means paying close attention and focusing, not only hearing what a person is saying but also observing and interpreting what is being communicated, verbally and nonverbally. Active listening is necessary to truly understand the meaning and feelings being conveyed and is an important component of listening to an individual's concerns. Active listening also involves responding to the person to clarify information and paraphrasing what has been said to encourage the speaker to continue.

It is important to explain what your role is when meeting an individual for the first time, especially regarding community development principles. This helps to build trust, as many people are unsure of what community development is and how they can participate.

There are some important points to keep in mind when meeting with individuals.

Community workers should:

- ▶ give people information about the purpose of their role and responsibilities
- ▶ inform them about confidentiality and privacy principles so that individuals feel secure talking about their concerns
- ▶ help individuals realise which of their concerns may be public issues
- ▶ discuss referring individuals to specialised services to deal with private concerns where appropriate
- ▶ explain how collective community action can be used to address public issues.

Encourage participation

To encourage individuals to tell their stories and to establish rapport, respect and trust, workers must be able to convey congruence or genuineness, unconditional positive regard (being non-judgemental) and empathy. These qualities are explained here.

Genuineness

Genuineness occurs when you are genuine in your interest in an individual and what he or she has to say. While this is often subtle and not consciously noticed, people do pick up on your level of interest and compassion.

Non-judgment

Non-judgment occurs when you respect an individual by showing them unconditional positive regard. This means accepting the other person unconditionally, without judgment, disapproval or approval. This helps the other person to feel increased self-regard and to value their own experience.

Empathy

Empathic understanding means that you try to understand the individual's perspective or internal frame of reference, instead of imposing your own views on them. This is a fundamental aspect of respecting all people.

Distinguish between private and public concerns

People in a community usually have a number of issues and concerns that they want to discuss with a community worker. Some of these issues will be personal or private matters, and others will be issues that affect others in the community or the community as a whole. You must be able to distinguish between private and public issues and discuss possible strategies with people for addressing both types of concerns.

Private concerns are usually issues that affect the individual in a personal way, such as mental health concerns like depression or anxiety. Public concerns affect larger numbers of people in the community, such as lack of public transport or rising rates of crime in the area. However, be aware that the line between private and public concerns is not always clear; a person's depression may be worsened or partially caused by stigma, isolation or lack of appropriate services, which are public concerns for all people.



Example

Employ appropriate interpersonal skills to hear individual stories and distinguish between private and public issues

Janine, a community development worker, is meeting with Carla, who has asked for a meeting. Janine welcomes Carla into her office and makes sure she is comfortable.

'Hi Carla, it's really nice to meet you. What can I help you with?' Janine makes sure to give Carla her full attention, to provide good eye contact and nods encouragingly as Carla speaks.

Carla smiles, clearly relaxed. 'Thanks Janine, it's good to meet you too. I wasn't sure if you're the right person to talk to, but I thought I'd try'.

'Please, go right ahead, Janine replies. 'If there's anything I can help with, I will. And if not, I'll do my best to find the right person to assist you.'

'Oh, great. Well, I was waiting for a bus a few weeks ago and there was a bunch of kids from the local high school there too. They made fun of my cane and my gait and one actually knocked my cane out of my hands. Luckily, I was sitting at the time, but it caused me a lot of pain to bend over and get it'.

Janine shakes her head, showing concern. 'That's terrible Carla,' she says. 'I'm so sorry that happened to you.'

Carla smiles. 'Thanks. But the sad thing is, it's not the first time. I was talking to some friends and we discovered that we've all had trouble with local kids. I was talking to my support worker and we've come up with some techniques to manage if it happens to me again, but it's not just my problem!'

'Absolutely, I agree. Would your friends be willing to work together to do something about this?'

Carla nods vigorously. 'We've talked about it, because it's a safety issue. If this continues, someone's going to get badly hurt'.

'And it's abuse, which is not ok' says Janine. 'You and your friends have every right to travel safely and be free from abuse. I think this is a public issue and I'd like to get together with you and your friends to hear more about it. Is that okay?'



Move from private concern to public action

Workers and others who are keen to take action will need to build support by promoting the benefits of community action, such as greater community self-determination, increased social networks, a sense of communal empowerment and other positive outcomes, including improved services.

While it is your role to facilitate public action, you also need to respect people's decisions. If a person decides not to participate in public action, you need to respect their choice. This decision may arise from any number of reasons, such as a lack of understanding, fear of the consequences of acting or lack of access to participate. Make sure that you can identify when people are willing to participate and when they may need further encouragement, information or supports. You can identify their willingness to participate by gaining verbal consent, implied consent or written consent as necessary.

A move from private to public can be facilitated by:

- ▶ encouraging individuals to think in terms of collective action
- ▶ providing information and inspiring examples of successful community projects
- ▶ drawing on the resources of the community
- ▶ ensuring that people have their access, language and cultural needs met to participate
- ▶ ensuring that everyone who wants to participate has a part to play that best suits them.

Example

Identify the individual's willingness to engage in a public process to bring about change and facilitate the move from private concern to public action

Francine is meeting with a group of people who are concerned about the lack of leisure facilities for the youth in their local area. Francine will investigate whether they would be interested in any community action.

Francine advertised the meeting by placing an advertisement in the local paper and by placing flyers on community noticeboards. Those who attend are already demonstrating a certain level of willingness to participate in public action.

After chairing the meeting, where people were invited to share their stories and ideas for action, Francine thanks everyone for their attendance and participation. She says that she will prepare a report from what she has learnt from the meeting, which she will provide to anyone who leaves their contact details with her.

Many people do leave their details and express an interest in meeting again. Some others do not leave their details, indicating that they may not be interested in participating.



Referral procedures

Each organisation has specific procedures for making referrals and workers should make sure that they follow these at all times. Keep a current list or database of services and health professionals that you can use for referrals.

Here are the basic steps involved in the referral process.

Referral process

- 1 Evaluate**
 Evaluate the person's needs and discuss the possibility of a referral with them to a service that can help them with private concerns.
- 2 Provide information**
 Provide information about appropriate referral sources and explore options with the person.
- 3 Decision-making**
 Help them make a decision about the service that best meets their needs. This may also involve including family and/or carers in the discussion.
- 4 Make contact**
 Make contact with the chosen organisation to check eligibility requirements and whether they have vacancies in their service. Discuss the individual's needs and expectations of service delivery. Make sure the person has signed a release of information form.
- 5 Document**
 Document information according to your organisation's policies and procedures.
- 6 Follow up**
 Follow up with the person and the referral agency after the first few appointments to check that all is going well for the individual and for the service provider.

Example

Provide appropriate referrals to support people to deal with personal issues

Tomas, a community service worker, is talking to individuals as part of a community needs analysis. When speaking to Liliana, a young mother with a physical disability, he notices she seems agitated and has many bruises. They discuss community needs, such as the need for more childcare and better transport. Tomas asks Liliana if she has any personal needs he can help her with. Liliana breaks down and says she needs help to leave her husband because he is abusing her. She says she has no idea where she can go. Tomas tells her there is a women's domestic violence service he can refer her to that will help.

With Liliana's consent, Tomas refers her to the domestic violence service immediately and follows up closely to ensure the safety of Liliana and her children.





Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Research and analyse community priorities**
- 3B Identify and document shared community priorities within the public group processes**
- 3C Plan appropriate strategies in collaboration with the group to ensure community priorities are addressed**
- 3D Document community structures and resources available to maximise outcomes for groups**
- 3E Provide advice and information to groups and individuals as required to ensure they are fully informed about relevant issues and opportunities**
- 3F Advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes**
- 3G Manage group dynamics, facilitate discussions and engagement processes**
- 3H Review and modify own work practice within a community development framework**

Work with groups to achieve community development outcomes

Community development projects must be carefully planned in consultation with the community. One of the first steps involves workers carrying out a community needs analysis. This involves conducting research to develop a community profile based on statistical and demographic data and obtaining information from individuals and groups in the community.

Once community needs are identified, you can facilitate action by helping groups plan strategies for addressing their concerns. You will need to identify community structures and resources that can be used to support action and develop strategies for keeping all key players informed about new opportunities and issues related to the community development process.

Conduct a community needs analysis

The purpose of conducting a community needs analysis is to find out what people in the community need to improve their lives. Do not assume that you know what the community needs without consulting a wide range of individuals and groups within that specific community. Without consultation, you may find that you set up a service or resource only to find that few people interested in what you have done.

Through a needs analysis, you can help the community identify their concerns, establish goals and consider options for reaching these goals. How you engage with the community may depend on your own financial and staff resources. It is important to find a way to consult the community and obtain the necessary information within the means of the project. Once you have gathered all the relevant information, you will need to establish common concerns and work out priorities and timelines.

Methods of conducting a needs analysis are outlined here.

Background research

Background research is important to develop a community profile and gain a general understanding of the community. It will include statistical and demographic data and may involve interviews with key people and groups in the community such as council representatives, community organisations, government departments and other community leaders.

Workers will also need to check local media stories and review other research that has been done on the community or similar communities.

Questionnaires/surveys

Questionnaires and surveys are a good way to encourage people to start thinking about issues and to canvas the range of needs in the community. They can be delivered to every resident, inserted in local newspapers, handed out in public places or conducted on the street.

Interviews

Conducting interviews with people in the community by doorknocking is a good way to obtain detailed, open-ended information. The drawbacks are that it is time-consuming and not all agencies have the resources needed.

Focus groups

Focus groups involve conducting a series of group interviews/meetings with selected groups in the community. Questions should be targeted to keep the group directed on their purpose.

Public meetings/forums

Public meetings and forums give interested stakeholders an opportunity to come together and express their concerns and points of view. They help foster interest and ownership of public issues, but they can also result in conflict and stalemates.

Example**Identify and document shared community priorities within the public group processes**

Trevor is conducting a public meeting on behalf of a community disability group. The group consists of people with a disability and their family members and carers. They have identified a lack of transport options and accessible social spaces as major priorities and are seeking other community members and organisations to help.

Trevor advertised the meeting in the community newspaper and contacted several parties that he thought may be interested in attending, such as local councillors, a representative of the local bus company, local taxi drivers, the local bush care group and others.

During the meeting, several people with a disability shared their experiences of isolation. In turn, local government representatives, organisation representatives and community members shared their hesitations about funding, but expressed support for the group's goals.

At Trevor's suggestion, volunteers were requested to form a leadership group to take the discussion further and to narrow down specific priorities and actions. A councillor and a representative from the bus company agreed to join the leadership group, as did several members of the local community. The members of the original community group decided that three of their members would attend, as well as two family members or carers.

Trevor coordinated everyone's contact details and set a schedule for the initial meeting of the leadership group. His role was to take the minutes of the group and to facilitate defining clear priorities and developing an action plan.



Practice task 9

1. Name two considerations for assessing community issues.

2. Name three groups that you may facilitate communication between.

3. Name three benefits in forming a leadership group.

Action plans

Action plans outline the strategies that the group will use to achieve their goals or desired outcomes.

When developing an action plan, groups should consider:

- ▶ what issues are being addressed
- ▶ what resources and funding are needed and how they will be obtained
- ▶ what tasks are involved
- ▶ who are the key players
- ▶ who will do what
- ▶ what level of organisation is needed as larger projects may require a steering committee and task-related groups.

Strategies and course of action

The type of strategies and courses of action that a group chooses will depend on what they are hoping to achieve, the size of their project and the willingness of participants to participate in different actions.

Here are some common courses of action.

Appropriate courses of action
A public response/meeting
Group action
Program development
Establishment of organisational arrangements
Monitoring and evaluation

A public response/meeting

A group may call a public meeting and involve stakeholders from the public, community organisations, government departments and politicians in order to discuss a particular issue. This is an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of politicians and government representatives and to draw attention to the concerns of the community. It is also a way of exerting public pressure on officials to respond to a community concern.

A meeting may succeed in achieving the desired result; for example, if a community has concerns about a dangerous footpath that has caused several accidents for people with access issues, the meeting may result in the authorities responding to the situation immediately by undertaking work to make the footpath safer.



Plan appropriate strategies in collaboration with the group to ensure community priorities are addressed

Here is an example of an action plan for community youth centre.

Action plan

Problem

The youth centre is under-utilised by young people with a disability

Goal

To encourage the use of the youth centre by more young people in the community by offering a greater range of programs and services for people with a disability.

Resources needed – list expertise, money equipment etc.

More money and staff to organise, promote and run specialised programs.

Resources available

Volunteer staff and offers for donations and equipment

Time frame

Six months

Strategies

1. Conduct research and consult with youth with a disability to devise relevant programs.
2. Identify sources of funding.
3. Write funding submissions.
4. Create a development media/promotional campaign.
5. Liaise with other community groups and services to promote the centre and invite participation.
6. Train volunteers.

Participant roles

Allocate roles among organising and working groups.

Evaluation and indicators of success

The youth centre is used to capacity by a wide range of young people throughout the community with all levels of ability.

Young people with a disability are encouraged to offer suggestions and use feedback forms about various programs on offer.

Community information

As part of the needs assessment research, community development workers should have gathered a considerable amount of information about the community. Much of this information can be used for developing a community resource list or assets register. The report should begin with a description of the community, including the following factors.

Community type

The type of community being described and analysed; for example:

- ▶ A geographic community may be based on a town, a suburb or an area in a suburb
- ▶ An issue or group-based community that is based on a particular interest or issue, such as disability issues

Details

Other, detailed information about the community may include:

- ▶ the basic history of the community, including whether community action has been successful in the past
- ▶ general demographic information including socioeconomic and education levels and the age, cultural and gender makeup of the community
- ▶ issues of most concern to the community
- ▶ community willingness to participate in community action.

Community resources

The main resource that a community has is its people. People who are willing to work together to achieve community objectives are what drive a community development project. Every person in the community who wants to make a contribution to a community development project should be given an opportunity to do so. Everyone has skills and resources of some kind to offer.



3F Advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes

Community development is not only concerned with values and principles, but processes. To achieve specific goals or outcomes, community development workers work with members of a community to change or transform existing conditions. This requires an understanding of how to work within existing social and political systems to achieve change and transformation, including how to advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes.



Being an advocate involves working towards a community group's goals in any way that you can, through both words and actions. This may involve being a spokesperson for the group (when invited to do so) or representing them when dealing with another service or government department. Lobbying involves seeking to influence people to support the community group's cause. This may involve providing people (including decision-makers) with targeted information that supports the community group's position, or using the media to raise awareness of an issue.

Advocate and lobby to support identified goal

Along with empowerment, a commitment to community participation is a core principle of community development. Community development is a process that involves consultation with the community to determine what their needs are, what they want to achieve and how they would like their community to be. Community development workers support communities, foster participation and harness the resources of the community to achieve identified outcomes. Workers promote self-determination by providing information, offering support and developing skills.

Part of your role also involves advocating for the community group and lobbying to support the goals that they identify. While the community group set their goals and are the experts on their needs, your valuable support activities can help them achieve their goals efficiently.

Here are some of the ways that you can advocate and lobby to support a community group's goals.

Advocating and lobbying activities

Networking

Use your professional network to gain information, publicise activities, lobby for support and create connections.

Identifying allies and opposition

Identifying potential allies and opposition helps groups to access resources and prepare for challenges in lobbying support.

Model respect, courtesy and trust

Good groups respect each other and foster a trusting, supportive environment where everyone is free to speak and share their ideas. You can support this goal by modelling respect, courtesy and trust in all your interactions with group members and by helping the group to set and maintain ground rules for group behaviour.

Facilitate inclusion and participation

Make sure that everyone has the opportunity to participate to the extent that they wish to do so. This may involve ensuring that people's communication, access, language and cultural needs are met and by providing plenty of time for people to speak. In some cases, other people may have to be asked to let other people contribute if they are too dominant.

Have strategies in place to manage conflict

Conflict is a normal part of group dynamics and is not always negative, as healthy disagreements can lead to new ideas, approaches and insights. However, clear ground rules must be set initially so that group members adhere to them and so that conflict can be managed productively. For example, if a discussion becomes heated, you could step in and demonstrate active listening techniques to encourage people to hear each other.

Set group goals and keep them in focus

Having clear, well-defined and agreed-upon goals is vital for good group dynamics. While some brainstorming and off-topic discussion is useful for social bonding, remind people of their common goals and keep people on track. Reminding people of their common goals is also a useful way to diffuse conflict.

Solve problems quickly

Identify problems within the group and solve them quickly. If a communication problem between two factions of a group is not resolved quickly, the group could split. If a person feels neglected they may withdraw their participation.

Invite and use feedback

Managing group dynamics is a collaborative effort. Ask people for their feedback, suggestions and ideas about what is and is not working and what can be improved. Remind everyone that they are valued members of the group and that their input and participation is appreciated.

Summary

1. Researching and analysing community needs and priorities should be formed through your own research of information sources and by speaking with community members.
2. A community needs analysis is a formal way to consult with community members who need to identify their own needs and priorities.
3. Conducting a community profile will help you to identify and assess community needs and priorities.
4. Shared community needs have to be identified so that priorities can be assessed and decisions taken on which needs are to be actioned.
5. Forming a leadership group can be very beneficial.
6. Once community group priorities have been identified and goals set, undertake careful planning to choose the most effective strategies and courses of action.
7. Monitor and evaluate all actions to ensure progress is being made.
8. Document the community's structures and resources to make outcomes more visible.
9. Community development work often results in other beneficial outcomes for the community, aside from the stated goals.
10. As a facilitator, your role involves providing advice and information to individuals and community groups to ensure they are fully informed and are able to meet their goals.
11. Advocating and lobbying to support a community group's identified goals supports their self-determination and ability to reach their goals efficiently.
12. Remember that the community group is the expert on their own needs.
13. As a facilitator, supporting group members to communicate effectively in group discussions, managing group dynamics and promoting engagement strategies form a large part of your role. This role is to support, encourage and guide, rather than to lead or dominate.
14. Regularly reflecting on your own professional practice and modifying your approaches are requirements for all community service workers.
15. Change, flexibility and extending your learning all contribute to your professional development and allow you to provide excellent community development support.