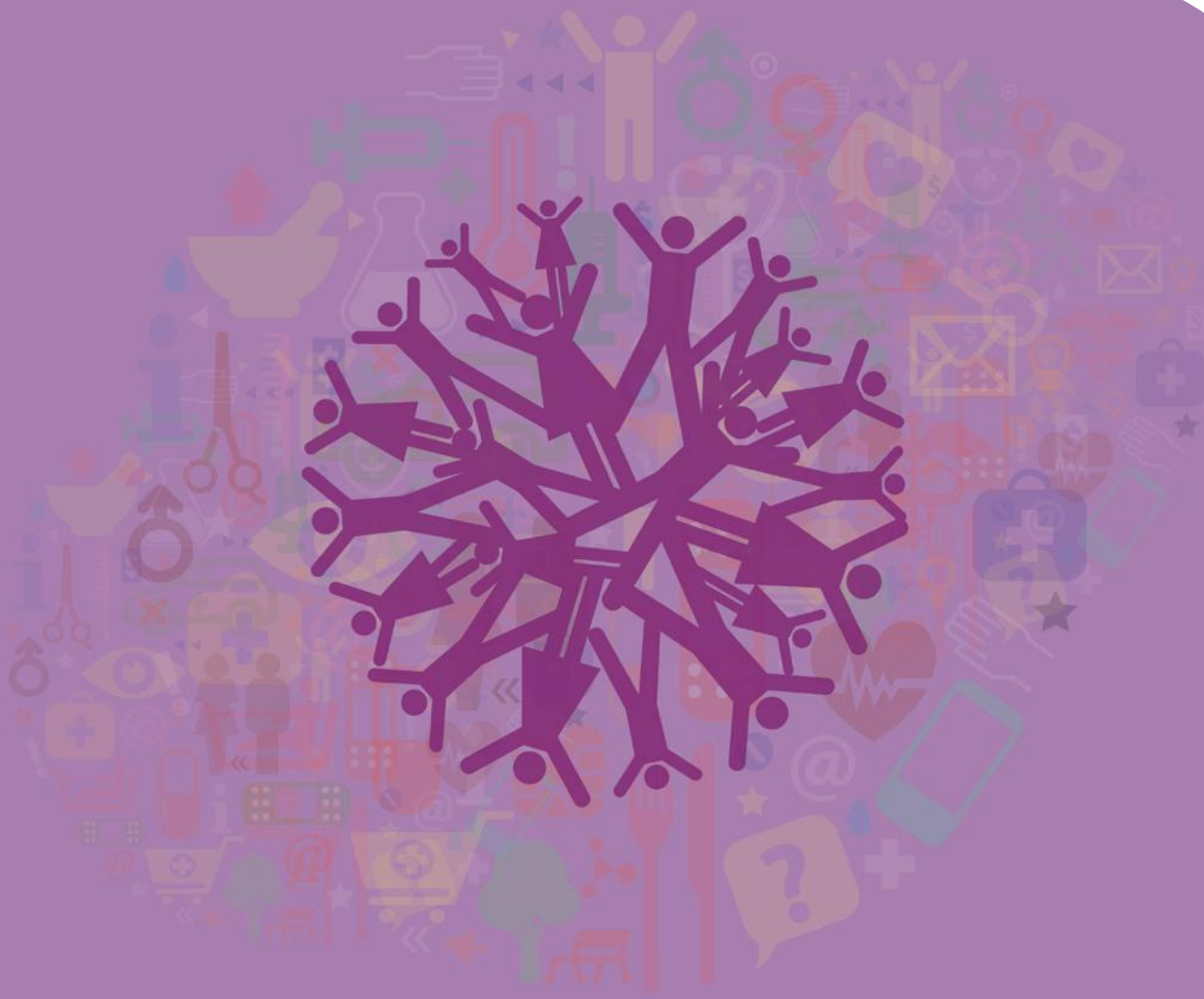
CHCCDE003
Work within a community development framework

Release 1



Learner guide

Aspire learning resources

CHCCDE003

Work within a community development framework

Release 1

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Aspire Version 1.1

Aspire learning resources

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Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone (03) 9820 1300

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Contact details

Participant

Name:

Start date:

Phone number:

Email:

Work location

Name:

Address:

Postal address:

Workplace supervisor name:

Phone number:

Fax:

Email:

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Name:

Address:

Postal address (if different):

Phone number:

Fax:

RTO contact name:

Mobile:

Email:

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCCDE003 Work within a community development framework*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	▶ Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. ▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	▶ Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	▶ There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	▶ Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities ▶ Managing your work and seeing how well you are going and making goals for yourself at work ▶ Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement
Reading	▶ Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents ▶ Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology ▶ Interpreting key information in relevant documents ▶ Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation
Writing	▶ Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents ▶ Communicating through written letters, email and online ▶ Recording progress; reporting incidents
Oral communication	▶ Clarifying instructions ▶ Providing information ▶ Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution ▶ Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language
Numeracy	▶ Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance ▶ Interpreting measurements
Teamwork	▶ Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport
Planning and organising	▶ Planning your workload and commitments ▶ Implementing tasks ▶ Completing work on time ▶ Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks
Making decisions	▶ Understanding and applying decision-making processes ▶ Reviewing the impact of your decisions
Problem-solving	▶ Identifying problems ▶ Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes and reviewing the outcome
Innovation and creation	▶ Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas ▶ Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something ▶ Making suggestions to improve work

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Technology and digital literacy	▶ Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely ▶ Accessing, organising and presenting information ▶ Using equipment correctly and safely

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Operate within a community development framework	1A Work towards the vision and mission of the community development work plan	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1B Work with communities to achieve their priorities	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1C Identify and document the interrelationships between the priorities and rights of the individual, the family, the community and society	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
Topic 2 Distinguish between private and public issues arising in community development work	2A Employ appropriate interpersonal skills to hear individual stories and distinguish between private and public issues	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	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	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2C Provide appropriate referrals to support people to deal with personal issues	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2D Ensure all work reflects and meets duty-of-care responsibilities	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Work with groups to achieve community development outcomes	3A Research and analyse community priorities	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3B Identify and document shared community priorities within the public group processes	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3C Plan appropriate strategies in collaboration with the group to ensure community priorities are addressed	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3D Document community structures and resources available to groups to maximise outcomes for groups	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3E Provide advice and information to groups and individuals as required to ensure they are fully informed about relevant issues and opportunities	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3F Advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3G Manage group dynamics, facilitate discussions and engagement processes	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3G Review and modify own work practice within a community development framework	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

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Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

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

1B **Work with communities to achieve their priorities**

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

Operate within a community development framework

Community development aims to improve the lives of individuals and groups within a specific community. When you work in a community development framework, you are not so much providing services to the community, but empowering and supporting them to take action to achieve the changes they see as necessary.

Community development operates on the principle that all people have a right to be involved in community decisions and that everyone in the community has skills and knowledge to contribute. Community development is an inclusive process that rests on the contributions of the diverse community and encourages everyone who is interested to participate.

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.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability means using the earth's resources without substantially affecting the access of future generations. This includes maintaining the beauty of the natural environment. Working in an environmentally-sustainable manner supports the ongoing viability, health and wellbeing of the communities you support.

Electricity produced from wind and solar energy is considered a renewable resource, because we can reasonably expect that wind and sun will continue to be available. Choosing to buy electricity produced from renewable resources is a good way to promote environmental sustainability. Oil and coal are non-renewable resources; there is a limited supply of these, which will eventually run out. We cannot continue to use these resources at the same rate and expect our children to be able to do the same.

Environmental sustainability is also about taking things from the natural environment at a slower rate. If every organisation aims to reduce, reuse and recycle, then the amount of waste produced and energy and water used will decrease, as will the cost to the organisation.

Using the example of paper in an office, environmental sustainability can be demonstrated by the following actions.

Reduce

Print or copy as few things as possible. Don't just automatically print an email; consider first if you actually need to keep a hard copy or whether an electronic copy is enough. Printing or copying on both sides of the paper will dramatically reduce the amount of paper you use. Buying paper made from recycled products also reduces environmental impact.

Reuse

Wherever possible, use the same paper again. If you have finished with a copy of something, use the reverse side for notes. If it is something that several people need to read, such as a copy of an interesting article, consider setting up a system to circulate one copy for everyone to pass on when they have finished.

Recycle

When you have finished with the paper, make sure it is recycled. Use a box to collect paper for recycling at your desk, then transfer it to the recycling bin when it is full. Remember that for some documents, it is important to comply with your organisation's requirements for storage and disposal. Some things, such as client letters or orders, may need to be printed for legal reasons. Other documents may need to be shredded before they are recycled to maintain confidentiality.

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.

Workforce sustainability

Workforce sustainability means retaining the right people with the right skills to meet current and future business requirements. Workforce sustainability should be considered in terms of recruitment, motivation and job satisfaction, stress, career paths, staff turnover and job design.

Encouraging inclusive work practices and the inclusion of people with support needs in the workforce not only supports their individual needs, but contributes to workforce sustainability. In community development work, the aim is to support communities to train, support and retain the right people in the right positions to support the community's needs. Ensuring a sustainable workforce supports the ongoing viability, health and wellbeing of the communities you support.

Organisational workforce sustainability policies and procedures may refer to:

- accessing education and training
- accessing external expertise and advice
- reporting WHS concerns or issues.

At a management level, workforce sustainability relates to:

- creating and sustaining a positive workplace culture
- modelling open and ethical communication and professional practice
- implementing appropriate recruitment strategies
- providing ongoing support and professional development opportunities
- contributing to the development of workforce sustainability policies and procedures
- supporting staff to adhere to workforce sustainability policies and procedures.

Understand community development

Community development is a process where a community takes collective action to improve or change a particular situation that may relate to social, environmental or economic conditions affecting the community.

In the context of community development, community may refer to a particular locality, but it can also refer to a group of people with a shared concern or interest. The action the community takes is based on joint action, rather than each individual pursuing isolated actions.

It is important for support workers to understand that community development has a different intention from traditional social welfare work. Social welfare work is usually based on individual concerns and problems and uses methods such as casework and counselling to help individuals deal with particular issues. Community development focuses on empowering groups of people in the community to take action to meet a particular need or bring about change. An example would be people with a disability. This group has traditionally been isolated and marginalised. By supporting inclusive communities, we can profoundly affect people's health, wellbeing and social and political participation.

Community development may involve diverse projects, including:

- facilitating disability support groups, social groups and political advocacy groups
- local youth developing circus and street theatre projects
- local groups collaborating to provide soup kitchens for homeless people

- Indigenous people developing employment initiatives; for example, tour groups based on bush tucker trails
- local residents campaigning to have asbestos removed from public buildings
- ethnic community groups coming together to develop a multicultural festival
- community leaders and organisations joining forces to reduce crime in their area
- local people protesting high-rise developments in their neighbourhood
- older people forming a job bank to help mature-aged workers find employment
- local groups combining fundraising activities to share profits and create social connections.

Individual community development vision and mission

Individual community development projects may have different goals. The overall vision and mission of community development is to bring about change through group action, participation and empowerment. While it is vital to empower the individual person, empowering communities creates a sense of connection and purpose that can lead to real, systemic change.

There are some fundamental aspects involved in community development work.

Community development work involves:

- identifying community needs, shared concerns and interests
- helping the community to establish goals and timelines
- encouraging community participation and collaboration in decision-making
- building on the existing strengths, skills and resources of the community
- creating relationships between those in the community who have resources and means and those who don't
- developing strategies and processes to bring about change in consultation with the community.

Reflect on core values

Community development workers do not deliver services to the community, but work with them to empower the community to identify issues and take action. Community development workers have a responsibility to use their skills and resources to support community groups, but not to unduly influence them or to make decisions for them. To reflect the core values of community development work, you must understand community development and how it functions.

Some of the core values involved in community development work are shown here.

Community development aims

- Community development aims to foster inclusiveness so all members of the community have an opportunity to be involved and none feel excluded. It aims to promote leadership, participation and upholds the human rights of all community members. It encourages a wide range of opinions and perspectives and works with them effectively.

Community development needs

- Community development can only occur when people in the community believe they can make a difference and work together to address their shared needs and goals. It needs a strong belief in collaboration and participation, with change occurring through the actions of many committed people. It may use the services of an external community development worker or facilitator, but only by request.

Community development creates

- Community development promotes community leaders who can support and motivate others. It provides opportunities to build skills, resources and opportunities for community members. It creates a sense of connection, shared purpose and support, which fundamentally empowers all the individual members of the community.

Traditional community development approaches

Traditionally, community development work has centred on fixing perceived problems. This sometimes involved a needs-based or gap-based approach, which focuses on addressing gaps in service, or on a community's needs. These approaches tend to define a community by its perceived problems, by what is not working, or by the discrimination that the community has experienced. For some people, this can serve to reinforce a sense of weakness and powerlessness, which does not support their human rights or empowerment.

Needs-based approach

A needs-based approach to community development is an outgrowth of government intervention into marginalised communities, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A needs-based approach is based on an external facilitator working to provide a community with services that meet perceived needs, which are usually defined by government or another external authority.

For example, a needs-based approach to community development for people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders may focus on government providing funding for specific activities or needs that it defines, rather than people themselves determining their needs. Often, needs-based community development results in concentrating on negatives, rather than positives, such as what community members can do, can achieve and can contribute.

Gap-based approach

A gap-based approach to community development is similar to a needs-based approach, as it focuses on filling perceived gaps in services. While people with support needs often do not receive adequate services, this approach tends to further marginalise vulnerable people by labelling them as problematic or in need of 'fixing' by professionals. It can disempower because gaps in services can demoralise the person or group and is an indication of a decline of their human rights.

Needs- and gap-based approaches:

- focus on deficits, lack and 'problems'
- define what a community needs externally
- are disempowering, as they do not support self-empowerment and human rights
- can lead to further marginalisation, exclusion and stigma
- see community development as fixing negatives, rather than supporting strengths.

Contemporary community development approaches

In contrast to traditional approaches, workers now seek to support communities by focusing on their strengths, capabilities and achievements. While we recognise that people with a disability have and still do experience significant marginalisation and often abuse, we recognise them as the experts in their own lives who define their own goals, needs and aspirations.

The community development work that you undertake will follow rights-based and asset-based (ABCD) approaches that focus on listening to the community and empowering them to make their own choices.

Asset- and rights-based approaches:

- focus on capability, strengths and capacity
- recognise that the community defines its own needs
- support self-empowerment, inclusion and human rights
- lead to greater social and political recognition of the community's capacity and the value of diversity
- see community development as supporting strengths, rather than fixing negatives.

Asset-based approach

Asset-based community development (ABCD) perceives community members as the experts in their own lives, who have value, strengths and capabilities that should be supported. An ABCD approach seeks to support communities to identify and celebrate their own strengths and assets, prioritise their needs and lead the development of their own communities. This recognises that the people within a community are best placed to accurately determine what they need and that a worker's place is to support their decisions and assessments.

The ABCD approach seeks to mobilise community members to work from a place of strength and capability and focuses on capacity-building, not 'fixing' problems. This shift of perception expresses respect for all people and sees community development as a collaborative activity, where the community themselves take a leading role. It operates using networking, democratic processes and management of strengths and assets. It is active, rather than passively 'receiving' funding or services that are defined by external authorities.

Rights-based approach

A fundamental principle of social justice is that everyone has value, strengths and should be respected to make their own decisions. Rights-based community development upholds these rights by following the lead of community members and supporting their choices, priorities, goals and aspirations.

You can help to mobilise community members in a rights-based manner by providing them with information about their rights, supporting them to identify their strengths and choices and by modelling respect, courtesy and appreciation for diversity.

Principles and practices of community development work

Community development is a collaborative process where workers, community members and organisations work in partnership to achieve the needs identified by the community itself. To support communities in this way, you must be aware of the principles of community development and work within this framework.

Principles of community development include:

- a recognition of structural disadvantage and inequality
- social justice and human rights
- empowerment
- recognition of personal and public political processes
- commitment to people's participation
- sustainability.

Structural disadvantage and inequality

Many of the issues that community development workers deal with stem from structural disadvantage and inequality. This means that some individuals and groups are disadvantaged and excluded because of entrenched systemic inequalities inherent in the way society is organised. People may be disadvantaged and excluded based on their gender, age, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity and ability. Disadvantaged groups experience inequality and structural disadvantage as a lack of access to opportunities and resources and exclusion from decision-making processes.

To change this situation, communities may need to challenge established institutions and power structures. A famous example of a community group taking action at the highest level is the Mabo High Court action that challenged a long-established legal concept held by the state as represented by government, judiciary and bureaucracy.

Social justice

Justice relates to what is fair and morally correct. Social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equality. All people have a right to participate in society and to be treated equally. Social action refers to organised activity that seeks to address an injustice or improve a situation or conditions affecting people within a community. It is usually based on specific values, such as inclusion and social justice principles. It may include demonstrations and other actions designed to draw attention to a specific issue.

Social justice principles recognise that all people have equal:

- rights in private, employment and legal domains
- access to economic opportunity
- access to education, housing, employment and health
- opportunity to participate in their community and making decisions that affect them.

Human rights

Australia supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and a number of other international human rights treaties and declarations. In addition, human rights principles are enshrined in a range of Australian laws. For example, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation is designed to ensure that people are not discriminated against based on their age, sexuality, gender, race, ability or religion.

Respect for human rights contributes to strong communities based on equality, tolerance and opportunity. Human rights is based on notions of fairness, respect for others, justice and equality.

All people are entitled to basic human rights.

Basic human rights include the following:

- Free speech
- Life
- Freedom from torture and other inhumane treatment
- Justice and a fair trial
- Religious freedom
- To be free from discrimination and abuse
- An adequate standard of living, education and health
- A family and to participate in the community

Empowerment

Empowering communities means increasing a group's ability to be self-determining and giving them the skills to take action to meet specific community needs. While providing support services is focused on empowering individuals, community development work extends this empowerment by supporting people to create and maintain strong community bonds.

Community development workers can empower communities by:

- helping community groups develop skills and organise themselves to take action
- providing information and links to appropriate support
- encouraging participation and collaboration.

Recognition of personal and public political process

To achieve specific goals, 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.

Community development processes are a series of actions designed to achieve a particular outcome. The steps taken will vary according to the situation, the preferences and the resources of the community.

Personal process includes actions that individuals may use to promote community change; for example, creating petitions, undertaking personal advocacy work, door-knocking and writing letters to politicians or newspapers. These actions may be part of a personal campaign or as part of group action.

Workers may have their own personal processes that they use in community development projects, such as seeking advice from mentors and conducting personal research in preparation to begin a project.

Public political process relates to how workers and community groups engage with the public and political spheres to achieve change. Public political process may involve calling public meetings, participating in demonstrations and using the media to call attention to issues of concern.

Commitment to people's participation

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 outcomes identified by community members. Workers promote self-determination by providing information, offering support and developing skills.

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.

Click to complete Practice task 1

1B Work with communities to achieve their priorities

As a community development worker, your role is essentially that of a facilitator rather than directing initiatives or telling communities what they need. Community development workers may conduct research to determine what the community's needs and priorities are, but it is up to community, or groups within the community, to decide what action to take.

Community workers may work in a range of capacities, such as:

- being a voluntary worker for an organisation
- undertaking paid work – community development workers may be employed by councils, local organisations or government departments
- undertaking unpaid work.

Enhance skills

Groups within a community may identify a need and priority, such as providing young people with a disability with specific facilities, but they may have little understanding of how to organise themselves and take action to achieve an appropriate outcome. There are a number of different approaches and methods of community development, but all involve processes that foster community participation and enhance the skills and resources of the local community. A community service worker acts as a resource to provide the necessary information and skills to enable the group to act on and prioritise their concerns.

Community groups may need skills development in:

- networking and raising funds
- writing submissions and reports
- dealing with councils and other relevant authorities
- promoting the need for a specific action
- holding public meetings
- increasing community participation
- using the media to promote their cause.

Access appropriate support

Community development involves tapping into available resources and sources of support. To achieve a particular objective, support workers and community members may need to draw on support from a range of organisations, government departments, local councils, other communities, professionals and individuals. Support may be in the form of funding, resources, information, advice, work, participation and specific actions. For example, a group who wants to gain increased funding for carers for people with a drug or alcohol issues may need to consult with various people and groups.

In your community development work, you may need to facilitate information-gathering from many people and groups.

Information may be required from:

- the police
- health professionals
- workers in drug and alcohol sector
- other community organisations
- the council
- relevant state, territory and Commonwealth government departments
- community leaders.

Work with others who share concerns and issues

Before beginning a community development project, find out who in the community shares the identified concerns and issues. For example, are there individuals or groups in the community who have been trying to deal with the issue previously? What do the police, community leaders, church groups and community organisations think about the issue? Have other communities had a similar problem and how have they dealt with it?

If other organisations or groups in the community are working on the same or a similar issue, you may want to establish what has already been done or what is being planned. In these circumstances, organisations or groups may choose to collaborate and/or share resources. This can be very beneficial financially, in terms of time-management and establishing valuable connections within the community.

Example

Work with communities to achieve their priorities

Westville is a community with numerous social problems including unemployment, drug and alcohol problems and isolation and marginalisation of young people with a disability. One of the area's rural community workers consults with the community, public officials and community organisations to determine what actions and projects can be undertaken to address the problems and foster community wellbeing.

One clear need that emerges from this consultative process is the need for more opportunities for young people in the community. People feel that if the young people have opportunities to better their lives and engage in meaningful activities, many of social problems in the area will disappear. The rural community worker is able to obtain funding from the local council to appoint a community development worker who has had great success initiating profitable arts-based projects.

The worker, Nelson, sets about getting funding and resources from local businesses, individuals, community groups and outside funding bodies. A supporter offers a disused house in the town as a base for the project. Nelson consults with the community (particularly the young people) and establishes a number of different projects, including the development of a band with instruments donated by the community, a dance group, a street theatre group that performs at local shopping centres and schools, and a scheme to market Aboriginal artwork on the internet. Future plans include setting up certificate and diploma courses in arts administration.

Nelson also identifies a lack in services for young people with a disability in the community and works with these people to improve their access to the new arts programs. In time, the young people with a disability form their own social group and integrate into the other programs, establishing valuable friendships with other young people in the area.

This project has received support from the whole community and has resulted in a significant reduction in petty crime and other social problems around the town, including the isolation and marginalisation of young people with a disability.

Practice task 2

1. Name three common forms of work that community development workers can undertake.

2. Name three skills that workers can help community groups develop.

3. Name three sources of information that workers can facilitate for community groups.

Click to complete Practice task 2

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 the 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.

Impact on interrelationships

Community development work takes place in complex and changing social, political and economic contexts. It is important to realise that at different times, you may be both constrained and supported by these different contexts.

At a basic level, changing political, economic and social environments influence whether community workers are employed. Many paid community workers are funded either directly or indirectly by the government. The funding the government provides for workers, projects and community organisations is influenced by the political agenda of the current government, the prevailing economic conditions and a range of social forces.

Influence of political, economic and social issues
▶ What type of services are provided
▶ How they are provided
▶ Whether workers have adequate resources to provide services
▶ Whether they are supported by the community
▶ The role families and carers may take in providing care and support for their family members who require assistance

Understand impacts on interrelationships

Workers need to understand the social, economic and political contexts in which they are working. You need to keep up to date with policy developments and how people are affected by current economic conditions. You can do this by becoming more politically aware and keeping informed about the role that peak organisations such as the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) takes in raising specific issues in the social and community services sector.

An understanding of the political, economic and social context you work in helps you become aware of broader issues affecting your work.

Broad interests help you to:

- develop a framework for your practice
- gain a better understanding of the cause and nature of disadvantage and inequality
- understand the difference between locating the source of people's problems in individual failings and recognising that many problems stem from broader structural conditions
- realise how government policy may be reflective of a hidden agenda.

Political influences

The high point of the welfare state in Australia was in the 1970s when a Labor, social democratic government, initiated reforms aimed at providing universal services in the area of health, education and welfare. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pendulum had swung back to a more conservative era in service delivery.

Current political trends are based on economic rationalist principles of minimalist government intervention. Privatising welfare services encourages agencies to compete to receive government funding to deliver services. Competition and the need for efficiency means that community organisations are constantly struggling to maintain funding for staff and programs. This influences how services are provided.

Community service workers need to be aware of and work within the prevailing political context. You can do this by building contacts within relevant government departments, networking with other community services organisations and working together to influence policy development.

Economic influences

The economic conditions of the day and the political persuasion of the current government influence how much money is available for community programs and services. In difficult economic times, governments seek to reduce spending on community and welfare services. This results in families and carers having to take on more responsibility for looking after their relatives and friends with support needs.

The trend in social service provision is for less public programs and more private or community-based programs. This allows governments to reduce their expenditure in a number of ways. Many community organisations also rely heavily on volunteers to carry out basic tasks. It is important for community workers and people within communities to learn the skills of community development because it encourages them to become more aware of structural inequalities within society. By using community development practices based on democratic principles and collective action, communities can develop the political strength to obtain a fairer distribution of resources.

Social influences

Social factors influence community actions and projects. During times of high social change, people are more likely to challenge established social norms. For example, in the 1960s people in Western societies took part in the civil rights movement and became involved in influencing social policy through community action. In Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, anti-war protests, green bans, industrial action and actions supporting the emerging gay, feminist and Aboriginal rights movements were common.

Community workers have an important role in helping people realise that collective action is a powerful social and political tool and that people have a right to organise and take action to achieve specific goals. Thanks to advances in technology and social media, there are now new ways that people can participate in community development programs and social action. Relevant development programs may not be in their own community, but somewhere in another part of the country. People can now lend their voice and support to projects that they believe are important via communication technology. This is particularly important for many people with a disability, who are able to participate in social action virtually, where it may be challenging to participate in physical locations.

Rights of the individual, family, community and society

Community workers, especially those working in a community development framework, should have a good understanding of the rights of the individual, the family, community and society. In addition, they should work within the framework of human rights principles and understand how these are related to meeting needs. Much of the work will involve ensuring that people are aware of their rights and are prepared to take action to meet their needs and claim their rights.

The basic needs of humans include access to housing, feeling safe and secure (including economic security) and having access to healthcare and adequate nutrition. The right to have these needs met is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In addition, people have a right to equal access to resources, opportunities, information and to participate in decisions that affect them.

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.

Religious and spiritual beliefs

Religion is the belief in a superhuman or supernatural power, such as a god that has divine control over human life. Religions include Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto and Sikhism. Many people have spiritual beliefs that are not based on a formal religion. Understand how different religions and spiritual beliefs influence the way people do things like eating, dressing, praying, celebrations and honouring the dead.

Cultural values

People value many things about their culture including their language, food, religious practice, sport and family life. Different cultures have different values that are usually based on tradition.

Family structure and roles

Family structure and roles may be quite different between cultures. In many cultures, the male is the head of the home and in other cultures, the grandmother or mother is the matriarch (the female head of a tribe or family). Be aware of different family structures and be respectful of them.

Gender, gender relationships and sexuality

Be sensitive to different ideas and preferences regarding sexuality. Understand that some people may be embarrassed about their sexuality or may treat you in a certain way because of your gender.

Disability and special needs

People of some cultures don't like others to see people who have a condition that impairs or interferes with the 'normal' way of doing things; they may put people with a disability in special homes. In some poor countries, people with a disability may be sent out to beg for food and money. Other cultures include people with disabilities in everyday life. It is against the law in Australia to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Strategies for addressing individual differences

When you work in the community sector, you do not have to put your own values aside. However, you do have a responsibility to ensure that your values or attitudes do not result in being judgmental or discriminating against others.

Strategies for responding to individual differences

- Demonstrate a willingness to learn about an individual or group's culture and/or circumstances.
- Invite and value every individual's opinions and ideas.

- Ensure that people have access to services that meet their needs.
- Be empathic and try to see things from another person's perspective.
- Foster an environment of inclusiveness and acceptance.
- Avoid being judgmental about the way people live or their cultural practices.
- Help to educate the community about different needs and the value of diversity in the community.
- Encourage people to initiate or join community groups that support their specific needs; for example, disability groups or different cultural groups.
- Ensure that people with a language other than English, or who have hearing and speech difficulties, have opportunities to make their needs known.

Document interrelationships between rights and priorities

Being aware of how societal, political and economic concerns impact on people's rights and priorities ensures that you can provide a meaningful context for your support work. In community development, these factors, individual rights and priorities all need to be considered and weighed when facilitating community goals.

In the same way that self-reflection and documentation form an important part of providing individual supports, they also play an important role in community development work. Make sure that all individuals are given the opportunity to identify and communicate their priorities, as everyone has the right to be heard.

Documenting what people communicate may involve taking minutes at community meetings, collating material from feedback surveys or recording verbal conversations. As a facilitator, make sure that everyone is heard and their priorities are considered. Make sure everyone's rights are upheld and any conflicts between people's rights and priorities are documented and addressed.

Potential conflicts between people's rights and priorities
One community member dominating the rest of the group
Decision-making processes being undemocratic
Community members taking unilateral action without consultation
Family members disagreeing with people's priorities
People not being fully aware of their rights

Example

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

Marta is a community support worker who is volunteering her time to facilitate a group of local people who want to improve physical access in the community. The group that she is supporting consists of people with a disability and their families and carers, who are tired of the lack of access due to insufficient or broken footpaths and ramps.

Marta has chaired a meeting to document the group's experiences and helping them to identify clear goals. While the group would love a ramp to every store and public building and smooth, clear footpaths on every street, Marta has helped them realise the economic and political barriers in place. The group decides to focus on campaigning to get a footpath down to the local beach. Most people in the community have never considered that people with a disability cannot access the beach, so Marta suggests that they begin with an awareness campaign, as well as a meeting with a local councillor to discuss her position and to hear her ideas.

Practice task 3

1. Name three influences that impact community development work.

2. Name three individual differences that may present in working with a group.

3. What are two strategies you can use to address individual differences within a group?

Click to complete Practice task 3

Summary

1. Community development is a term used to describe a particular type of community work that empowers people in communities to take action to achieve shared goals.
2. Community development work involves supporting community members to identify their strengths, determine their own needs and set their own goals.
3. All development work must be geared towards the ongoing strength and sustainability of communities.
4. Workers collaborate to support community members' goals and uphold their human rights.
5. Workers facilitate community group goals by enhancing skills, accessing information and forming connections with others who share the same goals and concerns.
6. A community development worker's role is that of a facilitator rather, than directing initiatives or telling communities what they need.
7. Be aware of the wider political, social and economic context and how it can affect community development.
8. Be aware of and respect individual differences.
9. Facilitate good communication and document all differences of opinion and conflicts.

Learning checkpoint 1
Operate within a community development framework

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in operating with a community development framework.

1. What are two ways that you can work towards the vision and mission of a community development work plan?

2. What are three ways that you can work with communities to achieve their priorities?

3. What are two ways to identify the interrelationships between the priorities and rights of the individual, the family, the community and society?

4. What are two aspects of working sustainably when working in a community development role?

5. What are the two traditional approaches to community development?

6. What are the two contemporary community development approaches and what principles do they uphold?

7. Name three of the fundamental principles and practices of community development work.

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

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

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**

2C **Provide appropriate referrals to support people to deal with personal issues**

2D **Ensure all work reflects and meets duty-of-care responsibilities**

Distinguish between private and public issues arising in community development work

Community workers participating within a community development framework provide support to groups within a community and facilitate action. To do this, you need to have well-developed communication and interpersonal skills. You need to work with groups and organisations within the community, as well as have the ability to connect with individuals to encourage them to tell their stories.

Workers must be able to help individuals determine which of their concerns are private and which are public issues. Some people may not realise that issues that they consider to be personal problems are concerns that other people in the community share. Individuals with private issues should be referred to appropriate services, while public issues may be best dealt with using a public or community development approach.

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.

Core communication skills

To communicate effectively with individuals and groups, workers need to ensure that they are courteous and respectful and do not make assumptions about what people need. It is also important to listen attentively to people to develop a shared understanding of their concerns and needs.

Here are examples of core communication skills with which all community service workers should be familiar.

Active listening

- Active listening involves listening with full attention and focusing on understanding what the person is saying and experiencing.

Encouragers

- Encouragers are brief words or nonverbal cues (such as nods) that encourage a person to keep talking without interruption. Verbal encouragers are words like 'Go on', 'I see', and 'ah ha'.

Open and closed questions

- Open questions require an individual to give more than a yes/no answer; for example, 'How does this situation make you feel?' Open questions are used for information gathering. Closed questions can be answered with a yes or no; for example, 'Are you coming to the meeting on Thursday?' Closed questions are useful for obtaining a brief, direct answer that can lead to further questions.

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing involves restating what the speaker has said to confirm that you understand what they mean. Paraphrasing can also be used to draw attention to a particular concern; for example, 'So you are concerned that the lack of a community centre affects people's health and wellbeing?'

Reflecting feelings

- Reflecting what an individual seems to be feeling helps them to get more in touch with their feelings and examine them. For example, you could say, 'You seem really upset about what happened'. Acknowledging their feelings helps people to understand their motives and make clearer decisions.

Summarising

- Summarising involves focusing on the main points of what an individual has said over time to draw attention to a particular issue, or check understanding. It is a longer version of paraphrasing.

Non-verbal communication

- Ensure your body language is consistent with your verbal communication, as mixed messages are confusing. Be aware of your facial expressions, how your body is positioned, your proximity to the individual, your hand and arm movements and level of eye contact. For example, if you yawn or stare out the window while a person is talking, you are sending a message that you are not interested in what they are saying.

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 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.

Private concerns

Private concerns are usually addressed by an individual seeking support and help from community services agencies or from specialist help, such as counselling, drug rehabilitation or specialist health expertise.

Here are some common private concerns.

Examples of private concerns
Personal health issues including mental health
A personal dispute with a neighbour
An incident of domestic violence
Individual substance abuse issues

Public concerns

Public concerns are best addressed through collective action taken by the community.

Here are some common public concerns.

Examples of public concerns
▶ Crime and violence in the community
▶ Lack of a political voice for people
▶ Lack of appropriate access for people
▶ Developers pursuing building developments out-of-step with community values
▶ Poor public transport
▶ Environmental concerns

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?'

Practice task 4

1. Name two communication skills that you need to encourage people to tell their stories.

2. Name two interpersonal skills that you need to encourage people to participate.

3. Name one instance of a private concern and one instance of a public concern.

Click to complete Practice task 4

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

Many people may not know about the processes involved in taking action in the public arena. A community development worker's role is to inform individuals and community groups about these public processes and determine their willingness to participate in them.

Workers should respect the right of individuals and groups to make their own decisions about whether they want to take action on a particular issue and what action this may be.

You can identify a person's willingness to engage in public action by their desire for more information, their attendance at meetings or activities and by their demeanour. Make sure that you obtain consent before providing their information to anyone else involved in the public action.

Facilitate public action

It is important for workers to help people realise which of their concerns may be addressed by group action rather than private action. For example, an unemployed person with a disability may feel that they are out of work because of their own bad luck or personal failings, and the only way they can address the issue is by their own private actions. A community development worker may be able to assist the person to see their inability to gain employment in a wider context and support them to take public action.

You can facilitate public action in many ways, depending on the needs and goals of the community and individual. You can listen to people, provide information and a broader context in which to interpret private experiences, facilitate connections with others and facilitate goal-setting. Make sure that you use active listening and good communication skills to identify when someone is willing to participate in public action. For example, if a person looks bright, attentive and asks questions, this indicates interest. A person who looks uncomfortable or distressed may be indicating unwillingness.

Broader issues a community worker may help to identify

- Lack of appropriate public transport servicing the area
- Community isolation
- Closure of businesses
- Difficult economic times
- Lack of access to employment services
- Abuse, neglect and stigma experienced by people

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.

Practice task 5

1. Name three ways that you can facilitate public action.

2. Name two ways that you can facilitate the move from private concern to public action.

3. Name two broader issues that you may be able to help people identify.

Click to complete Practice task 5

2C Provide appropriate referrals to support people to deal with personal issues

Community development work is essentially concerned with facilitating collective action. However, in the course of discussing community issues with individuals, you may meet people who have personal issues that require specialist help. In these cases, you must refer them appropriately.

Referring a person involves identifying their specific needs and matching these with an appropriate service. Referral to other services is necessary when the person has needs that cannot be met by a worker or their agency. Here are some examples of when referrals may be required.

Private matters

Private matters include mental health concerns, such as depression or anxiety.

Public matters

Public matters that are already being addressed elsewhere. For example, other agencies may be developing programs to combat neighbourhood crime. In this case, an individual with a concern in this area should be referred to them.

External services needed

External services are those that are not part of the agency mandate. Some issues may be outside the mission and practice area of the agency; for example, community action against unwanted development in the area. Most community services agencies focus on work designed to foster better social services and conditions.

Make referrals

Workers should always ensure that they provide considered and appropriate referrals for anyone with whom they work. It is also important to involve the individual in choosing the services and make sure they have given their consent to the referral. Provide the person with information about a range of service options and discuss their needs with them to help them choose the option that suits them best.

Types of considerations

- How well the service matches the person's needs
- The person's wishes
- How far they have to travel and whether suitable transport is available
- Any costs involved
- Eligibility requirements
- Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure requirements
- Waiting periods

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.

Practice task 6

1. Name three considerations to keep in mind when making referrals.

2. Name two situations that may require you to provide a referral for a person.

3. What are the first two steps in a referral procedure?

Click to complete Practice task 6

2D Ensure all work reflects and meets duty-of-care responsibilities

Workers involved in community development work have the same responsibilities to meet duty of care obligations and to work ethically as workers involved in providing individual services.

As a community development worker, you have a duty of care to ensure that your actions do not cause harm or negatively affect the people with whom you are working. This means you should ensure that you carry out your work in a way that would be expected of a reasonable person. You have a duty to ensure that the work you do with people is based on safe and responsible work practices at all times. Community workers are required to use their professional judgment and experience when making decisions about the most reasonable action to be taken in certain situations.

Duty of care and negligence

Community service organisations and workers have a responsibility to provide a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people in receipt of their services. Legislative and regulatory obligations underpin an organisation's policies, which determine the procedures to guide service delivery that promotes and enhances the safety and wellbeing of all people.

Duty of care describes the legal obligation that individuals and organisations have to anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment or as a result of their actions. Duty of care is part of common law and it requires you to do what is fair and reasonable to prevent harm or injury to the person or their property. While aspects of WHS (work health and safety) legislation may vary between states and territories, there are common legislative requirements and obligations under the duty of care principle.

Here is more information about duty of care and breaches of this principle.

Duty of care

Duty of care is the obligation a person has to act in a way that would not cause harm.

Negligence

Negligence occurs when duty of care has been breached and harm to either person or property ensues. It is the legal and ethical obligation of any community worker, supervisor or organisation to ensure that people using services are not exposed to unnecessary or unreasonable risk.

Your duty of care requirements

A duty of care exists when someone's actions could reasonably be expected to affect another person. The law has established a duty of care towards other people. This principle is based on a worker taking reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that may cause foreseeable harm to any person. You must think ahead about possible risks or dangers to any person using your service, co-workers or others while making sure you follow the organisation's policies and procedures.

Example

Ensure all work reflects and meets duty-of-care responsibilities

Marco's organisation is hosting a meeting of community group members to discuss their current projects and initiatives. Many of the group members have mobility issues, so Marco is careful to book a meeting room that has appropriate access for wheelchairs and mobility aids.

Half an hour before the meeting is scheduled, Marco checks the meeting room for trip hazards and makes sure there is enough seating, including the ability to remove chairs from the room easily to accommodate wheelchairs. He walks along the route from the organisation's entrance to ensure that the path is clear and he waits by the entrance to offer assistance to people if required.

Practice task 7

1. Name two groups of people to whom you owe a duty of care in your work activities.

2. What is the umbrella term for the legislation that underpins duty-of-care requirements?

3. What is the legal term for when duty of care has been breached?

Click to complete Practice task 7

Summary

1. Use good communication skills to encourage people to tell their stories.
2. Help people identify when their concerns are private (and need to be referred to another service or worker) or public (and can be dealt with on a community or group level).
3. Facilitate public action by providing information, helping people connect and listening to people's stories.
4. Workers should respect the right of individuals and groups to make their own decisions about whether they want to take action on a particular issue and what action this may be.
5. Support people to move from private concerns to public action according to their needs, goals and choices.
6. When appropriate, refer people to other services, including private support workers and other community development services that fall outside of your organisation's area.
7. Ensure that all your duty of care requirements are fulfilled at all times.

Learning checkpoint 2
Distinguish between private and public issues arising in community development work

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in distinguishing between private and public issues arising in community development work.

1. What are two interpersonal skills that you need to hear people's individual stories and to help them distinguish between private and public issues?

2. What are two ways that you can encourage individuals to engage in a public process to bring about change?

3. As a community development worker, what are two reasons for providing referrals for people?

4. Which community development work activities involve duty-of-care responsibilities?

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.

3A Research and analyse community priorities

Before beginning a community development project, workers should have a good understanding of the community they are working in and the needs of the community. To do this, you will need to develop a community profile and then conduct a needs analysis by consulting individuals and groups within the community. There are several important skills that you must have to develop a community profile and conduct a needs analysis, such as research skills, community engagement and language and literacy skills.

Research skills

Workers need to acquire both hard and soft data to prepare a profile of the community and conduct a needs analysis. Soft data includes information collected from individuals, groups, community organisations and the local media. Hard data is statistical information about the community that may be held by the local council and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

This information will include demographic information, such as the age spread of the population, prevalence of different disabilities, different cultural groups and languages in the community, socioeconomic information and crime statistics. This information can help workers develop an overall picture of the community and possible problems that may need attention or action.

Community engagement

Workers need to participate in a community needs analysis and assessment. To do this, they need to be familiar with the various processes of engaging and consulting with the community, such as conducting interviews and holding public meetings. They also need to know how to analyse the information they obtain to establish shared concerns and community needs.

Language and literacy

All community service workers should have appropriate literacy standards and skills for preparing written documentation. At every stage of a community development project, workers must document and report on their progress. Depending on their organisation, you may need to make written and oral reports to a range of stakeholder groups, including project management committees, council and government representatives, community groups and funding bodies.

You should have the ability to write funding submissions, planning documents and progress and evaluation reports. You also require high-level verbal skills to conduct public meetings, foster support, empower community stakeholders, resolve conflict and present information about the project.

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

Research and analyse community priorities

The Hill Top Neighbourhood Centre is conducting a survey about the current and future needs of the local community. To help identify community needs and develop services or programs to meet these needs, they would like to hear what residents think are important issues in the community. After they have completed the information-gathering process, they will produce and circulate a report and engage in further community consultation.

The following is an example of a survey that could be used to survey residents.

Survey

What issues are of most concern to you in the community?

_____

_____

What changes would you like to see happen in the community in the next five years?

_____

_____

Are there needs or gaps in community service delivery that are not being met at the moment?

_____

_____

What concerns do you have that other people in the community may share?

_____

_____

Other comments

Please add any other comments about the community that you would like to make.

_____

_____

Personal information

Please note, this is an anonymous survey and we do not require your name or address but we would like to know some basic details about who has answered our questionnaire. Please supply the following information, if you feel comfortable doing so.

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Postcode: _____

Practice task 8

1. Name three forms of hard data that you may need in community development work.

2. Name two activities that community development workers engage in that require high-level language and literacy skills.

3. What are two methods that you can use to conduct a community needs analysis?

Click to complete Practice task 8

3B Identify and document shared community priorities within the public group processes

The process of conducting research and preparing a community profile helps workers to identify the issues, concerns and problems within a particular community. The next step is to determine which needs are most important and shared by the community. This involves further analysis and consultation to establish which issues individuals and groups want to address and are prepared to take action on.

Assess issues

The community may identify a range of issues such as rising crime rates, lack of public transport, inadequate housing and insufficient park and recreation spaces. At the end of the analysis, you should have a clearer picture of which issues are major concerns within the community. The next step is to confirm which issues they are willing to take action on.

Here are some considerations for assessing various community issues.

Workers should assess the size and scope of each issue and consider:

- the prevalence of the problem – how many people are affected by it, both directly and indirectly
- the seriousness of the issue – how it affect people's lives and whether it is a major concern or just a minor inconvenience
- how long the situation has lasted and if there have been attempts to do something about it in the past
- whether the issue affects some members of the community more than others
- whether there are opposing views in the community about the issue
- whether it is likely that individuals and groups within the community are willing to collaborate to take action on the issue.

Group processes and community action

To plan for community action, workers should consult with groups and individuals in the community to determine what issues should be addressed as a matter of priority, what actions should be taken and who will be involved.

Facilitate a range of group processes, such as meetings and forums, to assess community readiness to engage in action. Through these group processes you can determine the type of actions that people are prepared to engage in and what different groups and individuals can contribute to the proposed action in terms of skills, time and resources.

Your role is that of a facilitator, involving the communication between the following groups.

Workers will need to bring together:

- community agencies and other organisations who have indicated that they are interested in responding to a particular issue
- community groups who have expressed concern about the issues, such as tenant groups, disability groups or self-help groups
- any individuals who have volunteered to help.

Leadership groups

One of the ways community development workers can facilitate action is by developing a leadership or management group consisting of representatives of community organisations, groups and interested individuals. Ensure that individuals representing all the major groups in the community are offered membership in the leadership group. This ensures increased breadth of perspective and greater representation of the community members who may have difficulty participating directly.

Sub-groups or task groups may also be formed to accomplish specific actions. You may act as facilitator and advisor to the leadership and other groups. Provide information and oversee group processes to ensure community members are properly represented and consulted as necessary.

A leadership group can help to:

- foster greater participation through their own contacts and networks
- take responsibility for achieving specific tasks
- ensure that the role of facilitating action does not fall on one worker only
- recognise local skills and knowledge
- build links between groups in the community
- ensure greater representation of different interest groups in the community.

Document community priorities

As with all work activities, you need to carefully document community priorities to ensure proper reporting and to ensure actions can be tracked and progress measured. All documentation needs to be accurate, complete and shared with other group members as appropriate.

Depending on the activities involved, appropriate documentation may include:

- formal reports
- action plans
- taking minutes at meetings
- progress notes
- collating surveys and questionnaires.

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.

Click to complete Practice task 9

3C Plan appropriate strategies in collaboration with the group to ensure community priorities are addressed

Once shared community needs are identified, strategies and options for addressing these needs can be considered. This process requires careful planning and will usually involve the creation of mission statements and plans of action.

Establish goals

Most working groups develop a mission statement to provide a clear statement of purpose regarding the goals and objectives of a project. A mission statement helps to keep the group focused and motivated to achieve its goals.

Examples of goals include establishing a group home for young people with a disability (under 30 years) in the community, developing a food cooperative to support people on low incomes, or establishing an annual community festival to celebrate the diverse cultures in the community.

Goals should be achievable and clearly defined and articulated. A useful way of thinking about achievable goals is to use the SMART formula, which is explained here.

S **Specific:**
Target and clearly define a specific area that you want to improve.

M **Measureable:**
Suggest an indicator of progress; quantify if possible. Determine how you will know the goal has been achieved.

A **Attainable:**
Agree what the goals should be and keep them achievable in the time frame.

R **Realistic:**
Identify what results can realistically be achieved given the available resources, knowledge and time.

T **Time framed:**
Specify when the result can be achieved; make sure there is enough time to achieve the goal, but not too much time.

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.

Group action

Group action may involve a wide range of activities, such as the development of resident and neighbourhood groups, participation in lobby and advocacy groups, and organising activities such as fundraising events and demonstrations.

Conducting a specific project may involve the community collaborating to address a single issue, such as lobbying the council to have a pedestrian crossing established on a busy road, or having the local library funded to acquire more audiobooks for the visually impaired.

Program development

Developing a program to address an issue will usually involve longer-term activities to benefit the community. Examples may include establishing community recreation activities for youth of the region, increasing access to facilities or services for people in rural and remote areas, setting up adult education programs or creating neighbourhood watch programs.

Establishment of organisational arrangements

Some communities may decide to set up an organisation to achieve their long-term objectives. For example, a group who wants to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities in the community may decide they can best meet long-term and ongoing concerns by becoming a not-for-profit organisation, rather than a group that forms to achieve a particular objective and then disbands. Different people within a group may focus on particular activities.

When undertaking these various courses of action, groups may use a range of strategies to get their message out, gain support or lobby decision-makers.

Strategies may include:

- advocacy for particular causes or groups within the community
- media and promotional activities that may involve television or radio interviews, articles, letters to editors, newsletters, brochures and pamphlets
- fundraising activities including writing grant submissions and conducting fundraising events
- consciousness-raising activities in the community to make people more aware of issues by creating neighbourhood newsletters, community websites and information sessions
- lobbying policy-makers by writing letters to politicians and government representatives to draw their attention to issues and promote change.

Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure that community issues are effectively addressed, workers should monitor the results of various actions. For example, if public meetings result in very little response from policy- and decision-makers, the group may need to find other ways of addressing and drawing attention to their concerns.

It is useful to be aware of common problems that occur in community development projects, as outlined here.

Loss of motivation

Over time, some people may lose interest or momentum when participating in community projects. This leaves a small group of people doing most of the work. Keep people engaged by encouraging them to:

- rotate tasks
- share leadership
- combine work with social activities and fun
- make a commitment for a specific period
- have established methods for resolving conflicts.

Aiming too high

In their enthusiasm to engage in community action, people may expect changes to happen quickly and easily. They may also think they can achieve more than is reasonable. Sustainable community development requires time and commitment so that steady, rather than sudden, changes occur. It is also important for groups set themselves achievable goals and recognise that they may not always achieve the outcomes they expect.

Unequal representation

Workers should not assume that people who come to meetings represent the wishes of the whole community. You may find that once a particular community group starts a course of action, others in the community will likely emerge who are opposed to the action. It is important to consult widely and beyond community meetings to gain a clear understanding of everyone's views.

Lack of action

Too much time spent planning can lead to people losing the motivation to act. Workers should ensure that participants have roles and actions they can carry out early in the process, such as participating in research projects and building networks. This will help to keep them motivated and interested.

Ensure issues are addressed

To ensure issues are addressed effectively, workers must consider how well the goals of a project have been met. For example, if a major goal is to establish a youth recreation centre and this is achieved by obtaining funding, converting a disused church into a meeting place and recreational facility for young people, then this specific goal has been achieved.

A secondary expectation may be that the centre will be used by a wide cross-section of youth in the community. In reality, the centre may only be being used by a particular group of young people, with most young people in the area never going near the place, including young people with a disability. If this is the case, the project cannot claim unqualified success as it is only meeting the needs of a relatively small number of youth in the community.

Evaluation is useful for highlighting these types of issues. On one level, the project has achieved what it set out to do, but on another level, more work has to be done to ensure the centre is fully utilised and meets the needs of more young people in the community.

The working group should not automatically assume that the project has been a failure either. They may need to do more work to find out why young people with a disability are not using the centre and work on strategies to overcome this. For example, they may find that many young people are not using the centre because there are not enough resources, programs and activities to keep them interested or that their access needs are not met. This review may lead to the development of a new action plan to ensure that the youth centre is more widely used and inclusive.

Example

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.

Practice task 10

1. What are two characteristics of effective (SMART) goals?

2. Name two considerations involved in creating an action plan.

3. Name three common strategies or courses of action that community groups can use.

Click to complete Practice task 10

3D Document community structures and resources available to maximise outcomes for groups

Community resources and structures are community assets that include individuals, groups, organisations, services and places that can help a community group to achieve its goals. Workers can identify these structures and resources by creating a resource list or assets register. A resource list provides a framework within which community action can take place.

As part of the process of looking at community assets, you can conduct a SWOT analysis of the community to examine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a particular community or project. For example, in a community program to lobby for more green and recreational space in the community that is fully accessible to all, a worker and/or work group may carry out a SWOT analysis. The following example shows what this SWOT analysis might entail.

Strengths

- Strengths may include a high percentage of individuals and groups who are keen to act on the issue, plus the fact that the area has vacant land that could be made into parkland and recreational space.

Weaknesses

- Weaknesses may include lack of experience among residents about community development processes and lack of interest by the local council in more parks and recreational areas that are fully accessible.

Opposition

- Opposition may include various developers vying for the available vacant land in the area for housing or shopping developments.

Threats

- Threats may include that the amount of money developers are prepared to spend to persuade the council that the area needs more housing and retail centres, rather than open, accessible recreational space.

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.

Local skills and knowledge

People are more likely to participate in community development projects if the time, skills and knowledge they contribute are recognised and valued. It is vital to encourage local people to share their skills and knowledge to foster self-determination and participation in the community.

By contributing their skills for the good of the community, people build social capital, goodwill and a solid base for achieving their objectives. They also learn about processes involved in community development that can be used to achieve further changes in the future.

Community members may have:

- experience in conducting community development programs
- business skills and knowledge
- networking skills
- research skills
- fundraising skills
- writing skills
- people skills such as counselling, interviewing or group facilitation
- administrative skills
- practical skills such as building and other trade skills
- links to people in decision-making positions and authority
- leadership skills
- diverse voices, perspectives and ideas
- enthusiasm and motivation skills
- listening skills.

Community structures

Structures may include the services and agencies already in place in a community. These may include government and non-government services and businesses. The resource list can be used as a reference point for a range of community development activities including planning, fundraising, promotion, building partnerships, research and networking.

Information that should appear in a resource list
▶ National, state and local government services and departments in the area, including public transport, meeting rooms and unused public buildings
▶ Community organisations and groups with whom they can work and share resources
▶ Local business and industries that may be willing to provide donations to community projects and participate in specific projects, such as employment initiatives
▶ The media for promoting activities and to highlight problems in the area, including the different types of media they can use and relevant contact details

Processes and outcomes

Community development is a complex process that involves bringing together many different elements to achieve a desired outcome. Workers should understand that the process or means of achieving an outcome can be just as important as the outcome itself. It is through this process that community members join forces, share resources and learn new skills.

In this sense, the process itself can be considered a valuable outcome. As part of the process, workers and the community as a whole draw on and learn to value the skills and knowledge of local people. The contribution of local people builds social capital in the community. Social capital is based on community mindedness that reflects mutuality, or the interdependence of groups and individuals in the community.

It is this process that brings about sustained changes in the community. These changes may include better social and organisational networks and a broader, more inclusive group of people willing to participate in community action.

While community development projects may start out with specific goals, on the road to achieving these goals, they are likely to achieve a range of other outcomes.

Types of outcomes

Workers should not try to rush the community development process or gloss over the details so that individuals and groups do not really understand what is happening or what they are doing. It is important that everyone who participates in community action has the opportunity to be involved in a way that enables them to contribute to the final outcomes of the project. In this way, every individual learns about the process of community development and becomes empowered to take on other challenges.

Outcomes include:

- meeting community needs
- new or improved service delivery
- community projects
- community planning
- consultative and planning committees
- inter-community collaboration
- enhanced social capital
- enhanced community skills
- enhanced community capacity
- new or improved community facilities
- policy changes
- increased community confidence in public activity
- building capacity to address community problems and strengthen community structures
- increased capacity of groups/individuals to engage with political/community structures.

Example

Document community structures and resources available to groups to maximise outcomes for groups

Sandhill is a small town in western Queensland. It was once a thriving rural town, but since the closure of the bank and the school many people have moved elsewhere. The current population consists mainly of an Indigenous community, rural workers and older, local residents living in what remains of the town. Many of these older residents have significant disabilities and impairments. Sergei is a community worker from the nearest town, which is 60 kilometres away.

He calls a community meeting in Sandhill to find out what the needs of the community are. One of the unexpected but major needs that all groups in the community mention is a desire to have community access to the internet. Few people in the area have personal access in the area and since there is no library and no school, there is no way to access the internet without travelling to the nearest major town, which is not achievable for many of the community due to their mobility issues and for economic reasons. The community feel they are being left behind in a technological backwater.

Sergei develops a community resource list. At a surface level, he finds that the Sandhill community seems to have few resources and structures that other communities have. After some investigation, he is able to draw on a range of resources and structures both within and outside the community. He makes the following notes.

Resources:

- Close-knit community who are all in agreement about what they need: community access to the internet.
- A group of Aboriginal elders and other senior citizens have volunteered to form a management committee.
- Several of the children who attend high school in the nearest town have offered to provide internet lessons to other members of the community.
- Members of the community are willing to donate furniture such as desks, chairs, a fridge and other items the centre may need.

Structures:

- There are no government services or community services at present.
- The state education department prepared to offer the disused school as a location for community internet service.
- The local council can provide ex-council computers and offer their staff to service these.
- A federal government grant could provide internet connection fees.
- The Chamber of Commerce from the nearest town have offered to provide courses to the residents interested in setting up online businesses.
- The Lions Club have offered to conduct fundraising activities to pay electricity and other basic running costs.

Practice task 11

1. What are the four elements that a SWOT analysis helps identify?

2. What are two reasons why the time, skills and knowledge community members contribute should be recognised and valued?

3. Name three common outcomes from community development programs.

Click to complete Practice task 11

3E Provide advice and information to groups and individuals as required to ensure they are fully informed about relevant issues and opportunities

Workers must ensure communities are kept informed about community development issues and new opportunities that emerge as part of the process. In your role as a facilitator, ensure there are open channels of communication and that you are in a position to offer guidance where necessary.

During the community development process, new situations are likely to arise that the group and the community as a whole will need to be informed about. These situations may include negative events such as funding being withdrawn, plans not working out or people losing interest in the project. They may also be positive events such as new sponsors coming on board, offers of resources, such as a building to use as headquarters, promotional opportunities or people with needed skills donating their expertise.

Provide information and advice

The primary role of a community worker working in a community development framework is to empower others to take action to create needed changes in their own community. Community development is based on the principles of collaboration, participation and community self-determination.

As a community development worker, you may need to create networks throughout the community to be aware of what is happening in other community groups and projects. This involves networking with individuals, community groups, government departments, businesses and anyone else inside or outside the community who can offer support and information.

Here are some of the types of information and advice that you can offer.

Types of information and advice you can offer

- General principles of the community development process
- Information about specific strategies such as lobbying, advocacy and group action
- Information regarding funding sources and how to write grant proposals and funding submissions
- How to plan fundraising events

- How to conduct needs assessments
- How to use the media for promotion
- How to develop networks
- How to liaise with politicians, government representatives, local government and other policy-makers
- How to understand power structures within the community and hidden political agendas
- How to set up a community group including the legal and financial arrangements for doing so

Example

Provide advice and information to groups and individuals to ensure they are fully informed about relevant issues and opportunities

Tulsi is a community development worker employed by a city-based domestic violence service. Part of her role includes providing information and advice to individuals and groups in her community. This includes:

- conducting workshops on domestic violence
- carrying out research into the needs of domestic violence survivors
- providing information about fundraising activities to various community groups involved in domestic violence programs
- speaking at public meetings on a range of topics associated with domestic violence
- helping set up domestic violence self-help and support groups
- participating in community development activities such as establishing an emergency shelter for women experiencing domestic violence
- providing appropriate referrals to individuals who want to obtain restraining orders against a perpetrator of domestic violence
- networking and sharing information with other community organisations, government departments and community groups
- developing a database of domestic violence resources in the community and beyond
- maintaining a resource collection of books, DVDs, articles on the topic for the use of workers and community members
- ensuring that people with a disability, people from an ESL background and people with different cultural needs have equal access to domestic violence programs, services and information
- writing reports for her organisation and others involved in domestic violence work
- liaising with the media and writing articles for newsletters, newspapers and other media.

Practice task 12

1. Name two kinds of events that may arise in community development work that you may need to communicate to others.

2. Name three types of information or advice that you may be able to offer community groups or members.

3. Name three underlying principles of community development work.

Click to complete Practice task 12

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.

Using the media
Use traditional and social media to raise awareness, publicise activities, lobby for change and gain support.

Researching
Providing groups with accurate, appropriate and targeted information supports their goals. This may include creating your own researching tools to gain specific information.

Facilitating self-advocacy
Support individuals to take responsibility for their community by extending their own skills and by providing information and expertise.

Achieve outcomes

Community development processes are a series of actions designed to achieve a particular outcome. The steps taken will vary according to the situation and the preferences and resources of the community. Both personal and public processes can be useful in achieving specific outcomes.

Personal processes includes actions that individuals may use to promote community change; for example, creating petitions, undertaking personal advocacy work, doorknocking and writing letters to politicians or newspapers. These actions may be part of a personal campaign or as part of group action. Many individuals try private actions before they realise the best way to address a concern is to join with others to take collective action. Community workers can help facilitate this awareness by talking and listening to people, giving them information about options for action and facilitating group processes.

Workers may also have their own personal processes that they use in community development projects, such as seeking advice from mentors and conducting personal research in preparation to begin a project. Remember that the primary role is to involve people to take action together, rather than trying to achieve outcomes in the community on their own. You may have a preferred approach to community development activities, but it is important to keep in mind that each project will require a fresh analysis and a flexible approach, rather than rigid adherence to a formula.

Public political process relates to how workers and community groups engage with the public and political spheres to achieve change. Public political process may involve calling public meetings, participating in demonstrations and using the media to call attention to issues of concern.

Example

Advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes

Pari is a community development worker supporting a local community group of people with a disability and their family members and carers. The group has identified a priority to improve services in their local area, as many of them travel considerable distances to receive supports. The one service provider in the area is under-staffed and unable to meet all of their needs.

The group has researched funding opportunities to fund more services in their area and have identified a state government department and a charitable organisation that may be able to help. The group has prepared a statement outlining their experiences and needs, which they have asked Pari to deliver as their spokesperson.

Pari agrees, but thinks that a community group member should attend the meetings with the charity and government department as the face of the group. While she is happy to advocate for them, she wants to build the group's self-advocacy skills as well. Two group representatives agree to attend the meetings with Pari, as long as they can access appropriate transport.

Pari arranges transport and lobbies for immediate appointments with the government and charity representatives, due to the level of need in the community. She suggests a photo opportunity could be arranged for the meetings, which she suspects may be seen as good publicity for the officials. Both meetings are set within a fairly reasonable timeframe, and Pari works with the community group to hone their message and to define their requests and desired outcomes.

Practice task 13

1. Name one example of an advocacy activity in community development work.

2. Name one example of a lobbying activity in community development work.

3. In community development work, who sets the goals for which you advocate?

Click to complete Practice task 13

3G Manage group dynamics, facilitate discussions and engagement processes

When working with groups to achieve desired outcomes, community development workers must ensure they can manage the group's dynamics. Understanding the demographics of the community, the diversity and factors that are significant in the community assists you to manage group dynamics, facilitate and engage people in the decisions that affect their community.

Ensure that every member of the community, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, older people and youth have an opportunity to participate and to share their resources and ideas.

Manage group dynamics

The term 'group dynamics' refers to the way that a group functions and the roles that people within the group adopt, which can be helpful or harmful. Effective community development work relies on your skills of supporting and facilitating good work practices between diverse individuals. Good group dynamics foster good outcomes – groups that are based on trust, good communication and respect create good outcomes and lead to real change.

There are many strategies that you can use to manage group dynamics, including the following.

Know your group and the individuals involved

Research the demographics of your community and get to know the people involved in your group. Having an idea of people's communication styles, strengths and needs helps you to create a strong, supportive environment that encourages full participation.

Identify roles that people play

Often, different individuals take on roles when working in a group that may not reflect who they really are. Group communication works differently to one-on-one communication, and many people find communicating in large groups difficult. This may cause them to be defensive, aggressive, withdrawn or inappropriate. If you can identify when someone is playing this role, you can be prepared with an appropriate strategy. For example, if someone is withdrawn in group meetings, provide them with extra support and time to speak.

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.

Facilitate discussions

One of your roles as a community development worker is to facilitate discussions within the community group and between the group and others. The role of a facilitator is different to that of a leader: you guide the discussion, not dominate it. The community group's needs and goals are the priority, and your job is to support community members to communicate effectively and to discuss ideas and solutions.

A good facilitator:

- guides the discussion, providing structure and allowing flexibility
- listens, paraphrases and summarises to ensure everyone has been heard
- encourages participation but respects people's choices
- manages group dynamics productively
- records the discussion either by taking minutes or making an audio recording
- ensures that everyone's access, communication, language and cultural needs are met
- encourages democratic processes
- encourages feedback, questions and allows plenty of time for people to respond
- models good communication skills
- provides group members with a summary of the meeting and its results.

Engagement strategies

Workers use engagement strategies when they treat others with respect, keep everyone informed, build relationships with all the different groups and organisations in their community, communicate clearly and appropriately to all members of the community, and demonstrate a willingness to understand and learn about people's needs and differences. The community development process depends on community participation and cannot be effective unless all community groups and individuals are engaged in the process.

Engagement can be encouraged by:

- developing an inclusion strategy that recognises all the different groups and organisations that should be included in community development projects
- building relationships with groups and organisations in the community and creating links between them to establish trust and interaction between groups
- using a strengths-based approach to foster engagement, involving recognising and building on the strengths of different groups and individuals in the community
- building partnerships with community leaders and stakeholders who can promote engagement among their own groups and communities
- identifying possible barriers to engagement, such as access or communication issues
- ensuring all individuals and groups in the community are informed and receive relevant information
- helping participants recognise that consensus and collaboration is the foundation for community change.

Example

Manage group dynamics, facilitate discussions and engagement processes

Grace is a community development worker who has been asked by a core group of people with a disability within the community to support their goals. The group members all receive services from a local community services provider and are seeking other people to join their group and lobby for increased services in the community.

Grace met with the community group and after hearing their goals, she has been working with them to expand the group and a greater awareness of disability issues in the local community. With the group's consent, she has devised an inclusion strategy, seeking to invite more people to join the group and expand their activities.

As part of this inclusion strategy, Grace advertised a Christmas party for people who attend the community services provider, hosted by the community group. Many people attended the party, where they were given a flyer about the community group, inviting their participation and attendance at a community meeting.

The meeting was set for a week's time and Grace also invited other community members, a local councillor and the head of the service to attend. The meeting became heated when core group members expressed their anger at service cutbacks. Grace ensured that everyone had a chance to speak and documented what was said. Both the local councillor and the head of the service agreed to form a task force with the group to address their needs.

Practice task 14

1. Name three strategies involved in managing group dynamics effectively.

2. Name two techniques to facilitate effective group discussions.

3. Name two useful engagement strategies in community development work.

Click to complete Practice task 14

3H Review and modify own work practice within a community development framework

Working within a community development framework requires a different set of skills from one-on-one service provision, in which most community workers are engaged. To be effective in this capacity, you must have a commitment to community development principles that include the right of individuals and groups in the community to take collective action to address shared needs.

Rather than focusing on individual needs, community development workers look at broader community issues and concerns and help community groups to develop initiatives based on these shared concerns. Community development work occurs in the public sphere, whereas much one-on-one work such as support work, counselling and casework involves helping people address personal concerns. Workers who are involved in both types of community work must be aware of these distinctions and work appropriately in each framework.

Regularly reviewing and modifying your work practices is a fundamental aspect of your commitment to professional practice and your commitment to providing best practice community development support to people and groups.

Seek opportunities to improve

Workers who are engaged in community development work must seek opportunities to review and develop their practice on a regular basis. All work activities need to be regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure that best practice approaches are being utilised and that the group's changing needs are being met. Seeking opportunities to improve your practice demonstrates your professionalism and expresses your commitment to supporting community groups' identified goals.

While regular self-reviewing should be part of your normal practice, other signals that you may have an opportunity to improve include feedback from group members, a target or goal not being met or a reduction in group participation. Rather than seeing these as failures, it is more beneficial to view them as opportunities to better target your work practices to the group's specific needs.

Ways to continuously improve your professional practice

- Engage in self-reflective practices such as keeping a journal and participating in peer groups for the purpose of professional development.
- Have regular professional supervisions sessions – most workplaces provide community workers with opportunities to discuss and review work practices with a mentor or supervisor.

- Undertake professional reading in journals and texts to keep up to date with the latest developments in community development practices.
- Sign up to internet forums and email lists on the topic of community development practices.
- Attend workshops and conferences.
- Network with others in the field.

Modify practices

Workers should always be prepared to modify their practices if they find what they are doing is not working or is alienating people in the community. Remain flexible and be prepared to listen to others – especially the people with whom you are working. If not, you may risk losing community support and interest in the project.

It is important in community development to not take on the role of expert. There will be many people in the community who have skills and resources they can contribute to the project. Consider yourself as another contributor with a particular set of skills.

One of the most important ways you can review your own practice is to write clearly and honestly in a practice journal. Over time, you will begin to see patterns in the way you work and what your greatest strengths and weaknesses are. A practice journal is also useful in supervision sessions to prompt discussion on different areas of practice.

Community development aims to encourage individuals and groups to mobilise their resources and skills and work cooperatively to achieve specific outcomes for the community. Community development is based on the principles of self-help, democracy, social justice, participation, collaboration and inclusion. It is a flexible process where you contribute skills, but should not be seen as the leader or the expert. The basic steps of community development (which individuals and groups in the community participate in) are identifying existing concerns, developing a shared vision, planning and action. Your community development work can have a profound effect by empowering communities of people with support needs to claim their rights and fully participate in all aspects of life.

Example

Review and modify own work practice within a community development framework

Ang is preparing for his regular supervisory meeting with Carol, which he finds a great opportunity to gain new perspectives on his work practice. Before the meeting, he reviews his self-reflection journal and highlights a couple of instances in which he would like Carol's opinion. He makes a few notes for the meeting, making sure to de-identify any personal information, and brings along a pad and pen to make notes.

Ang chaired a community meeting the previous week where several people became frustrated and left. He has reflected on the meeting and realised that he could benefit from some more training on managing group dynamics, particularly in very large groups. He knows that one of the people who left was Maria, who was frustrated at her inability to communicate over several louder community members. Maria has communication issues and needs to use a communication aid.

After his supervisory meeting with Carol, Ang contacts Maria to hear her concerns and to invite her feedback. He finds an online training course for managing group dynamics and changes his work practices to ensure a more inclusive experience for all community members at the next meeting. He invites Maria to be the first speaker at the next meeting.

Practice task 15

1. Name two ways that you can identify opportunities to improve your work practices.

2. Name two ways to engage in continuous improvement in your work in community development.

3. Name two ways to modify your work practices in community development.

Click to complete Practice task 15

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.

Learning checkpoint 3
Work with groups to achieve community development outcomes

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in working with groups to achieve community development outcomes.

1. What is one way to research and analyse community priorities?

2. What are two group processes that community development workers can facilitate to identify and document shared community priorities?

3. What are three strategies that you can develop in collaboration with a community group to ensure community priorities are addressed?

4. What is one method to document community structures and resources available to groups to maximise their outcomes?

5. What are three types of advice and information that you could provide to groups and individuals to ensure they are fully informed about relevant issues and opportunities?

6. What are four ways that you could advocate and lobby for community-based outcomes?

7. Name one way to manage group dynamics, one way to facilitate discussions and one engagement process.

8. What are two ways that you could review and modify your own work practice within a community development framework?

9. As a community development worker, what would be your role once the community has identified and developed their community priorities?