

# Working with the principles of co-design



Co-design is an inclusive process of collaboration in which a diverse group of people with relevant skills, experience or interests come together to advise and make decisions on a piece of work. Queenslanders with Disability Network has developed the following principles and actions to put them into practice.



## Authentic Voice

Ensuring the voice of people with disability is present, strong, included and valued. It is important to:

- be clear about the work you are doing so you can invite the most appropriate people
- think about who is most impacted by the work and has the most experience or knowledge
- include a diversity of people from different disabilities, cultures, locations, genders, viewpoints, socio-economic backgrounds, and ages
- find appropriate and accessible meeting places, spaces, and times
- contact the agencies or organisations who represent the relevant people (this might include agencies such as Queenslanders with Disability Network, Health Consumers Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies, multicultural groups, advocacy agencies, service providers)
- work with agencies to invite people in a way that is welcoming and uses appropriate communication methods, and clear about the contribution needed and how it will be recognised.



## Respect

The co-design process respects people with disability, valuing individual capacity and diversity. It is important to:

- use language and communication methods appropriate to the people invited, for example:
  - easy English reading for people with intellectual disability
  - accessible documents for deaf or blind participants
- provide clear information upfront about the scope and level of influence
- provide information beforehand about process, participants, timing, and pre-reading in read-friendly formats matched to the disability type
- engage experienced facilitators who can design and host supported spaces that centre the voices of people with disability and facilitate sharing of relevant lived experience
- invite respect, open-mindedness, and an attitude of possibility
- create an environment of building on and connecting ideas rather than arguing about them
- ensure people feel heard and acknowledged – listen to and value all responses, even those that do not agree with the majority
- use a process that supports people to collectively make sense of the material (don't make sense of it for them – you may miss meaning and nuance)

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## Rights

Co-design is underpinned by human rights and needs. It is important to:

- acknowledge the level of engagement and influence that is possible – declare if it is not possible to fully engage people around an issue and hold an information session rather than a consultation
- if people give input that can be attributed to them, be clear about who (including specific area of government) will have access to it
- ensure all access and inclusion needs are met for:
  - venues
  - processes
  - information and communication
  - platforms for engagement.
- ask people in their RSVP to identify their needs around:
  - access
  - diet
  - support
  - culture and religion.



## Resilience

People with disability co-design ideas and solutions to lead and influence change and are here for the long term. It is important to:

- invite contributions from quieter voices
- respectfully invite or redirect more dominant voices to make room for others
- avoid pressuring people to contribute. Check in on them. Reassure that it is okay to not be part of everything – their choices come first and are respected
- provide opportunities for people to review notes and provide feedback to correct any misrepresentation or add extra input
- support the building of relationships so people feel comfortable, familiar, and included.



## Collective Action

People will own and champion what they have helped co-create. The collective action coming out of the work acknowledges and reflects the diversity of perspectives on the issue.

Map out the process (in plain English) of engagement from recruitment to closing so people can understand what they will be involved in and decide if, and when, they can opt in or out.

Start engaging from the beginning - involve people as much as is appropriate in:

- defining the problem
- crafting the question/s
- exploring the issue
- developing options
- generating ideas
- choosing viable solutions
- shaping prototypes or pilots
- action learning.

It is important to:

- acknowledge at every step who is missing from this conversation
- ask who else we need to bring to this conversation? Actively seek their involvement when identified.

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