



Co-designing recommendations to government – getting it right

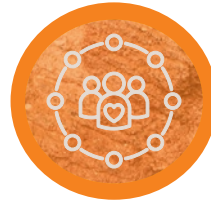
Dr RG (Jerry) Schwab, July 2021

Co-design is a big focus for Aboriginal organisations and government today. But how do we do it well? Our *Co-designing Recommendations to Government* project sheds some light on this.



Co-design at a glance

- **What IS co-design?** – in general terms, co-design is a process where government and involved citizens share in decision-making and together design policy. Yet for co-design to succeed it is important from the start for all parties to agree on how and when decision-making is shared, who takes part and who leads
- **Shifting mindsets** – genuine co-design often requires a big shift in world view and practice both for government and the Aboriginal people and organisations involved
- **Whose voice?** – including as many Aboriginal individual and organisation voices as early as possible in the co-design process can help enable agreement and timely outcomes
- **Include public servants** – including public servants in the co-design process will help in developing recommendations that government can understand and put into action
- **Toward healing** – relationships between Aboriginal communities and Government are sometimes fraught and fragile and local histories need to be taken into account, but the trust and respect that can emerge from the process of co-design may contribute to healing



Tips for co-designing successful recommendations

- **Trust** – successful co-design stands or falls on a foundation of trust and the quality of the relationship between Aboriginal communities and government
- **It's a process** – co-design is a process and not an event; time must be allowed to create, review, change and confirm recommendations
- **'Is this what you mean?'** – check back with communities to make sure every recommendation captures the intent that lies behind it
- **Make it actionable** – successful recommendations are: based on evidence, timely, economically feasible, politically viable, and within that government's control
- **Offer solutions** – recommendations may be more palatable to government if they are constructive, offer solutions and don't just identify problems
- **Craft your message** – think about how the recommendation will be heard/seen/received by both the Aboriginal community and government
- **Be specific** – a specific, concrete, measurable recommendation is easier for government to address than one that is general, vague or aspirational
- **Think about timing** – draft recommendations with a timeframe in mind: some might be urgent, some achievable immediately (as a quick 'win'), while others will take more time



Helpful strategies and tools

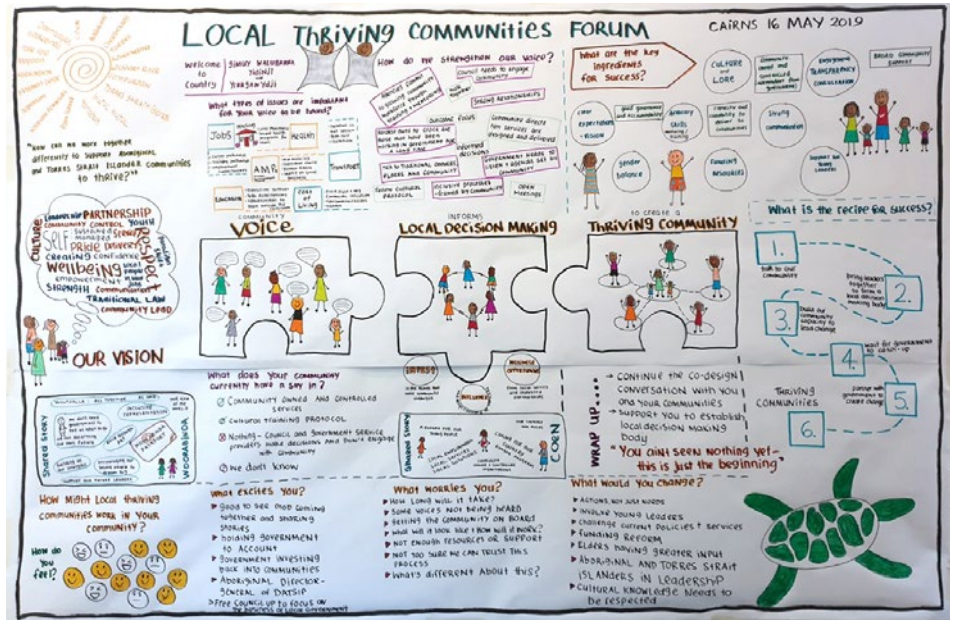
- **Find a facilitator** – having a skilled, culturally aware facilitator, who understands both government and Aboriginal communities is a great help in drafting recommendations
- **Prioritise, prioritise, prioritise** – grouping and ranking the recommendations is critical to help you decide: Which recommendations would best achieve what is needed? Which are the most achievable?
- **Tools to help prioritise** recommendations are summarised on the next page (see pages 33-36 in full report):
 - **Graphic harvesting** – captures complex ideas visually from discussions
 - **Matrix tool** – shows what is both important for Aboriginal communities and supported by government
 - **Paired comparisons tool** – helps with deciding which recommendations are higher priority than others



Graphic harvesting (or graphic recording)

A trained facilitator captures key ideas from complex discussions in a large image to help communicate important issues and strategies.

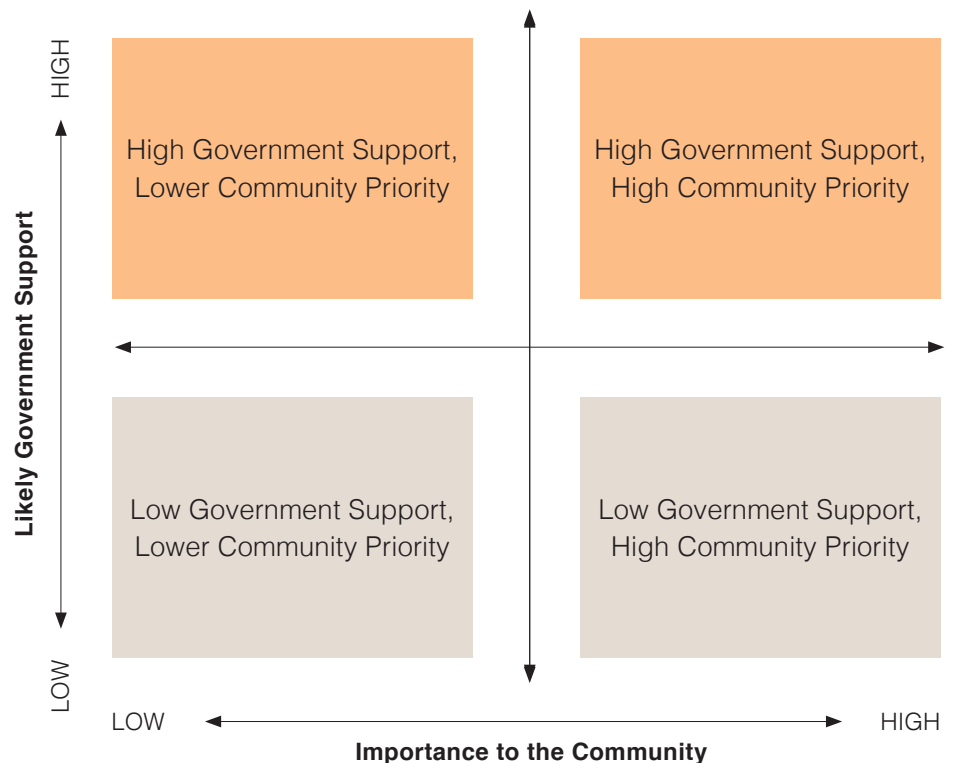
Example: Local Thriving Communities Forum 2019, Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. <https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/tracks-treaty/local-thriving-communities/community-co-design-journeys>



Matrix tool

The Community Priority / Government Support Matrix shows what is both important for Aboriginal communities and supported by government.

While this tool identifies differences in stakeholders' priorities, it can help the parties to understand each other better, and allows the group to decide where to put their energy and what future strategies to take.





Paired comparisons tool

The Paired comparisons tool helps with deciding which recommendations are higher priority than others.

Recommendations are grouped under broad headings and given a letter A, B, C etc, and put in a table. In the example below, a team sorted through its recommendations and grouped them under the headings of A - resources, B - communications, C - broad representation, D - staff training and E - cultural competency.

Paired Comparison table – example, not filled in:

	A. Resources	B. Communications	C. Broad Representation	D. Staff Training	E. Cultural Competency
A. Resources					
B. Communications					
C. Broad Representation					
D. Staff Training					
E. Cultural Competency					

The team then discussed the recommendations and decided which was more important and by how much, by using the table (0 = no difference / same importance, 3 = major difference / one much more important than the other). For instance, A (resources) was seen as much more important than B (communications) (A3), and D (staff training) was seen as a little more important than C (broad representation) (D1).

Paired Comparison table – example, filled in:

	A. Resources	B. Communications	C. Broad Representation	D. Staff Training	E. Cultural Competency
A. Resources		A3	A2	A2	E3
B. Communications			B2	B1	E2
C. Broad Representation				D1	E3
D. Staff Training					E3
E. Cultural Competency					

The scores are then added up to see which recommendations got the highest results.

- A = 7 (32 percent)
- B = 3 (14 percent)
- C = 0 (0 percent)
- D = 1 (6 percent)
- E = 11 (50 percent)

In this example, the top three results are: E - cultural competency (50%), A - resources (32%), and B - communications (14%).

The team decides it has the greatest chance of achieving desired change if it submits only high priority recommendations, and submits its top three recommendations to government in order of priority.