Objective

To establish a framework that outlines the preferred approach to partnership between the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (Department) and the community services sector, and provides agreed upon principles for engagement.

Policy context

The Delivering Community Services in Partnership (DCSP) Policy guides the Western Australian Government and community sector organisations by outlining the significance of partnership and collaboration in the funding and contracting of sustainable community services and the delivery of high quality services in Western Australia. The DCSP policy has been jointly developed by the WA Government and the community services sector to build and support a mature funding and contracting relationship between the sectors. It outlines partnership principles and behaviours which guide the way both sectors work together to improve outcomes for Western Australians. The DCSP policy informs and guides the key elements of this framework.

The partnership principles are:

1. A commitment to improve social, cultural and economic outcomes for the Western Australian community.
2. A collaborative approach to decision-making and working together recognising the interdependence in the delivery of community services.
3. A partnership based on mutual trust and respect, with openness and transparency in all activities.
4. Recognition of the value and contribution of both sectors in the design and delivery of community services and the important roles each play in the wellbeing of the community.
5. An enduring commitment to the sustainability of Community Services.
6. A commitment to empowerment of service users in the planning, design and delivery of community services.

The behaviours are:

1. An enduring focus and drive to deliver demonstrable improvements in outcomes for all Western Australians.
2. Consultation on all significant issues, including the development of policy, planning and service design.
3. Transparency in decision-making, including through the sharing of data and information, basis for funding decisions and contracting requirements.
4. An interdependent approach to the planning and delivery of community services.
5. Public Authorities and Organisations working together to ensure that funding levels are sufficient for sustainable Community Services.
6. Engagement of citizens in the ongoing planning, design and delivery of Community Services through direct and indirect methods of consultation and representation in the development of service delivery.
The engagement framework will assist the Department to meet the strategic objectives identified in the Department’s current Strategic Plan (2016 – 2019).

**Purpose of collaborative engagement**

It is important for the Department to identify the purpose of the collaborative engagement process so that stakeholders can determine if participating is appropriate and suitable for them. A clearly defined purpose or intention should be provided by the Department up-front, prior to embarking on any engagement process. This clear articulation is essential to genuine partnership and participation from all stakeholders and will ultimately result in better outcomes for the sector relationship and service recipients.

The degree of influence attributed to stakeholders at each level of the consultation should be stated to assist stakeholders to determine their commitment to the process and understand where and how their contribution will make a difference.

**Who should be involved?**

It is recognised by both the Department and community services sector, that wisdom and expertise does not sit within one organisation or sector. Expertise exists within the Department, community services sector, service users and the broader community.

The Department will utilise existing peak bodies, sector associations or representative bodies (such as the Alliance for Children at Risk, the Children, Youth and Families Agencies Association, Community Sector Roundtable and WACOSS etc.) to invite collaborative engagement. These groups are well placed to advise the Department in a timely manner of key stakeholders to be included in these processes. Further, these groups, will at times, have more direct access to service users. The intention of this approach is to:

- Demonstrate transparency when identifying and requesting participation and engagement (including defining the purpose and parameters of the work to be achieved)
- Support the community services sector to identify and assist in the determination of the most relevant stakeholders to be involved (includes current funded services, direct service users, key stakeholders and community members);
- Be accountable to the community and service users for time and resources used for this purpose and how this translates into outcomes or progress.

For this approach to succeed, these groups should provide feedback to the Department in a timely manner. Further, the Department will provide clear timeframes for responses that are reasonable and clearly determined. The Department will also seek to ensure that there is diverse representation of stakeholders at all times, including service users, their families, carers, government agencies and relevant cultural representatives. It is important to recognise that engagement directly with service users and their families requires additional planning and longer timeframes.

Where there is disagreement between the Department and community services sector about which stakeholders should be included, decision making will be transparent. The final decision will rest with the Department.
Type of engagement

There are many ways that engagement can occur. Determining the appropriateness of the method that will be most suitable can be dependent on a number of factors. These may include issues such as available resourcing, timeframes, identification of community need, current risk, the community services sector capacity to respond, and the overall purpose of the engagement process.

The decision about which approach to use will vary depending on the circumstance. Figure 1 (from the Australian Centre for Social Innovation) provides a framework for identifying the type of interaction that is most suitable for the intended purpose. The Department will use this terminology when identifying the approach to be used. The framework is consistent with the intent of the DCSP and Stakeholder Guidelines policies. Figure 2 outlines the level of influence for stakeholders during each approach.

The preferred approach will be dependent on the purpose or requirement of the work to be undertaken. At times, the decision about the type of collaborative engagement employed will be made by the Department and at times this will be jointly determined with the community services sector. The key to the success of this approach will be early definition of the intent and the approach that is most suitable to be used.

A co-design process may be utilised for the development of new service models or specifications. Appendix 1 outlines the Department’s interpretation of a co-design process.
How should collaborative engagement occur?

The method of engagement will depend on the individual purpose and intent of the required piece of work, as well as the type of collaborative engagement required.

Specific stakeholder engagement plans will be developed and broadly communicated for distinct projects, where this is needed. When it is possible and appropriate, these plans can be jointly developed between the Department and community services sector.

Sufficient time should be allowed for thorough collaborative engagement processes to occur. There should be clear consideration of timeframes, and capacity of stakeholders to participate, when deciding on the engagement or consultation approach to be used.

In all types of engagement it is essential that the Department defines the non-negotiable elements throughout the process.

Other key factors that enhance the success of engagement processes include good preparation (timely provision of documents and clear agendas), good planning, a clearly defined purpose or intention, active participation by stakeholders and a demonstrated commitment to the process.

Some common ways that engagement occurs can include provision of fact sheets, information sharing forums, surveys, stakeholder workshops, and research. These methods are aligned with the Department of Finance’s Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

It is important that there is sharing of the responsibility for setting agendas and identifying leads on project groups from both within the Department and community services sector based on the most appropriate expertise.

In all circumstances, it is integral to provide timely and specific feedback to all stakeholders involved in the engagement process. Feedback mechanisms should include timely information for stakeholders in relation to how their input contributed to decision making or outcomes. It remains the joint responsibility and commitment of the Department and the community services sector that this occurs.
**Some relevant publications:**

Good Practice Guidelines for engagement and collaboration in community sector services procurement (WACOSS)


Partnering in Procurement: A good practice guideline to engagement in community service procurement, and developing and measuring outcomes (WA Dept of Health and WACOSS)

http://www.wacoss.org.au/Libraries/Publications_Community_Sector_Reform_Updates/12897_Partnering_in_Procurement.sflb.asbx

Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy: A Policy to achieve better outcomes for Western Australians through the funding and contracting of community services (WA Govt, 2011)


Appendix 1
Co-design – Definitions and Principles

Introduction
The Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) is increasingly utilising elements of co-design in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives and services. This includes Department funded and delivered services.

The Department aims to improve consultation and engagement processes with internal staff, other government and community services sector agencies, community members and service users, to co-design responses. Put simply, the Department wants to move from ‘doing for’ to ‘doing with’.

The purpose of this document is to provide a Department agreed definition and approach to co-design, to guide all co-design processes. It is suggested this be read in accordance with the “Further Information” detailed below prior to consideration and commencement of co-design processes.

Definition
Co-design involves collaborating, including and designing with people that will use, deliver or engage with a service or product. It is a methodology for involving a broad range of people directly involved in an issue, place, process in its design and sometimes also in implementation.

Guiding principles
1. Intentionally and collaboratively designing responses to social issues results in improved outcomes, more effective product/services, higher levels of commitment and responsiveness.

2. Learning with and from people who have ‘lived experiences’ of an issue in their context leads to improved understandings, insights into complexity and greater capacity for responsiveness.

3. Co-design involves collaboratively designing all parts of the service system.
4. Co-design happens over time and across structures — it requires a different kind of relationship between people which incorporates trust, open and active communication and mutual learning. Co-design is a process not an event.

5. With regard to Aboriginal people and services, Aboriginal service providers, community members, elders, families and service users must be actively involved in and/or lead Department co-design processes and initiatives.

6. Planning and preparation is critical, to include careful consideration of purpose, who is involved, how and where co-design happens.

7. Co-design requires commitment to change and feedback loops, testing, making and implementing change over the lifetime of a program.

Further Information

ACT Govt Better Services Co-design Online

An illustrative case study of a co-design project that teaches the use of collaborative approaches, methods and tools.

https://www.betterservices.act.gov.au/about/co-design-online

Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines for Community Services Procurement

A guide to undertaking Stakeholder Engagement under the delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy.


ThinkPlace Improving services for families

Understanding the journey of families through the ACT service system and prototype the new service approach with families, service providers and the government using action learning.

http://www.thinkplaceglobal.com/case-studies/improving-services-families

Enabling Change with Aboriginal families and services - Project Report


By us, For us: The Power of Co-design and Co-delivery

http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_power_of_co-design_and_co-delivery.pdf