Evaluation of the Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative

Final Report
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1. Executive Summary

In early 2007, the Inner East Primary Care Partnership (IEPCP) confirmed that social inclusion for older people in the community was a priority for action across its catchment of four local government areas. A successful professional development, planning and funding process resulted in the establishment of *two* integrated projects across the municipalities of Whitehorse, Boroondara, Monash and Manningham in the inner east of Melbourne . One project focused on leadership and the other aimed to address issues of social isolation for older Cambodian community members. The projects were implemented using Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) methodology. This report presents findings from the evaluation of the two projects comprising The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative with detailed discussion of the achievements and learning's of each of the projects presented in sections 5 and 6.

1.1. Project Aims, Achievements & Recommendations

The overall aim of The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative is to build stronger community connections and create a greater sense of community that is inclusive of age, ability and cultural diversity. The two projects within the initiative, 'The Community Leadership Program' and 'Mobilising Communities Project', are experimental demonstration projects aiming to identify and empower emerging community leaders to strengthen their personal leadership skills and begin to apply these in addressing the social isolation that some groups of older people experience in the IEPCP catchment.

The Community Leadership Program (CLP), modelled on the successful Williamson program, was conducted to build community leadership skills. The program successfully recruited from across the four local government areas, potential community leaders from diverse backgrounds, age groups, and social and professional roles. Through the process, participants were supported to establish community projects in areas of social disadvantage.

> *"For me I just think I just learned the power of conversation. Before running this program, I wasn't that confident because I used to work with a project community and I am quite comfortable working with that community, but I wasn't sure how to contact or how to communicate with other communities. So that is the most important thing that I learnt how to be with the community, the organisation and how to know everything and just show your respect towards them and they will let you know everything what actually their interests are." [CLP focus group participant]*

The CLP successfully recruited a broad range of community participants to undertake leadership training to improve their capacity to develop community projects to enhance social inclusion and the program has been a successful way of developing community leaders who have begun to address the important issue of social isolation in their communities. In particular the evaluation noted that the CLP:

- Promoted positive leadership skills
- Created a high degree of participant enthusiasm
- Enhanced connections among participants
- Improved leadership skills
- Increased participants knowledge of social isolation & community development
- Increased confidence and ability to design community projects
- Resulted in successful early implementation of community projects

Recommendations to enhance future programs include: providing participants with structured opportunities to develop and practice newly acquired community development skills and providing additional support to participant's project development by linking them with existing work being undertaken in their local communities to increase social connection.

The Mobilising Communities project (MC) aimed to work with the relatively small but much marginalised Cambodian community that experiences limited opportunities for social and community linkages and poor access to supportive networks. The project included a focus on both the barriers and enablers for reducing social isolation as well as creating a common vision and shared ideas and activities to support stronger community connections.

> *"I am happy and proud to be part of the group. I did not want to be involved with a crowd and enjoy life because I have been through so much. Because of the information and support I gave it a chance. I joined the group. Since I have been involved I see the amazing and important things that have changed my life. I can't wait to join this group every week, I look forward to it. I want to be part of this group – it is a new life for me. I am nearly 70 years old, but now I feel 50 years old. The group makes me feel young. I feel that there is a bright future for me now; I won't get bored with my life. If this project continues it will help my transition to old age." [MC focus group participant]*

During the 12 months of the project, positive relationships between older members of the Cambodian community were built and some activities initiated have been sustained beyond the scope of the project. Participants described the project as having a large impact on their lives, noteworthy in the evaluation findings are:

- Improved social connectedness
- Trust built with community agencies
- Leadership developed from within the Cambodian community group
- Ongoing weekly water aerobics activity maintained
- A transferrable model to work with other socially isolated, marginalized CALD communities

Learning's from this project to support future work with other socially isolated and marginalized CALD groups in the community include: ensuring adequate time to build rapport and trust with the

community before embarking on project activities, providing support for volunteer leaders through culturally appropriate training and mentoring and having a flexible approach to community participation.

1.2. Conclusion

The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative succeeded in improving the leadership skills of a group of community leaders in the Inner East region of Melbourne. Evaluation of the CLP against the project objectives identified promising achievements for the CLP in enhancing participants' leadership skills and increasing their confidence as community leaders. Community projects were developed by the end of the CLP that are designed to address the overall goal of The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative of improving social connectedness (see Section 5, Table 5.6). Areas for improvement identified by the evaluation also enable the partnership to identify possible modifications for future programs.

The Mobilising Communities project was highly successful in bringing together older Cambodians to participate in a range of activities and to develop stronger ties within their community. By the end of the project, community members had begun to independently organise activities and to take ownership of the group. This suggests that the achievements of the Mobilising Communities project are likely to have longer-term benefits for the community. The evaluation also highlighted the key factors in successfully implementing the program; in particular, the time and resources required to build a new community group.

A key strength of the initiative has been the high functioning partnership of agencies that have worked together from the very early planning and securing funding stages right through to project completion and evaluation. The initiative has been overseen by a Steering Group comprising representation from the agencies, PCP and government departments who funded the projects. High levels of trust, commitment and collaboration have been achieved in the partnership resulting in very positive achievement toward common goals, shared decision making, in-kind support and staffing, sharing of resources, training and planning processes and importantly an ongoing commitment to continue working together to reduce social isolation in the community.

2. Introduction

2.1. The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative – History

Source of information: The project history was written by Ronda Held.

2.1.1. Background context

Considerable research has demonstrated the significant link between social connectedness/social inclusion and health, wellbeing and disadvantage. A key goal of the Victorian Government, outlined in *A Fairer Victoria,* is to help older Victorians remain independent and healthy for as long as possible.

The Department of Planning and Community Development has a community strengthening focus and there has been increased emphasis on the social determinants of health by the Department of Human Services.

2.1.2. Primary Care Partnerships

The Bracks Labor Government introduced Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) on entering office in Victoria in 2000. They were designed to support reform of the Primary Health Sector and to introduce cooperative arrangements to a sector that had become more fragmented under the competitive tendering regime of the previous Kennett Liberal Government. There are 32 PCPs in Victoria and are normally based on catchments of two or more local government areas. Core members of PCPs include Community Health Services, Acute and Sub-acute providers, Local Government Authorities and Divisions of General Practice.

Core responsibilities of PCPs include service coordination, fostering electronic solutions to reduce the complexity of the system for services users (including electronic service directories and e-referral), and developing cooperative arrangements to support initiatives designed to ameliorate the effects of chronic disease and health promotion initiatives that attempt to reduce the onset of such conditions. Funding is provided through the Department of Human Services to support the work of each PCP.

When the PCP initiative first started there were two PCPs in our catchment, Boroondara and Central East. They came together in 2005 to form the Inner East PCP, which now consists of 74 agencies operating within the municipalities of Boroondara, Manningham, Monash and Whitehorse. With an estimated population of over a half a million people, this is the largest PCP in the state. Because of its size and diversity agencies who are members come together to pursue individual priorities. This is the case with the Inner East Leadership initiative.

2.1.3. Background to the Initiative

In 2003-04 the Boroondara PCP identified social isolation as a key issue in the area and initiated a pilot project in social connectedness for people with mental health issues and for older people. Two

groups led initiatives for these respective target groups and shared their findings in a workshop which was well attended by service providers across the region. Deakin University was then involved in the project regarding 'Consumer Experiences of Treatment for Depression: Pathways to Recovery," which reported in March 2005 and was initiated by the Central East PCP. In 2006 two stages of a project involved a literature review relating to social connectedness and health, and a consultation with Inner East PCP members regarding current activities in this area.

The 2006 Inner East profile identified depression as the number one burden of disease in the catchment. It is recognised that there are many people who are isolated due to frailty, disability, cultural background or low income.

Subsequently, a group of PCP members met to scope a project to build on the outcomes of these two processes. The agreed approach was to commission a consultancy to achieve three aims:

Review the literature on the relationships between social connectedness and health outcomes and to locate evidence-based approaches to addressing social isolation.

Consult with member agencies about the key issues for their consumers and target groups across the catchment for whom social isolation is a key issue. The report also aimed to document good practice currently occurring across the region.

Scope funding sources to support a longer-term capacity building project for the PCP and member agencies.

The literature review was completed in July 2006 and circulated to member agencies. The review concluded that the "linkages between health and social networks are extremely complex and poorly understood". It proposed a "three tiered approach to health promotion, that not only integrates the personal, relational as well as collective sphere but is also capable of drawing on the benefits of a strength-based methodology". The literature suggests that certain population groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities, might benefit more from community-based intervention than others.

The consultations with agencies and scoping of possible projects and funding were completed in September 2006. Mike Green from the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute in the USA was in Melbourne at the end of August 2006 and participated in a workshop on the report findings. Mike has a long association with community development projects designed to promote community connectedness.

The report documents the people perceived as being at risk of social isolation and initiatives across the region to address this. It summarises the characteristics of effective practice. It was observed by the consultants that agencies are aware of the extent of the issue and have implemented a number of service-based initiatives to address isolation. However, the notion of how to link people into generic community activities and resources outside the human service system still requires further

development. This is similar to the challenges currently being faced by agencies attempting to implement the State Disability Plan. A range of potential funding sources for further projects were also identified.

The Report recommended a number of possible project areas:

1. Assessment
2. Information Co-ordination
3. Community Development
4. Capacity Building

The report was circulated to the PCP Strategic Direction Committee and a wider group interested in the issue, including those who attended Mike Green's workshop.

Proposals were put to the PCP Governance Group in November – the following extract from the minutes summarises the decision:

Ronda spoke on the progress of the project and tabled a summary document highlighting the two resources of the literature review and the mapping document.

The key principles to guide the future development of the program were that:

- They are capacity building of agencies
- They fit with existing policy drivers for PCP agencies, such as patient self-management, service coordination and care planning, person-centred care, the State Disability Plan, DVC Capacity building etc.
- There is coverage of the four municipalities
- It will fit criteria for funding from the Department. Of Planning and Community Development or can attract other funding
- It focus on older people
- It involves community groups broader than PCP agencies
- It could include a small grants program.
- It was agreed that principles for project selection be endorsed and that a forum be held.

A workshop was held in April 2007 with key stakeholders to help scope the projects to be discussed at the forum. Two partnerships were established: Leadership for Social Inclusion, and Mobilising Communities. These partnerships established a shared goal to and build the capacity of member agencies, and community members in the Inner East to develop and implement projects that enhance the inclusion of older marginalised people in community life. An ABCD approach has been utilised.

An outline of the developmental process of the initiative is shown in Figure 2.1. The process of designing, implementing and evaluating the two projects is represented by the following project

stages adapted from the Inner East PCP Leadership for Social Inclusion Initiative, Program Management Plan:

1. Planning and Program Design.
2. Recruitment and Marketing.
3. Leadership Program and Mobilising Communities.
4. Program Evaluation and Sustainability.

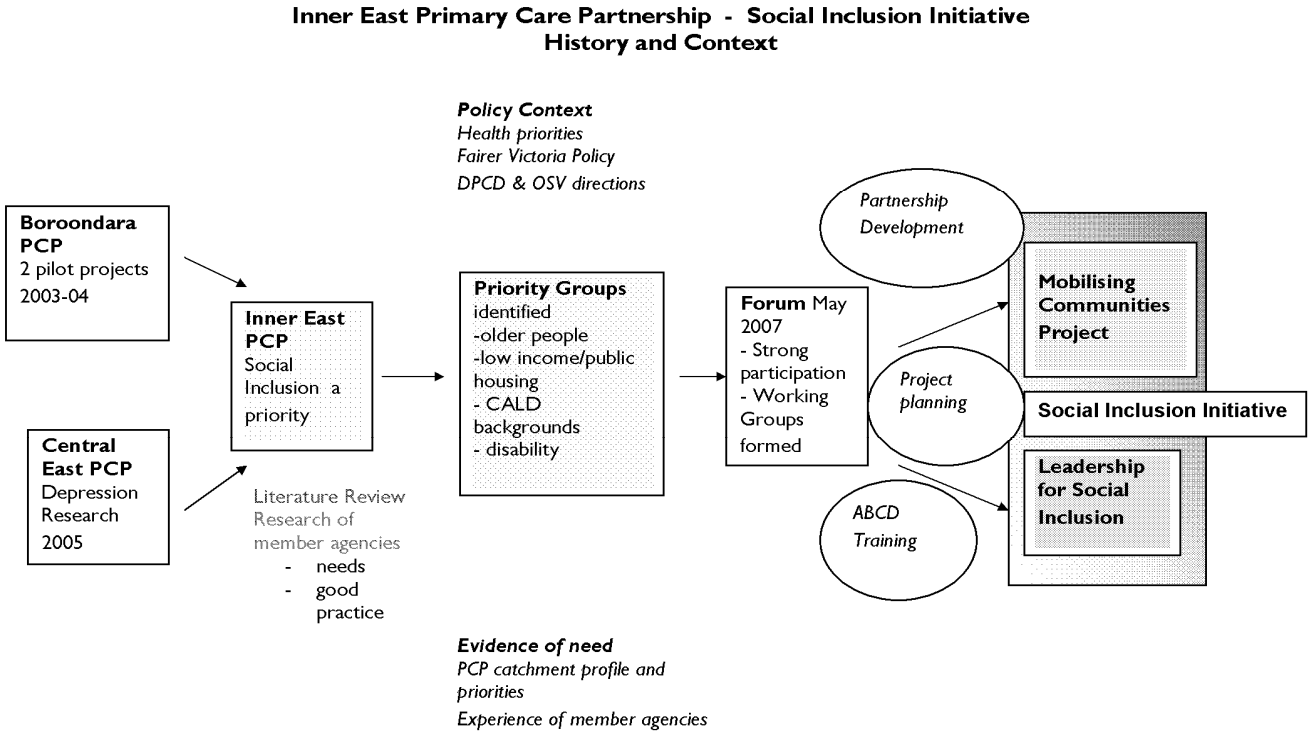

Figure 2.1. Outline of Social Inclusion Initiative History (from *Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative*, presentation by Ronda Held)

2.1.4. Leadership Project

Goal: To increase the awareness of and response by individuals and groups in the Inner East catchment to address the social isolation of older people.

Elements:

- Community engagement process to identify informal leaders
- A leadership development program that includes 30 participants from across services, community groups, informal leaders and business
- Action research projects in local areas to increase the social inclusion of older people.

The Leadership Program was modelled on the very successful Williamson Community leadership Program (Leadership Victoria), which brings together a diverse range of people for a year-long program aimed at developing their leadership skills and insight. At the end of the program, participants give back to the community through service projects. Leadership Victoria staff gave advice on the design of the program. The aim was to have a diversity of participants including active citizens older people, workers from agencies, local business, members of service clubs or other local organisations etc., so that different perspectives on the issue of social isolation could be shared, and the resources of the participants could be pooled to support their projects.

2.1.5. Mobilising Communities Project

Goal: To increase participation in community life for the Cambodian Community 50yrs + in the Inner East.

Elements:

- Two-phased approach – scoping and implementation
- Using an ABCD approach
- Initially aimed at strengthening the Cambodian community
- Look to reduce barriers to the social inclusion of older members of the Cambodian community
- Potential leaders from the Cambodian community to be involved in the leadership program.

The stages that were then undertaken included:

- Appointment of a Patron
- Learning from others experience (e.g., the Williamson Community leadership program of Leadership Victoria)
- Selection of Target Areas
- Evaluation Methodology
- Participant Recruitment

- Leadership Program Elements and Design
- Governance Arrangements
- Reporting to Funding Bodies
- Project Launch and Communication

The outcomes hoped for at the commencement of the initiative were:

- A successful Leadership Program developed that is transferrable to other areas
- Enhancement of leadership capacity within target areas
- Engagement with disadvantaged culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Leveraging off existing programs that work including Universities of the Third Age (U3As)
- Action Research Projects Initiated
- Case Studies documented
- Evaluation completed.

Funding for the projects was obtained from a range of sources including the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development and Department of Health, the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, the City of Whitehorse, the Uniting Church Share Appeal and the Inner East PCP.

The Steering Committee were delighted at the generosity of funders and at the ability to have sufficient funds to commence the projects. However, the funding criteria, especially of government departments, created its own challenges. While the funding needed to be spent and acquitted within certain time-frames, the experimental and developmental nature of the projects meant that the project coordinators needed to work at the community's pace. This led to some compromises and the need to rush certain stages of the projects that might otherwise have had more time invested in them.

2.2. Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

1. To outline the achievements, strengths, weaknesses and key learnings of the Initiative.
2. To document a model for working with marginalised older people from CALD backgrounds.
3. To develop best practice recommendations for ongoing efforts to improve social inclusion for disadvantaged communities more broadly.

3. Evaluation Methodology and Methods

The evaluation used a range of data collection methods to assess the achievements of the two projects against their stated objectives. The main data collection activities are summarised below.

1. A brief review of recent literature was conducted to provide up-to-date information on key concepts underpinning the initiative. The literature review is targeted to include only the most relevant concepts underlying the initiative. The literature briefly covers the following themes:

   - The significance of social inclusion and connectedness for community and individual wellbeing
   - The use of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as a resource to build community capacity and promote social inclusion
   - The significance of community leadership in the drive to build community capacity and enhance social inclusion
   - Barriers to social inclusion for older people, with specific reference to issues facing refugees including older Cambodians.

2. Materials relevant to the history, development and implementation of the two projects comprising the initiative were collected and reviewed. Primary materials utilised in this process were:
   - Background materials supplied by the Steering Committee, including the literature review on Social Connectedness and Health conducted by Goetz, Dickson and Wright in 2006 and a summary of the history of the Initiative.
   - Project reports (both written and verbal) prepared by the Community Leadership Program (CLP) and Mobilising Communities project coordinators
   - The Structured Journal for the CLP and the Mobilising Communities project coordinators (Appendices 5 and 6)
     - For each project objective, the project coordinators described:

       a. The strategies undertaken to achieve project objectives

       b. Aspects of the strategy that worked well

       c. Aspect(s) of the strategy that didn't work as well as they would have liked

       d. What they would do differently next time.

3. Data collection was undertaken utilising tools developed specifically for the evaluation. The data collection methods and tools comprised:
   - The CLP pre-program evaluation questionnaire (Appendix 1)
   - Sixteen pre-program evaluation questionnaires were completed by participants (an 80% response rate).

- The CLP discussion questions (Appendix 2)
  - A set of questions were developed to guide discussion with the CLP participants. These questions sought participant opinions on topics such as aspects of the program they found useful, the skills they felt they had developed and aspects of the program they would change.
  - Group discussions were conducted with of the CLP participants as part of the CLP two weeks before graduation. The analysis of themes emerging from these discussions is included in this report.
- The CLP post-program evaluation questionnaire (Appendix 3)
  - Fifteen post-program evaluation questionnaires were returned by participants (a 75% response rate).
- The CLP group discussion themes questionnaire (Appendix 4)
  - A quantitative questionnaire which reflected key themes that emerged from the group discussions was developed. This questionnaire measured the key factors that participants rated as being related to (a) overall satisfaction with the CLP and (b) overall satisfaction with personal achievements in the CLP. Seventeen participants returned the completed questionnaire (an 85% response rate).
- The Mobilising Communities discussion questions (Appendix 7)
  - A set of questions were developed to guide discussions with participants in the Mobilising Communities activities. These questions included such issues as whether the participants believed that undertaking the activities had helped them, whether they wished the activities to continue and what support they thought they could access to ensure the continuation of the group.
- A direct observation of one session of the CLP was undertaken. Observation of this session allowed the evaluators to observe the dynamics of the participants as they engaged with a guest listener.
- A direct observation of one Mobilising Communities outing was undertaken by the evaluator.

4. Brief Review of the Literature

A brief review of the literature was undertaken (focused on the last five years, but including key documents from earlier periods) to provide an update of recent research and to target the review to define the key concepts underlying the Social Inclusion Initiative. Key terms (e.g., Asset Based Community Development [ABCD], Social Connectedness, Community Capacity Building, Community Leadership) were entered into Google Scholar and limited to recent articles (2004 and later). This enabled a broad search of the literature in order to identify other key terms (e.g., Social Capital) and to isolate key articles. A follow-up search was undertaken using common Social Sciences databases (e.g., ProQuest, PsycINFO) and individual journals (e.g., Community Development) were also scanned for relevant articles. Given the complexity of concepts involved, the review serves only to provide a context for the present project and should not be considered exhaustive.

4.1. Introduction

It has been demonstrated that specific groups of people in the community (e.g., the mentally ill, unemployed, poor, disabled or elderly) may experience social isolation. Social exclusion implies that particular individuals and community groups may be actively excluded from participating in wider society. As a result, a range of subsequent problems, like poverty, unemployment, poor education and health may be characteristics of these communities [1]. The consequences of lack of connections to the community and social isolation can be profound and include physical and psychological health effects [2, 3]. As a result, interest in the concept of social inclusion has grown, as have strategies for promoting social inclusion through community development which involves a planned approach to producing assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life [4].

4.2. Key Concepts

4.2.1. Community

Seeking to define a ‘community’ presents challenges. It could refer to a specific geographic location (like a neighbourhood or a local council area), social networks or interest groups developed to serve a particular purpose [1, 5]. While it is true that location represents an important characteristic of a community, communities also have social and psychological characteristics; communities are defined by the interactive relationships that allow for individual needs to be met [6]. Through the network of relationships that comprise a community, individuals within that community can derive a sense of wellbeing through a sense of involvement and bonding [7]. Communities are defined by having a geographic location, social organisations that provide for interaction between the communities residents and social interaction around a shared interest [4].

4.2.2. Social Inclusion

Having connections to the community through a system of social networks is a vital component of successful ageing [8, 9]. Individuals with large networks where contact with members is frequent tend

to have better health. In contrast, individuals who have fewer close ties and less access to social support are more likely to suffer depression [8, 10]. Large networks tend to supply the resources that are linked to wellbeing; including social support, information and connections to systems that provide feedback that contributes to self-esteem [8].

Specifically in relation to older adults, social participation, social engagement and social networks have all been shown to be predictors of cognitive decline in the elderly [10]. Beyond a focus on individual social networks, connections to the wider community through community participation may provide a sense of belonging and wellbeing, as well as extending network connections [10].

4.2.3. Social Capital

There is strong evidence that a community's social capital is linked to positive mental health outcomes [11-14]. Social capital has been defined in a number of different ways, which range from the ability of community members to form strong connections, to the idea that one's needs can be met in the community, or a sense of belonging [15]. Irrespective of the specific definition, a community's' social capital is likely to represent an asset [11]. Social capital encompasses the resources – physical and psychological – that can be accessed in a community; evidence suggests that communities with high levels of social capital typically have better health and greater levels of community engagement, education and safety [1]. Thus, tackling the issue of promoting the ability of socially excluded groups to mobilise their community resources to deal with problems has been advocated as a strategy for change [1].

4.2.4. Building Community Capacity

Community capacity building represents a motivation to assist excluded and marginalised communities to tackle their own problems. Communities can be active participants in development activities and can choose to direct their efforts to strive for particular outcomes, by drawing on community capacity [5]. This approach regards all communities as having inherent strengths, skills and abilities (the community's assets). Community capacity building is a long-term activity.

Community capacity has been defined in a number of different ways; however, these definitions are consistent in viewing community capacity as socially protective of communities, by improving their health and social conditions [3]. Nevertheless, the key components of community capacity cited, like leadership or community skills, are often identified through anecdotal observation or from observations of specific community types (e.g., local initiatives linked to specific organisations versus more broad definitions of community). Lempa et al. sought to clarify the key components of community capacity by conducting a large quantitative survey focused on local initiatives for community improvement operating out of community-based organisations [3]. This research confirmed that community leadership is at the core of community development efforts. The capacity of community initiatives was also a product of access to resources, skills (e.g., ability and

commitment, personnel sustainability) and networking factors (both externally to influential people outside of the community and also within the community).

4.2.5. Asset Based Community Development

ABCD is an approach to community development that evolved in the United States as an alternative to focusing on the deficiencies and needs in a community [4, 16-19]. Need-based community development is a traditional approach to community development that seeks to identify the problems and deficiencies in a community. It is argued that focusing only on problems creates a context of despair and inaction that may be difficult to overcome [4, 16, 19]. ABCD is sometimes regarded as the opposite pole to need-based community development. This approach to community development seeks to generate community capacity through a process of identifying and mobilising existing community assets [4, 16, 17, 19]. ABCD focuses on a community's strengths and successes, rather than deliberating its problems, failures and needs [18]. It is claimed that by focusing on strengths ABCD is an empowering approach, whereas an exclusive focus on deficits and problems can be disempowering for communities [20]. ABCD involves an approach as well as outlining a set of strategies for identifying and mobilising community assets for change [11].

Boyd et al. outlined five steps in ABCD [11]:

- Develop relationships with local residents with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised groups
- Identify the network of associations and local groups – large and small, formal and informal – that can contribute to the initiative (a process of asset mapping)
- The third, fourth and fifth steps involve expanding the asset map to include local organisations (e.g., council, schools, hospitals) and creating partnerships between these groups.

Community asset mapping was proposed by McKnight and Kretzman as an alternative to maps of neighbourhood deficiency and need.[16, 19] A community's assets, including resources, capacities and abilities can be mapped as in the example in the diagram below (adapted from Green and Haines [4]). Mapping a community's assets is an ongoing process which may involve strategies such as community surveys and public participation [4].

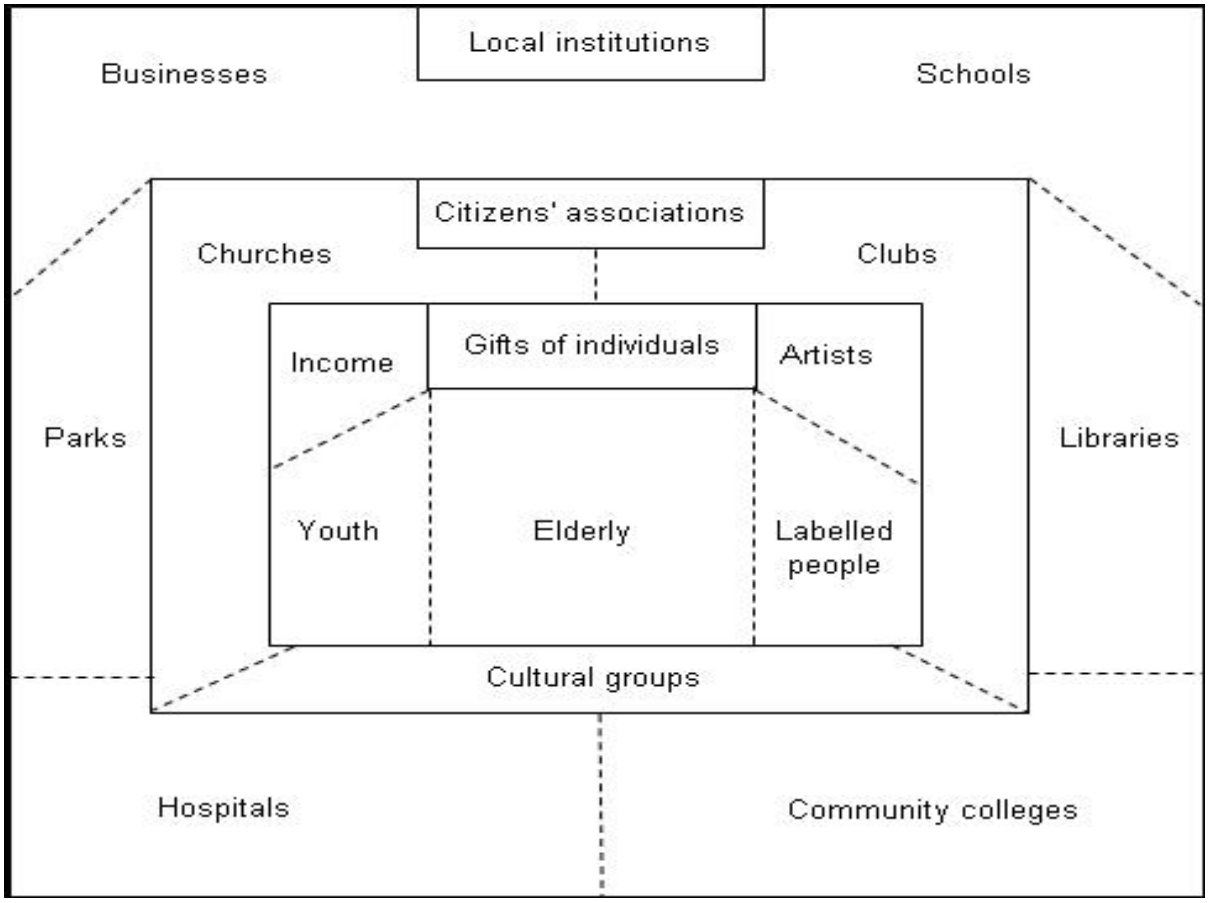

Figure 4.1. An example of a community asset map.

4.2.6. Community Leadership

Leadership as a concept is difficult to define and is subject to wide debate across a range of fields [21]. Conventional definitions view leadership as a process whereby an individual (or a leadership team) uses persuasion or influence to encourage a group to pursue objectives held by the leader and their followers. Community leadership, however, is likely to represent a unique kind of leadership. One idea is that community leaders are those who seek to build and enable their community's capacity [22]. Another notion is that community leadership is about community networks and influence because community leaders cannot rely on formal power [23]. Community leaders are also characterised by wanting to direct their efforts towards improving conditions in the community [23]. They typically have a great deal of knowledge about their communities and some ability to motivate people to follow a cause. Community leaders also need specific skills to help them be more effective: specific skills that will enhance their effectiveness can be taught (e.g., negotiation skills) [22].

Volunteers play an invaluable role in contributing to community development. Volunteers are likely to play an increasingly important role in helping communities to develop their capacity and therefore contribute to long-term community wellbeing. It is likely that equipping volunteers with relevant skills and abilities will enhance community capacity building efforts. Leadership training is a clear need if volunteers are going to be effective in leadership positions and successful in managing groups

to achieve project aims [6]. Training volunteers in specific skills like grant-writing, conflict management, negotiation strategies, presentation skills and understanding of the decision-making processes of local government all prepare volunteers better to successfully develop and implement community projects [6]. Volunteers also require skills in identifying the communities' needs and strategies to effectively map community assets [6].

Though community leaders are likely to cite many benefits to their roles (e.g., personal growth and the development of interpersonal relationships), they also describe disadvantages (e.g., interpersonal tensions, lack of time and lack of resources) [24].

4.3. Training Community Leaders

4.3.1. What can be taught in Community Leadership?

Much of the focus on leadership training has been around the acquisition of knowledge (e.g., definitions of community, how the community works, models of community development [25]). In contrast, Kolzow argued that in order for newly acquired knowledge to be practised, individuals must also learn new skills [21]. These skills he argued can include (p. 125), "problem solving, planning and goal setting, critical thinking, effective decision-making, conflict management tactics, negotiation techniques, team building and team management, group process techniques and effective listening".

4.3.2. How might Community Leaders be taught?

Adult Education Principles

In 1968 Malcolm Knowles first advanced five adult education learning principles. Knowles contrasted the learning needs of adults (using the term andragogy, or the "art and science of helping adults learn") with those of children (contrasting pedagogical approaches with those designed to teach adults) and proposed five assumptions around the adult learner [26]. Merriam (2001, p. 5) summarised these assumptions as follows:

"The adult learner: Has an independent self-concept and can direct his or her own learning. has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning. has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, is problem-centred and interested in immediate application of knowledge and is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors."

The degree to which Knowles' assumptions constituted a theory was subject to enormous debate. Knowles later revised his distinction between andragogy and pedagogy to a continuum from teacher-directed to student-directed learning, with acknowledgment that both approaches may be appropriate with adults, depending on the learning situation [26].

The adult education area is characterised by enormous debate and differences in emphasis; alternate models of adult learning have subsequently developed. Bryan, Kreuter and Brownson [27] synthesised research on adult learning theories and models and articulated five principles in relation to

training for public health practice. The principles, sample assessment questions and evaluation questions suggested by the authors are included in Table 4.1 as they are highly applicable in designing any course with adult learners.

Table 4.1: Bryan, Kreuter and Brownson's (2008) Sample Assessment and Evaluation for Applying Adult Learning Principles in Training for Public Health Practice

Principle	Sample Assessment Questions	Sample Evaluation Questions
1. Adults need to know why they are learning.	What is your organisation's mission? What areas of your organisation need improvement?	Were learning objectives clearly stated? How well did trainers understand your reasons for wanting to learn this information?
2. Adults are motivated to learn by the need to solve problems.	What specific problems or challenges do you expect this training will help you address?	How realistic were the problems presented? Were the problems presented ones you have encountered in your organisation? How will the training help you address problems or challenges you currently face?
3. Adults' previous experience must be respected and built upon.	In current or past positions, how have you used local data to help understand or solve a local problem? What challenges did you face working to address this problem? How did you overcome those challenges?	How well did trainers understand your past experience and current job demands? Was the content of the training too simple, too complicated or about right for your level of experience? How easy or difficult was it to integrate the content of the training into your existing knowledge and experience?
4. Adults need learning approaches that match their background and diversity.	Do you learn better by listening and watching or doing? Do you learn better working alone or in a group?	Were different training methods used to address different learning objectives? In what ways did the methods used help or hinder your personal learning?
5. Adults need to be actively involved in the learning process.	What do you need to learn to achieve the goals of the training? If you were responsible for planning the training, what would you include and how would you deliver it?	What input and control did you have over what you learned and how you learned it? How did that level of control help or hinder your learning? Did the training include too much, about the right amount, or too little participation from trainees?

4.4. Community Development with Refugees

Refugee groups often experience social exclusion on a number of dimensions [28]. Community relationships between refugee groups, other migrants and existing residents may be lacking or strained, with small differences in culture, attitudes or religious belief contributing to broader divisions, misunderstanding and conflict [29]. Meanwhile, viewing refugees through a deficit model typically reinforces the idea of local refugees as a burden rather than as potential asset [30]. There is, however, evidence that community development driven by members of refugee communities, rather than directed by external agencies, has the potential for rebuilding social relationships within fragmented refugee communities [7].

4.4.1. The Cambodian Community

The experience of Cambodian refugees presents a particular challenge for community development. Cambodian refugees are often regarded as having experienced more serious trauma than other refugee groups; Cambodian elders, as holders of traditional knowledge, can be particularly socially isolated [31]. With experience of torture and violence aimed at dismantling the social connections between families and the wider community, refugee communities may be divided, with little sense of community beyond a shared national identity [32].

4.5. Evaluation of Approaches to Community Capacity Building

Community capacity building efforts can be difficult to evaluate. Ideally, an evaluation approach should be integrated into the planning phase and decided upon by the community [1]. Evaluation of the efficacy of community capacity building initiatives are particularly crucial as evidence shows that projects which have only a short-term vision are likely to fail. Significantly, projects that fail may be damaging to existing social networks and community relationships [1].

4.6. Conclusions

The preceding review presented a brief summary of key concepts underlying the rationale behind the Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative. The aim of the review was to briefly define key terms that have been used throughout the Social Inclusion Initiative and present them in a systematic way. The review highlighted the likely benefits to individuals and the wider community from interventions to promote social inclusion. Community leadership will probably represent an important resource in mapping community assets and helping communities to mobilise assets successfully. An effort to train potential community leaders in skills to assist their efforts is likely to have positive benefits. However, undertaking community development work with refugee groups is inclined to be particularly challenging and requires consideration of the unique experiences of refugees, especially those who are survivors of trauma.

5. Evaluation of the Community Leadership Program

5.1. About the Community Leadership Program

The Community Leadership Program (CLP) sought to recruit potential community leaders from identified areas of disadvantage in the Inner East Primary Care Partnership catchment, equip them with skills necessary to take up leadership positions and encourage them to develop community projects modelled on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) principles. A project coordinator was employed to oversee the implementation of the project and a facilitator was engaged to deliver the CLP. The CLP was officially launched by the Hon. Peter Batchelor in late 2008 at a forum attended by a broad representation of community groups. The CLP was widely advertised and intensive efforts were made to attract potential participants from within disadvantaged areas to apply for the program. The recruitment process aimed to select applicants from diverse backgrounds, encompassing a range of ethnicities, ages and professional backgrounds. In order to attract suitable candidates to the program, a wide-ranging promotional campaign to attract potential leaders was undertaken. This included:

- Advertising through local newspapers and on community radio and television
- Broad distribution of information to organisations and service groups throughout the catchment area
- Meetings with key individuals to promote the project (e.g., coordinators of neighbourhood houses)
- Talks to community groups (e.g., Clayton Rotary Club)
- Forming two ambassador groups in Boroondara and Manningham to bring together leaders of social hubs for older people in these areas.

To be considered for selection to the CLP, candidates completed an application form and undertook a group selection interview with at least one member of the Steering Committee on the panel. In total, there were 32 applicants; from these, 21 were successful in gaining a place in the program. One candidate later withdrew, leaving 20 candidates to complete the program.

5.1.2. CLP course structure

The CLP began with a two-day live-in retreat facilitated by Gayle Hardie from the Global Leadership Foundation. It included exercises that promoted self-reflection on the concept of leadership, listening abilities, and personal strengths pertaining to leadership. After the retreat a one-day ABCD Workshop was run by trainer Ted Smeaton, which introduced the principles of ABCD to the participants. For the remainder of the course the participants met for one day twice a month at different venues in municipalities within the Inner East PCP catchment. The sessions comprising the CLP were facilitated by Vanessa Lynne using an adult learning approach with support from project coordinator Jane Oldfield. A general outline of a CLP session is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Session Outline for the Community Leadership Program.

Time	Process	Responsibility
9.30 – 9.40	Ice-breaker	Group members
9.40 – 10.00	Group news and reports Presentation by community (if in a guest venue)	Group members Vanessa and Jane
10.00 – 10.30	Case study discussion or group presentations	Group members
10.30 – 10.45	Morning tea	Group members
10.45 – 12.15	Continue group presentations or guest listener session	Group members Vanessa or Jane Guest listener
12.15 – 1.00	**LUNCH**	
1.00 – 2.00	Group discussions on projects	Group members Vanessa and Jane
2.00 – 3.00	Work on projects	Group members
3.00 – 3.15	Afternoon tea	Group members
3.15 – 4.00	Project work including support from group members for individuals/groups who request it.	Group members Vanessa and Jane
4.00 – 4.10	Reflection	Group members
4.10 – 4.30	Pack up and close	Group members Vanessa and Jane

5.2. About the Community Leadership Program Participants

The Steering Committee particularly wished to engage with emerging community leaders who lived in areas of identified disadvantage; however, this aim was only partially fulfilled. To address this, in some cases professionals working in the identified areas were recruited in an effort to establish links with disadvantaged communities. Overall, the candidates who completed the CLP represented a diverse cross-section of the community, with each of the four municipalities of the Inner East Primary Care Partnership catchment represented. Participants ranged in age from their 20s to their 80s and came from more than ten different ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Chinese, Indian, Korean, Anglo-Australian). The participants were also drawn from a wide range of social roles (e.g., carer, volunteer, retiree, church minister, church elders) and professional backgrounds (e.g., social worker, teacher, librarian). Participants were predominantly female, with only four male participants undertaking the CLP. The participants also brought widely different experiences in working with communities to the CLP; some participants had undertaken extensive community development work, while others had little to no experience. Table 5.2 summarises the characteristics of the CLP participants.

Table 5.2: Summary of Community Leadership Program Participant Characteristics

Age range	LGA				
	Boorondara	**Manningham**	**Monash/ Manningham**	**Monash**	**Whitehorse**
20 – 29			1	1	
30 – 39	3	2	1	3	3
40 – 49	1			1	
50 – 59	1				
60 – 69					
70 – 79	1				
80 – 89	1				1
TOTAL	7	2	2	5	4

5.2.1. Pre-program attitudes to ageing, leadership and social inclusion

During the retreat, the CLP participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 1) that sought a qualitative assessment of their views on the key areas of ageing, leadership and social inclusion. This approach served the purpose of determining participants' views on key themes at course commencement. Describing participants' pre-program views also allowed for a comparison with how these views may have changed by the end of the program in the post-evaluation questionnaire. It also allowed for consideration of the role the CLP may have had in shaping their views. These comments were transcribed for analysis and are synthesised in the section below. Selected quotes from participants (in italics) are included below the summaries for some questions.

Views on Ageing

How old is an older person?

When asked how old an older person is, most participants suggested a biological age at which a person becomes old, ranging from around 65 to 75. A very small number of participants suggested that chronological age and mental state might be separate entities, or that a person may be aged when they can no longer participate in social activities.

What do you expect to be like when you reach that age?

Almost without exception, participants had positive expectations about reaching old age themselves. Though they acknowledged that health concerns may present some limitations, they expected to be happy, challenged and continuing to learn and contribute to the community. They sought continued independence and close connections with family, friends and the wider community.

What symbolises ageing for you?

Most participants presented a mix of positive and negative views in relation to ageing of the mind. Though they recognised mental deterioration as a possibility, they also presented positive ideas around the transmission of wisdom and accumulated experience. In contrast, views around the ageing of the body were predominantly negative. Participants cited a diverse range of positive social roles that they hoped to occupy as they aged, with only a few associating ageing with becoming socially isolated from society. Participants cited financial stability as a key factor in ageing; some hoped for financial stability, whereas others believed that economic insecurity was more likely. A selection of the most frequently occurring key phrases that participants associated with ageing are shown below:

- Mind – Agile, Wisdom, Dementia, Mature, Experienced, Memory loss, Confusion, Forgetful, Thoughtful, Not open-minded, Full of advice
- Body – Tired, Sagging, Weak, Aches and pains, Frailty, Fatigue, Slow, Wrinkly, Stooped
- Social roles – Leadership, Active and involved, Not as accepted, Volunteer, Family-centred, Elder, A teacher, Isolated, Retired, Community participant
- Economic roles – Financial stability, Self-sufficient, Budget restrictions, Dependence, Budgeting, Fear of poverty

Views on Leadership

What are the qualities you admire in a leader?

Most participants cited qualities that suggested a model of a charismatic-type leader. Participants admired leadership qualities such as having a vision, the ability to communicate and the ability to motivate and inspire others. They thought that being assertive, organised, knowledgeable, intelligent, encouraging and supportive were also admirable qualities. Some felt that admirable qualities might also include honesty, humbleness and politeness. A small number of participants suggested that a leader might also be follower or may not call themselves a leader:

> *He or she must also be a follower. He or she should be willing to change roles from time to time and depending on the situation. Leader must work hard and set an example and great if the leader can inspire others around. Humility and politeness are important.*

> *A person who encourages others to contribute, good communicator, has a vision.*

In what ways do you consider yourself to be a leader?

Participants offered a range of ideas about how they considered themselves a leader that both reinforced and extended their views on admired leadership qualities. Attributes such as vision, ability to communicate, solve problems and motivate others were offered as personal attributes. Participants also cited personal qualities such as compassion, caring and ability to listen:

I have a very good understanding of a person's needs and am able to communicate effectively. Good problem solving skills. Can think pros and cons of the action.

I see myself influencing people around, in my family, my workplace, my community toward lifestyle.

I'm intelligent, compassionate, creative willing to step up and hold the big view (visionary).

What leadership skills do you hope to develop during the leadership program?

The skills that the participants hoped to develop during the leadership program were quite diverse. These included generic skills like enhanced communication, conflict resolution, networking skills and also much more specific requirements like knowledge of aged care and an understanding of multiculturalism. Participants were consistent, however, in wanting to improve some aspect of themselves through participation in the course:

Better able to inspire and envision. I would like to be able to lead by example.

Networking skills, more communication skills.

To be able to reach out to more people who needed help.

To become stronger person and to develop a good network.

Views on Social Inclusion

What does the term 'Socially inclusive community' mean to you?

CLP participants overwhelming viewed community participation and acceptance as the foundation of a socially inclusive community. Participants also emphasised the idea of everyone being welcomed in the community:

Everybody would be able to take part in the community activities according to their choices.

All people are respected for who they are and what they bring to the community. Opportunities are offered to all.

Everyone taking part or involved in something going on in the city.

That the community encourages people to be participant, contributing members of their community……I feel that "socially inclusive community" means that to be accepted and included regardless of circumstances.

Group of people with common interests working in harmony for a common purpose.

How do you hope to use your leadership skills to engage with older people in your community during or after the completion of the leadership program?

Some participants presented very specific ideas for project ideas that they sought to develop:

I want to increase awareness about the support services amongst the migrants and want to form network and work in partnership so services can be easily accessible for them.

Setting up art therapy workshop or programs, with appropriate grants from governments.

I wish to engage with others in an outreach program from my church base to isolated seniors in our community.

Other ideas for using leadership skills to engage with older people in the community expressed more general hopes that they could have an impact on the social connectedness of older people in the community:

I hope to be able to assist older people to voice their opinions and be active about the development of their neighbourhood.

Maintain a presence and line of communication, organise activities to suit various needs of community if possible.

I hope to lead the cultural and socially isolated old people to join the general community and feel socially included.

5.3. Implementation of the Community Leadership Program – Planners' Perspective

Sources of information: Project coordinator's structured journal and progress reports, Steering Committee workshop on the future of the Social Inclusion Initiative.

This section of the report presents the steering committee and project coordinators' perceptions of the success of the strategies implemented to achieve the objectives of the CLP. The project coordinator's structured journal was a primary resource in assessing the progress in achieving the objectives. Only limited editing of the project coordinator's responses was undertaken so as to preserve their intended meaning. As the structured journal was a reflective document, some variation in the quality of expression may be evident.

5.3.1. Objective 1 Strategies implemented to increase leadership skills of CLP participants

1. Community Leadership Program

Description: see Section 5.1 (including two-day Retreat, the ABCD workshop, the use of guest speakers and case studies)

What worked well?

The concepts (community leadership, the need for effective listening and feedback skills) presented at the retreat and at the beginning of the program were valuable.

At the retreat it was useful to have out-of-program time at the retreat was found to be useful for connecting and provided opportunities for the participants to learn more about each other.

The project co-coordinator reported that the strategies implemented by the CLP were successful in enhancing participants' listening and communication skills, their community networks, and confidence in their ability to be a leader.

Areas for improvement

The concepts presented during the retreat were not consciously developed or built on during the remainder of the program, although they were returned to in situations where group members indicated they needed support.

5.3.2. Objective 2 Strategies implemented to increase participants' knowledge and skills to undertake action research projects and improve social inclusion for groups of older people in the IEPCP catchment

1. ABCD Workshop

Description: A one-day ABCD Workshop was run by trainer Ted Smeaton at the beginning of the course. It introduced ABCD, which was the community development approach preferred by the Steering Committee.

What worked well?

Overheads, handouts and stories provided a good introduction to ABCD concepts.

Areas for improvement

The ABCD trainer could have modelled the strength-based approach by identifying strengths of individuals or groups to illustrate his teachings.

2. Developing community projects

Description: CLP participants were encouraged to develop their own community projects that focused on increasing social inclusion for older people, either in teams or individually. Participants were encouraged to use ABCD principles to develop their projects.

Time was provided in the afternoon of each session to report back on projects, seek feedback and for participants to have time in their teams and or with the community to further develop their projects.

In the morning, information relevant to the stage of project development or learning of the group was provided; e.g., project development, rules of engaging with community, creative problem solving, submission writing.

What worked well?

Participants had the opportunity to observe others and receive feedback and support from their peers.

Areas for improvement

A number of participants came in with a project idea, or projects already established and these were participant-driven as opposed to community-driven. Most of these projects have been taken up by the group.

3. Case studies

The regular presentation of case studies as researched and presented by participants provided opportunity for participants to hear about different local initiatives using action research principals that could be applied to increasing social inclusion for older people. An initial example provided by the facilitator provided leadership in how they could be presented and readings providing relevant case studies were provided as examples.

Areas for improvement

The use of case studies could have been enhanced by additional strategies such as visiting sites and hearing about initiatives directly. For example, the Neighbourhood Renewal area in Ashburton. An approach was made to residents of a Whitehorse public housing estate to hold a session there and for them to tell their stories, however residents declined the opportunity. Their decision was attributed to the lack of time provided to discuss the request as a group.

5.3.3. Objective 3 Strategies implemented to foster collaborative relationships and ongoing networks between service providers, community groups, businesses and citizens to support social inclusion for older people

1. Ministerial Launch

Description: The Hon. Peter Batchelor, Minister for Community Development, along with Patron Fred Chuah, launched the Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative on 26th November 2008 at Ashburton Support Services.

What worked well?

The launch created the opportunity for a range of community representatives to come together and connect around the common goal of social inclusion. Participation in the launch and endorsement of the Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative from people known in the community provided credibility and openings for the development of community connections.

Areas for improvement

Invitations to community groups did not provide sufficient time for them to raise the invitation at their meetings and generate a response. Although there was a strong community presence, allowing more time for community groups to respond to the invitation may have produced a stronger community response at the launch.

2. DVD Production

Description: A DVD was developed by the CLP project coordinator with assistance from a social work student who was a film producer. The DVD presents information about the CLP and about the nature of the Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative. It also included interviews with members of a range of community groups involved in social inclusion projects. The DVD was developed to assist in the recruitment process and to promote support of the CLP from community organisations and the business sector. The DVD was shown at the launch and used at a range of community presentations.

What worked well?

The process of making the DVD provided opportunities to establish strong and ongoing connections with community groups. This assisted the project in finding venues and guest listeners for the CLP.

Areas for improvement

The time spent developing the DVD may have been used better for recruitment purposes.

Use of the DVD with community groups was limited by time constraints and the availability of equipment.

3. Recruitment strategy

Description: The recruitment strategy aimed to promote the program widely across the community and to encourage expressions of interest from people from a broad range of backgrounds.

What worked well?

The recruitment strategy resulted in participants from diverse backgrounds. The strategy also resulted in the development of ongoing networks between CLP participants and between the project coordinator and a range of community groups.

Areas for improvement

There was some difficulty recruiting participants who lived in areas of identified disadvantage.

4. Rotation to different venues

The strategy of rotating the CLP sessions to different venues with introduction by host provided the opportunity for participants to familiarise themselves with different resources in the community and to meet key staff involved with community groups and services. This led to a number of participants using the spaces as part of their projects. For example, the use of the Clayton Community Pool facilities by the Mobilising Communities Group and establishment of a partnership between Strathdon Community and Whitehorse Library. It has also assisted in building the profile of the CLP in different sectors of the community which will foster future collaborative relationships.

Areas for improvement

There was a significant amount of time taken in organising each venue, however, it is anticipated that this will be reduced in future programs as venues can be re-booked with clearer expectations and processes in place.

5. Graduation

What worked well?

The graduation ceremony provided the opportunity for more than 30 different organizations to meet and network with participants who show cased their projects. The process of sending out invitations provided the opportunity to strengthen relationships with all who had expressed interest in the program.

5.3.4. Objective 4 Strategies implemented to develop a sustainable leadership program with private sector support for recruitment, marketing, volunteering and financial assistance

1. Development of a Communication Plan

Description: A communication plan was developed by the Steering Committee, PR officer and the Project coordinator.

What worked well?

The communication plan was implemented through out the program.

Areas for improvement

The communication plan was not developed early enough to encourage members of the working party to utilise and promote the course.

2. Securing funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

Description: This funding increased access of the program to community members.

What worked well?

Funding increased access to the program by community members.

5.3.5. Objective 5 To improve social inclusion for groups of older people in the Inner East Primary Care Partnership catchment.

At this stage, CLP participants have developed a number of community projects focused on reducing social isolation among older community members. Though these projects are at an early stage, initial indicators suggest that these projects will make a positive contribution towards improving social inclusion for older people in the Inner East Primary Care Partnership catchment. A follow-up outcome evaluation in the future would be a useful way to determine the effectiveness of the CLP projects in reducing social isolation.

5.4. Implementation of the CLP - Participants' Perceptions

Sources of information: Participant focus groups

There was a high degree of consensus among the CLP participants about useful aspects of the program. Participants' perceptions about useful and challenging aspects of the program are listed below.

What worked well?

Learning the principles of ABCD

Overall participants valued learning the principles of ABCD. They also noted that ABCD training contributed to how the group worked and opened up avenues for sharing:

ABCD concept/ strength-based community development. I love the concept. It changed my way of thinking a lot.

The ABCD training has assisted me to be more assertive about opportunities.

I think certainly having, you know, the training and the exposure to the principles and some of the examples and having Ted Smeaton come and speak was all very good, very positive.

It changed not only the way I do a project, but also the way that I look for a normal life and try not to forget people who are not good at something, but to look for their strength and build onto it.

Expansion of networks

The most useful aspect of the program was gaining many connections.

Networking: it was just great to belong to a group of like-minded people who think hard to help the community.

It's made me go out and do, made's probably the wrong word in there, but I've been out and done a lot of things, working around ...] I haven't done before. Gone and read a lot of people that are actually working out in the community and it's all sorts of different things. Childcare centres, community centres, the library, all sorts of different places I've been able to do a lot of networking which has been fantastic….

The retreat

The retreat was spoken of very favourably, in terms of creating a bond in the group, fostering learning, and generating enthusiasm for the course:

For me, okay this program started off very, very good with the first two days retreat with Gil, it was really very, it is an eye opener and it actually opened other doors or whatever.

I think starting with the setting; I think we were all shown a lot of respect. We were given, you know, a lot of, we all felt important and that was nice, it wasn't just that "Oh you stay there and we do this and that". There was a lot of care taken about everyone, everyone's, I think that really set the tone, that was fantastically done.

Time was well used. It was well-paced and it seemed to be able to pick everybody up, even though there were lots of levels of experience of being a community leader or learning to be.

Learning from guest speakers

- *Hearing from a range of people with experience in working in communities with isolated members. In particular some were very skilled at this task and at presenting.*

Challenging aspects of participating

Diversity of participants

Diversity of participants. My God just people from completely different backgrounds, different levels of whatever understanding, different value systems…

Expectations of the CLP

One participant commented on having a different impression about what would be involved in the program at the beginning:

My impression was that we were going to come together as a group and we would be learning skills and training et cetera, and that there were these, we would be working on a couple of projects as a group….. And it, you know, cause the idea was you'll come together, you'll do this training, we'll work on some projects as a group, then you've got the skills to go out into your community and work with your community to do what you see as the need.

Applying the ABCD model

Participants felt that starting from strengths was not always possible and that there were contradictions inherent in using the strength-based model, against a need-based approach:

I just think that when you do look for assets within the communities like when you are applying for grants, you do completely the opposite. You have to talk about the negatives within the community to get funding and then when you are at the start of the program, you are looking for the positives within the community to build that up and so it's completely the opposite.

So in a way, I questioned what is the need where we can on stressing onto what is the need and what is the advantage or disadvantage and why we are professing to that group and so we have to keep on finding the need, the disadvantage, before we actually look at the strength and what we can do. So in a way that is the tricky part about ABCD.

Some participants questioned the assumptions underlying ABCD and felt there was a balance between taking ideas to the community and being wholly directed by the community. Some felt useful

elements of ABCD could be picked up and used without adopting the whole model, thereby using their learning creatively:

> *…it might be something that has components of ABCD but then you've got to adapt your approach to the communities that you're working with.*

Participants noted that it might not have been realistic in the timeframe to learn the model and develop projects using it.

Participant felt pressure to develop an ABCD project, rather than any project with validity. Some found it personally challenging to develop projects and found it difficult to contact communities.

Participant recommended they select people based on having project ideas already.

Tension between developing leadership skills and delivering projects within the timeframe

> *…I felt the course was too long, but there was a question of what was the purpose of the course? Is it to build leadership or was it to deliver projects?*
>
> *My suggestion is to separate two things, which are developing leadership skills and another thing is to achieve community projects.*

Lack of direction and clarity

Participants comment on lack of direction in the course:

> *We floated for ages going, and the idea was not to be too directive in a schedule or a structure because I think the idea was to try and get us to drive what learning we felt we needed.*
>
> *I think the way the program was organised at the beginning, they did not know really what to do each day and because they sort of like to organically evolve, we were novices ourselves and that didn't work well. There should have been some direction and we lost time.*

Time demands

Some participants identified difficulties in fitting the CLP around personal commitments and found time away from other responsibilities difficult. They felt there was additional time outside of the course spent on projects that they had not been expecting.

Learning model

The program started from an adult education model and then imposed ideas about assessments and graduations that seemed to fit more with a school-based model.

5.5. Impact of the Community Leadership Program

5.5.1. Impact on attitudes about ageing and leadership

At the end of the CLP program, participants were asked to consider whether their views about ageing and leadership had changed since the start of the program. There was consensus that their views on these issues had not changed substantially, though they stated that if any change had taken place, they now had a more positive view of ageing.

Post-program Views on Ageing

The majority of participants retained similar ideas about an aged person as being someone between 65 to 75 years or more; however, there were more comments about physical and mental age being different. All participants expected to be involved and active into old age and many now included volunteering and community work as proposed activities when they were old. Interestingly, the few participants who expressed negative views around the factors that symbolised ageing of the mind, body, social roles and economic roles in the pre-program evaluation had adopted more positive views by the end of the program. For instance, one participant felt a characteristic of the mind in the pre-program questionnaire was to be closed-minded, but in the post-program evaluation this participant included knowledgeable as a characteristic. Another participant who listed aches and pains, low stamina, panting and lots of medication as characteristics of the body in ageing, now listed a simple life, high thinking and simple living as characteristics of the body.

Post-program Views on Leadership

About half of the participants included additional ideas about the qualities they admired in a leader. Most of these views centred on the ability to empower, organise and engage others, to listen and to take advantage of all the strengths in a group.

> *Ability to instil learning in others. Ability to engage people. Ability to pull things together.*
>
> *Able to facilitate a group, bringing the strengths out of the group, adding colours or increasing or building on strengths.*

What is a Community leader?

Selections of descriptions provided by participants of the characteristics of a community leader are shown below:

- Someone with real concerns
- Not a servant model of leadership
- Someone who shares leadership with a team
- Works with the people rather than for them

- Do not regard themselves a leader
- Being responsible and accountable, with a vision
- Someone prepared to make a sacrifice
- Sharing new ideas
- Someone who can bring about changes that will persist
- Being in the community
- Being a connector in the community
- Someone who can come up with an idea and make it useful and relevant
- Someone who has the capacity to take other people with them
- Someone who can dream, hold a vision and encourage others to share.

5.5.2. Impact on confidence as community leaders

> *For me I just think I just learned the power of conversation before running this program, I wasn't that confident because I used to work with a project community and I am quite comfortable working with that community, but I wasn't sure how to contact or how to communicate with other communities. So that is the most important thing that I learnt how to be with the community, the organisation and how to know everything and just show your respect towards them and they will let you know everything what actually their interests are.* [Focus group participant]

The post-program evaluation questionnaire included six items that measured participants' post-program confidence in various aspects of community leadership. Each quantitative item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *Strongly disagree* and 5 = *Strongly agree*. Table 5.3 shows the mean responses (and standard deviations) for the items measuring participant rating of achievement of objectives (ordered from highest to lowest mean), as well as the percentage of participants who rated each item as either 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Mean responses to the evaluation items were all within a very high range (4.0 and above).

The highest ratings were recorded for participants' confidence in being able to develop collaborative relationships and ongoing networks that would promote social inclusion and for their belief that the CLP had helped them to understand the benefits of social inclusion for older people. All participants felt confident about transferring what they had learnt to other members of their community and also felt confident about their ability to develop a community project promoting the social inclusion of older people. Most participants agreed that the CLP had improved their leadership skills and had increased their confidence to be a community leader.

Table 5.3: Means (and Standard Deviations) and Per cent Agreement for the Community Leadership Post-program Evaluation Quantitative Items

Evaluation Item	M	SD	Per cent Agreement
I am confident I will be able to develop collaborative relationships and ongoing networks with service providers, community groups, business and citizens that promote social inclusion of older people.	4.5	0.5	100.0
The CLP has helped me to improve my understanding of the benefits of social inclusion for older people.	4.5	0.5	100.0
I am confident I will be able to transfer what I have learnt to other members of my community.	4.3	0.5	100.0
I am confident I will be able to develop a community project aimed at improving social inclusion of older people in your community.	4.2	0.7	86.6
The CLP has helped me to improve my leadership skills	4.0	0.5	86.6
The CLP has helped me to increase my confidence to be a community leader	4.0	0.7	80.0

5.5.3. Impact on leadership skills and personal growth

Sources of information: Participant evaluation

Many participants identified growth in effective listening and communication as skills acquired through the leadership program. Skills that enabled them to identify and mobilise community assets, such as networking, negotiating and consultation, were also cited. Some participants noted that they had experienced personal developments in terms of enhanced confidence, empowerment and the growth of initiative. Others felt that they had developed increased sensitivity and awareness when working with diverse community groups. One participant did not believe they had developed any skills from participating in the program.

> *I feel more empowered about different ways and means of engaging the community and to listen more to their needs.*

> *Effective listening and communication skills. Being able to reflect the whole groups' or communities' thoughts and less imposition of own thoughts and beliefs.*

5.6. Satisfaction with the CLP

CLP participants responded anonymously to a quantitative survey assessing agreement with 18 items which drew on themes that emerged from the group discussion (the complete questionnaire is included in Appendix 4). Each item on the questionnaire was measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *Strongly disagree* and 5 = *Strongly agree*. Participants also rated on a 5-point scale (where 1 = *Very dissatisfied* and 5 = *Very Satisfied*) their overall satisfaction with the course as a whole and with their achievements in the course. Seventeen completed questionnaires (85% response rate) were returned by participants. Table 5.4 shows the mean responses (and standard deviations) for the items, as well as the percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed on each item (defined as percentage agreement). Items are ordered from highest to lowest mean response.

Responses to the evaluation items can be grouped approximately into those with very high (4.0 and above), high (3.6 to 3.9), moderate (3.0 to 3.5) and low (2.9 and below) mean responses.

The highest rating was recorded for participants' evaluation that the CLP had encouraged them to think more broadly about community development. Participants also felt strongly that their experience in the course had contributed to their networking skills and knowledge of ABCD.

Participants gave high ratings for items assessing the course as interesting, a positive experience and contributing to personal development. They also felt that all group members were encouraged to participate actively. High ratings were also recorded by participants for the belief that the CLP had contributed to their ability to develop community projects. Participants felt that the course was well-presented, well-organised, personally fulfilling and contributed to their professional development and leadership skills.

Participants recorded moderate ratings for receiving support to plan their project and for the degree to which the CLP helped to develop their project. Participants also gave moderate ratings for receiving feedback about their progress during the CLP and for being helped to learn effectively.

Participants gave low ratings for the item that assessed whether the CLP had clear goals.

Table 5.4: Means (and Standard Deviations) and Per cent Agreement for the Community Leadership Questionnaire

Evaluation Item	M	SD	Per cent Agreement
The CLP helped me think more broadly about community development	4.4	0.8	94.2
My experience in the CLP contributed to my networking skills	4.1	0.7	76.5
My experience in the CLP contributed to my knowledge of Asset Based Community Development	4.1	0.7	88.2
The CLP was a positive experience for me	3.9	1.1	76.5
During the CLP all group members were encouraged to participate actively	3.9	1.1	70.6
My experience in the CLP contributed to my personal development	3.9	0.9	82.3
The CLP stimulated my interest	3.8	1.0	70.5
The CLP was well-presented	3.7	0.8	70.6
My experience in the CLP contributed to my ability to develop community projects	3.6	1.1	64.7
The CLP was well-organised	3.6	1.3	64.7
My experience in the CLP contributed to my professional development	3.6	1.0	68.8
The CLP was personally fulfilling	3.6	1.2	64.7
My experience in the CLP contributed to my leadership skills	3.6	1.0	64.7
During the CLP I received support to plan my project	3.4	1.1	47.0
The CLP helped me to develop my project	3.3	1.1	58.8
During the CLP I received feedback about my progress	3.3	1.1	47.1
During the CLP I was helped to learn effectively	3.2	0.9	47.1
The CLP had clear goals	2.9	1.3	41.2

Table 5.5 shows the mean responses (and standard deviations) for the items measuring overall satisfaction, as well as the percentage of participants who responded satisfied or very satisfied on each item (defined as percentage satisfied).

Participants gave moderate ratings to both their satisfaction with the course as a whole and their satisfaction with their achievements in the course.

Table 5.5: Means (and Standard Deviations) and Per cent Agreement for the Overall Satisfaction Items on the Community Leadership Questionnaire

The Community Leadership Program Overall:	M	SD	Per cent Satisfied
How satisfied are you with the course as a whole?	3.4	1.1	53.0
How satisfied are you with your achievements in the course overall?	3.5	1.1	47.0

Contributors to overall satisfaction

The questionnaire data was analysed to determine those items that were key contributors to participants' sense of overall satisfaction with (a) the course and (b) their achievements during the course. Figure 5.1 shows only the items that had a strong relationship with overall satisfaction. The items most closely related to overall satisfaction with the course and with personal achievements are the boxes that lie closest to the spheres representing course and personal satisfaction (a stronger relationship is indicated by darker shading of the box and by a thicker directional arrow between the item and satisfaction). Boxes that are further away from the spheres and connected with a thinner directional arrow are less strongly related to satisfaction.

The value in this description of the data is the additional information it provides over and above the data in Tables 5.4 and 5.5. It shows that different items contribute to the participant's sense of satisfaction with the course and with their personal achievements. For instance, belief that the course contributed to their personal development, that the course helped to develop their project, that support was available to plan their project and that the course was personally fulfilling were likely to lead to a sense of satisfaction with the course. However, receiving support to plan their project was the most significant influence on overall satisfaction with personal achievements.

It is also possible to identify those items where specific improvements could be implemented that may increase satisfaction. For instance, increasing the level of structured support around planning and further developing participants' projects may be one strategy that would enhance participants' overall satisfaction.

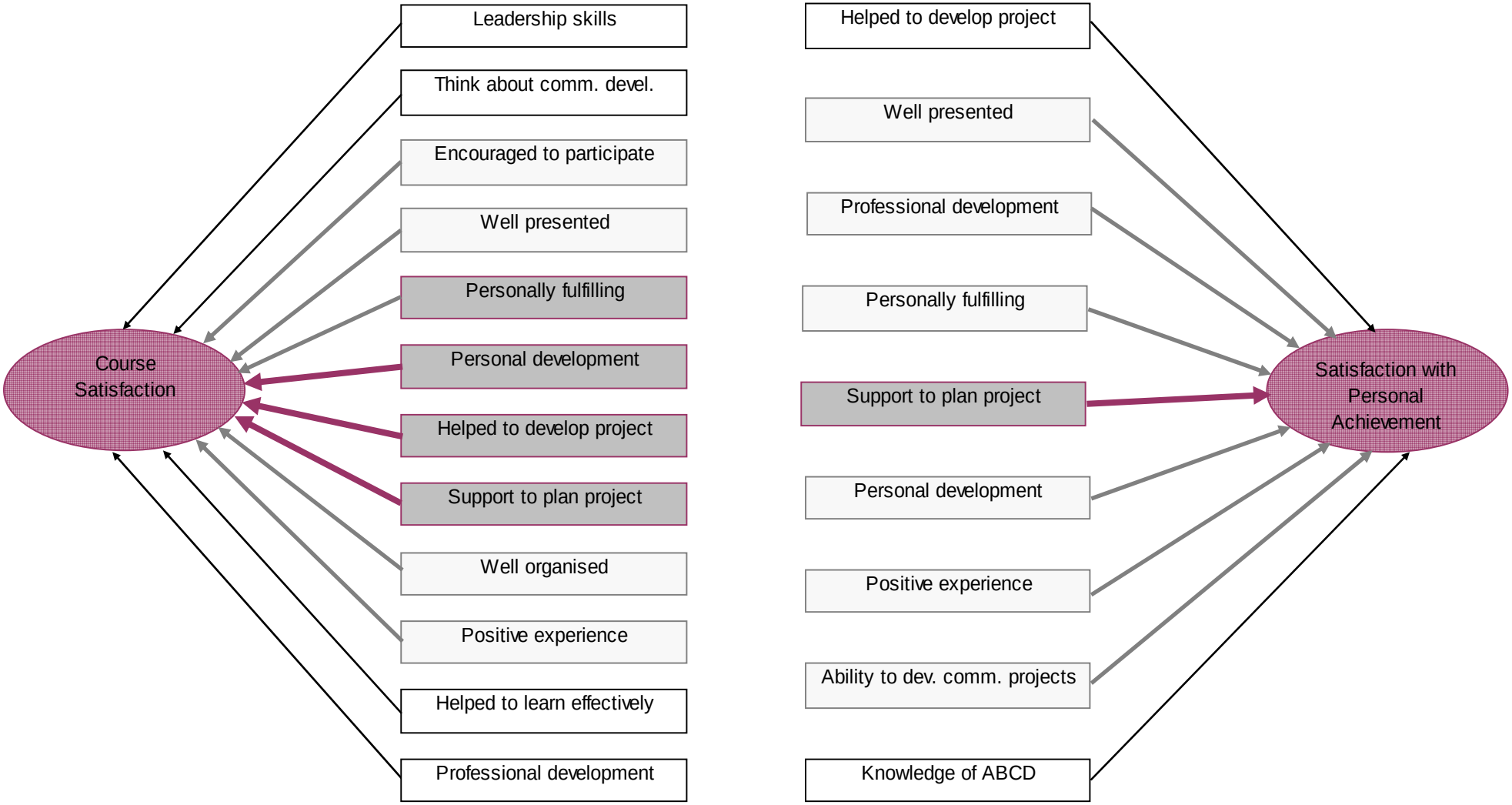

Figure 5.1: Key influences on overall satisfaction with the course and with personal achievements

5.7. Community Leadership Program Outputs

Table 5.6 lists the projects developed through the course of the CLP. The table lists the project titles, briefly describes their purpose and includes the key learnings nominated by the participants. This information is taken from a PowerPoint presentation developed by the CLP facilitator for the graduation ceremony.

Table 5.6: List of projects undertaken by Community Leadership Program participants

Project Title	Project Description	Key learning
Broadband for Seniors	Residents and non-residents of Strathdon Community learning to use the internet and how to communicate by email to friends and family	Working in a multicultural group, Valuing my personal resources and applying my capabilities Dedication and cohesion of group
Community Connector	Making connections with the truly isolated by delivering information pamphlets to their homes or places they need to visit	Increased knowledge of community programs Additional networking skills Increased opportunities to make things work
Mobilising Cambodian Communities	Increase access to community life for senior Cambodians in the Inner East	Working with the community Reaching out to the community Building consensus in a diverse group
Building families	To bring together older Boroondara residents and young parents with their children for support, skills exchange and friendship	To be open to new ideas, to be challenged and learn from unfamiliar situations, to openly share skills and knowledge Sharing ideas, getting out into the community, learning from the group
A cross-cultural U3A in Deepdene	The establishment of a new U3A in Deepdene with a focus on the strengths and interests of the target groups of Koreans across the Eastern suburbs and seniors in the Northern region of Boroondara	Causes of isolation in the community, benefits of working in cross-cultural contexts, official support for programs with seniors
Growing local	To revitalise church grounds and create an intergenerational community garden	Appreciation of diversity as a strength Vision is great but connected action opens doors Time management is important Don't be afraid to ask – communication is the key

Table 5.6 continued: List of projects undertaken by Community Leadership Program participants

Project Title	Project Description	Key learning
Holistic approach to health and wellbeing	Working with older people to develop a more holistic approach to health and positive ageing	Better understanding of ABCD principles Expansion of community networks
Connecting Us	Improve the mental health status of the Chinese elderly living in the City of Monash by increasing their social connectedness and support	Being positive, focusing on strengths, working for the community; listening to what they say Sharing and accepting new ideas, learning when to let go of the project, being more confident, improving decision-making
Men's kitchen	Establish a community kitchen where men at risk of social isolation can learn to prepare nutritious meals in a social environment	ABCD techniques, community engagement, leadership principles Seeing the world from another perspective, enhanced listening skills, ABCD principles Key ideas of ABCD, important leadership skills, listening and conversing Affirmation of positives as an attitude, amazing variety of skills of seniors, resources in our own training group Power of conversation, developed vision to see assets, a strength-based approach

5.8. Lessons Learned About Implementation - Areas for improvement

Sources of information: Project coordinator's structured journal and progress reports, Steering Committee workshop on the future of the Social Inclusion Initiative, CLP participant data

5.8.1. Recruitment strategy

Allow more time for identifying potential participants and be even more proactive in recruiting from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Clarify to participants the significant time commitment involved in the project, the expectations of them in undertaking the program and assess seriously their ability to commit to the program.

5.8.2. Ministerial launch

Leveraging from the success of the launch, ongoing promotion of the project's progress and achievements would keep the project visible.

5.8.3. DVD

Be more creative in ways DVD could promote program.

5.8.4. ABCD workshop

Increase ABCD training to two days to enable opportunities to try out some ABCD techniques.

Provide ABCD readings prior to the program.

Provide more real life examples of ABCD in the community.

5.8.5. Developing leadership skills

Focus on developing leadership skills that were worked on during the two-day retreat as a constant theme throughout the course (e.g., ongoing exercises to keep listening, feedback skills, leadership skills).

5.8.6. CLP course structure

Begin the program with a clear course schedule.

Start projects earlier; introduce a framework for keeping records early in the course and set clear and reasonable expectations for what can be achieved in the timeframe.

Provide more opportunities for participants to practice their skills through working on projects.

5.8.7. Developing community projects

Provide more structure to the process of developing community projects (e.g., begin by bringing in community groups so that participants can practice establishing connections).

Establish more theoretical structure around different models of community development accompanied by a reading guide. Devote some class time to discussing readings.

Link the participants' ideas for community projects with the theoretical models being taught.

Explore the tension between participant-initiated versus community driven projects.

Provide a project template for completing each session and follow the progress of each session.

Integrate structured support for developing projects into the curriculum.

Allow time for regular reporting and feedback on the progress of projects.

5.8.8. Communication plan

- Establish the communication plan at the start of the program noting key priorities, including deadline dates for key publications etc. and a large group of people to publicise the program.

5.8.9. Ongoing advice, support and information on accessing resources/how to attract funding

Provide participants with a mentor and establish a forum for continued contact with the CLP participant group (e.g., internet group, an email bulletin).

Collate information on how to tap into resources as a guide for participants.

5.9. Discussion - Community Leadership Program

The project achievements, the strategies implemented by the CLP to achieve the project's stated objectives and the recommendations emerging from the evaluation findings are discussed below.

5.9.1. Project achievements

> *For me I just think I just learned the power of conversation before running this program, I wasn't that confident because I used to work with a project community and I am quite comfortable working with that community, but I wasn't sure how to contact or how to communicate with other communities. So that is the most important thing that I learnt how to be with the community, the organisation and how to know everything and just show your respect towards them and they will let you know everything what actually their interests are.* [CLP focus group participant]

The CLP successfully recruited a broad range of community participants to undertake leadership training to improve their capacity to develop community projects to enhance social inclusion. Through participating in the course, participants felt their confidence to develop community projects had increased; they gained valuable networks and experience in community consultation. Twenty participants successfully completed the training and a number of community projects (see Table 5.6) have resulted from the course that show promise in improving social inclusion for selected communities. The evaluation found the CLP course was a successful way of developing community leaders who have begun to address the important issue of social inclusion in their communities.

5.9.2. Success of strategies to address project objectives

Objective 1: To increase leadership skills of community members participating in the Leadership Training Program

Objective 2: To increase participants' knowledge and skills to undertake action research projects and improve social inclusion for groups of older people in the IEPCP catchment

The key strategy implemented to achieve Objectives 1 and 2 was the Community Leadership Program. The main components of the CLP were: a two-day retreat, a one-day ABCD workshop, bi-monthly training sessions based on an adult learning approach, case studies, guest lecturers, guest listeners, and supporting CLP participants to develop community projects.

The two-day retreat was consistently identified as a highly regarded aspect of the course by both the participants and the other stakeholders. The evaluation findings indicated that the CLP promoted positive leadership skills among participants, created a high degree of enthusiasm for the course, and enhanced the connections among group members. Participants nominated the retreat as a major success of the course, providing a framework and strengthening bonds in the group.

Overall, CLP participants felt that the CLP had helped improve their leadership skills (e.g., effective listening and communication, networking and the ability to identify and mobilise community assets) and also increased their knowledge of ABCD. CLP participants saw the opportunity to observe and obtain the feedback and support from those in the group as an aspect of the strategy that worked well. All participants felt confident in their ability to develop collaborative relationships and ongoing networks. CLP participants identified the networks established and expanded, both within the group and in the wider community, as useful aspects of the program. They reported increased confidence in contacting communities, going and trying things they had not attempted before and greater awareness of community resources. CLP participants sought increased opportunities to practise establishing connections with communities at the beginning of the course.

Most CLP participants felt that the CLP had increased their confidence in their ability to develop a community project designed to improve social inclusion. Through attending the course, CLP participants successfully developed their own community projects focussed on enhancing social inclusion for specific groups. Through developing community projects using ABCD principles, CLP participants had the opportunity to engage with community members, which increased their confidence in approaching community members in the future.

CLP participants identified a tension between competing aims of the program; the course endeavoured to equip participants with skills and also have projects as an outcome. Participants sought clarity about whether the CLP supported existing projects (or ideas for projects) that did not necessarily fit the ABCD model. Some participants wanted greater opportunities to practise the skills they had

acquired in undertaking project work and many felt that the course needed to allow more time for project work.

Analysis of participants' views related to satisfaction with the course and with personal achievement during the course revealed some key factors that could be addressed to improve satisfaction. For instance, the degree to which participants believed they were helped to plan a project and then supported to develop their project were key factors in satisfaction. The evaluation findings suggest that building in targeted support (e.g., from external mentors), clarifying expectations at the start of the course and enhancing support for participants to get projects under way are likely to improve outcomes for future CLP participants.

Objective 3: Strategies implemented to foster collaborative relationships and ongoing networks between service providers, community groups, businesses and citizens to support social inclusion for older people

The two key strategies to achieve Objective 3 were 1) the promotion strategy (including: the Ministerial Launch, DVD production, rotation of the CLP sessions to different venues, and the graduation ceremony) and 2) the recruitment strategy.

The Ministerial Launch was a successful method for promoting the project, generating community interest and support, and fostering community connections. The graduation ceremony provided the opportunity for further promotion of the project and development of networks for CLP participants. Project planners reflected that time allocated to developing the DVD might be better spent in ongoing promotion of the program and in recruitment. They also suggested that in future the communication plan should be developed prior to commencement of the program so it can be used to guide the activities of the working party. Project planners also identified the need for more intensive ongoing promotion and reporting on the achievements of program participants as the course is delivered.

The recruitment process for the CLP was successful in recruiting a diverse range of participants, with high levels of interest and commitment in undertaking the leadership course. The CLP was successful in recruiting a broad range of future community leaders representing each of the municipalities of Boorondara, Manningham, Monash and Whitehorse. The successful applicants represented a wide range of ages, ethnicities, social and professional roles, and levels of experience in community work. The diversity of applicants encouraged the development of connections between CLP participants, the CLP project coordinator and community groups.

Some difficulties were experienced in identifying individuals from within the targeted areas of disadvantage. The key factor of time is likely to play a role in the process, with longer and more intense searches potentially yielding suitable candidates. Recruiting professionals working in disadvantaged areas represents a partial solution, but may make establishing contacts with the

communities more challenging, especially if communities perceive these individuals as attempting to impose external leadership.

Objective 4: Strategies implemented to develop a sustainable leadership program with private sector support for recruitment, marketing, volunteering and financial assistance

The two key strategies to achieve Objective 4 were the development of a communication plan and securing funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. Funding secured from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust increased access to the program by community members.

Objective 5: To improve social inclusion for groups of older people in the Inner East Primary Care Partnership catchment.

The key strategy to achieve Objective 5 was the development of community projects. At this stage, CLP participants have developed a number of community projects focused on reducing social isolation among older community members. Though these projects are at an early stage, initial indicators suggest that they will make a positive contribution towards improving social inclusion for older people in the IEPCP catchment. A follow-up outcome evaluation in the future would be a useful way to determine the effectiveness of the CLP projects in reducing social isolation.

5.9.3. Recommendations resulting from the Community Leadership Program

Recommendations for the CLP

1. Retain the intensive two-day retreat in order to enhance the cohesion of a very diverse group and introduce the leadership skills that will be built on throughout the course.
2. Retain aspects of the course that participants found useful, such as the ABCD workshop, case studies and guest listeners.
3. Include formal training in additional skills (such as conflict management, presentation skills, training in group dynamics) and research methodologies (e.g., interviewing skills, running focus groups, developing surveys).
4. Provide participants with a complete course outline at the beginning of the course, including clear statements of CLP goals and expectations of the participants, a structured curriculum (based on findings from the first CLP) and program timelines.
5. Provide a range of structured opportunities in the first few months of the CLP to practise ABCD methodology. Opportunities could include:
    - Developing an in-house project that serves as a model for the CLP group.

- One or two sessions with representatives from established community groups to enable CLP participants to practise leadership skills such as connecting with communities and determining community assets and strengths.

8. Reinforce the skills introduced during the retreat throughout the course.
9. Introduce a structured approach to the use of readings.

Recommendations for developing community projects

1. Plan to have project ideas formalised early in the course.
2. Increase the amount of time dedicated to project work (e.g., allocate one day per month for CLP participants to work on their community projects and build in formal project progress updates into the curriculum).
3. Recruit project mentors who will act as informal guides to participants in developing their projects. Mentors might meet monthly with project group members during the planning and implementation stages to discuss ideas, air concerns and report on progress.
4. Contact CLP participants six months, then again in 12 months after they complete the course to gain updates on their continuing involvement in projects.

Recommendations for recruiting CLP participants

1. Invest sufficient time to recruit individuals who live in the communities of interest.

Recommendations about the Asset Based Community Development approach

1. Retain the focus on ABCD as an approach taught to participants, with the possibility that other approaches might also be considered.

2. Clarify whether projects must adhere to the principles of ABCD from the outset, or whether projects can use a modified approach.

6. Evaluation of the Mobilising Communities Project

6.1. About the Mobilising Communities Project

The aim of the Mobilising Communities project was to work with the small Cambodian community in the Inner East region of Melbourne to assist them to identify and develop community assets to promote social inclusion (See Appendix B for a full description). The project spanned a period of 12 months, during which the project coordinator, with the assistance of a Cambodian volunteer leader and the support of the Migrant Information Centre (MIC), built relationships with older people in the Cambodian community and initiated community activities. A number of successful one-off events were organised, as well as regular activities (see Table 6.1). The process of initiating contact with the Cambodian community was challenging, but was aided by the Cambodian Welfare Association. The involvement of the Cambodian community leader identified was a critical factor in the outcomes achieved in this project.

6.1.1. About the Mobilising Communities Activities

Table 6.1 lists the outings organised as part of the Mobilising Communities project over a nine-month period. The number of participants at each outing ranged from 25 to 53 older Cambodian people. The project also succeeded in organising 16 weekly water aerobics sessions attended by 12 to 18 participants each week.

The project coordinator reported that by the end of the project:

- The group was investigating the possibility of organising ballroom dancing lessons in the Clayton area.
- Strength training was being organised through Monashlink (to commence late 2009 or early 2010).
- The group had identified Kerrie Neighbourhood house as a venue for regular meetings.
- Two group members had approached the project coordinator about building their leadership skills with a view to preparing for leadership roles in the group in future.

Table 6.1: List of Mobilising Communities Activities

Activity	Number of participants
State Rose Garden	51
Melbourne Botanical Gardens	27
Blue Lotus Farm in Yarra Glen	53
Khmer New Year Celebration	26
Multicultural Buddhist Festival at Federation Square	35
Tourist tram tour of Melbourne CBD	25
Weekly water aerobics (16 weeks) followed by shared lunch	12–18

6.1.2. About the Mobilising Communities participants

The majority of the participants in the Mobilising Communities project are survivors from the Cambodian genocide (1975 – 1978) and have particular experiences and challenges associated with being survivors of traumatic events. They include a wide age-range (50 years to more than 80 years) and mix of ancestry and religion. Overall, they had low fluency in English and did not share one common language (participants' languages included Khmer, Mandarin and Cantonese). Some have recently migrated to Australia and others have been in the country more than 30 years. See Table 6.2 for a list of the characteristics (age and gender) of the participants who attended the first Mobilising Communities outing.

Table 6.2: Characteristics of Participants Attending First Mobilising Communities Outing

Characteristic	Number
Gender	
Men	16
Women	35
Age group	
50-60	12
61-70	26
71-80	11
81+	2
Total number	51

6.2. Implementation of the Mobilising Communities project

Sources of information: Project coordinator's structured journal, observations and progress reports.

This section of the report provides a description of the strategies implemented to achieve project objectives and the project working group and project coordinator's perceptions of the success of these strategies. The project coordinator's structured journal was a primary resource in assessing progress in achieving the objectives. Only limited editing of the project coordinator's responses was undertaken so as to preserve their intended meaning. As the structured journal was a reflective document, some variation in the quality of expression may be evident.

6.2.1. Objective 1 Strategies implemented to examine the causes and impact of social isolation with the older Cambodian community; their strengths and resources

1. Establish relationships with older community members and leaders

Description:

The project coordinator attended community functions and celebrations.

Various Khmer group meetings were utilised as a platform to engage the community.

Group activities were initiated (excursions and weekly water aerobics followed by a shared lunch).

Participants were engaged in group decisions about future activities.

What worked well?

Gathering information informally after group activities when everyone was together and relaxed enough to share information.

It worked well for the project coordinator to spend time speaking with group participants every week.

The project coordinator had a transparent approach to information sharing with community volunteers. As volunteers understood the process and the parameters of the project, they developed a stronger sense of ownership, motivation to participate and trust of the project coordinator and the MIC.

Areas for improvement

Trying to explain the project and recruit volunteers by phone.

The use of bilingual promotional materials to promote the project. Many community members either can not read or will not bother to pick up these materials.

2. Develop engagement strategies

Description:

Explore the community at each outing or activity.

Develop familiarity with key resources and issues.

What worked well?

Utilising community members and volunteers to facilitate discussions.

Gathering anecdotal information from community organisations and leaders.

Taking time to build trust with participants.

Altering the work plan as required.

Areas for improvement

Short timeframes to gather information.

Implementing the ABCD approach with this group was difficult. The group was much more able to identify weaknesses than strengths.

3. Recruit and train younger Cambodians as volunteer field assistants to implement engagement strategies

Description:

The project was promoted widely to generate interest.

The primary volunteer, who ran the activities with the project coordinator and support from four participants, was located through neighbourhood house contacts.

What worked well?

Listening to the advice and community feedback given by the volunteers that would not have been discussed in a formal group discussion.

The volunteer was resistant to formalise her role as a volunteer with the MIC. Keeping things as informal as possible helped to keep up her participation in the project.

Areas for improvement

The use of structured engagement strategies did not work as well as hoped.

It was difficult to engage with 'young' volunteers – however the main volunteer is younger than most of the participants.

4. Explore potential for developing an oral and written history of Cambodian refugee, migrant and resettlement experiences

Description:

The strategy of bringing the community together around gathering their stories to identify and acknowledge the challenges experienced and to celebrate the strengths and accomplishments was explored by the project coordinator and the community volunteer.

What worked well?

Initially the project coordinator discussed the objective and different mediums which could be used to present the history with the volunteers, showed them written examples and DVD's. Once they had a thorough understanding the volunteers presented this to the group. Over a period of 2 months (in the early stage of the project) this was presented to the group in a variety of ways but they decided that they did not want to share their history.

Areas for improvement

The project did not achieve a collection of community stories. It was felt that there may have been interest in this strategy if the discussion had started at a later stage in the development of the project.

5. Research evidence on use of oral histories for strengthening marginalised communities and develop a best practice model

Description:

As part of this strategy, consultations were undertaken with Villa Maria, La Trobe/ Foundation House, Alzheimer's Australia, Infoxchange, Uniting Aged Care Community Options, the Australian Centre for Moving Image (ACMI) and the Immigration Museum. Literature on the topic was also examined.

What worked well?

Discussion with key experts from the above organisations about their experiences with digital storytelling in regards to cost, planning and editing was useful for developing a future strategy.

6.2.2. Objective2 and Objective 3 Strategies implemented to:

a) provide opportunities for community participation in planning and decision-making to improve community connectedness;

b) work with community members to develop strategies/activities to improve their opportunities for participation in community life.

1. Facilitate regular community gatherings around cultural activities and food

Description:

- Celebrate and participate in/ with the Khmer community in the Inner East
- Monthly one-off outings (see Table 8)
- Weekly ongoing activities (water aerobics)

What worked well?

Weekly water aerobics allowed for continued relationship development, regular contact and consultation and over time the group felt strong ownership of this activity (as the fee subsidising stopped). This is when ownership of the project began. Group members took ownership of the project and activities through arranging car pooling, contacting other participants and organising lunch.

Part of the success of the strategy was having the group choose the activities and using venues in Monash and Whitehorse.

Areas for improvement

Participants have dropped off over time and it is difficult to contact them as we have not got full contact details.

2. Exploring community assets through group discussions

Description:

At activities, the group broke into sub-groups and discussed their assets and those of the community as a whole. This was facilitated by the volunteer and bi-lingual participants. As a result an assets map was developed.

What worked well

Discussing community assets with the community leaders and presenting the information to the whole group was an effective strategy.

Areas for improvement

There were some difficult concepts for the community to understand, such as ‘community’, and discussing strengths rather than weaknesses.

3. Explore other opportunities for participation in planning and decision-making with the community

Description:

- Regular group discussions aimed at achieving a democratic decision-making process.
- Discussing individual ideas with the larger group.
- Connect individuals, institutions and systems with common values and goals.
- Promoting personal initiative and validating skills aimed at promoting independence and decision-making/ ownership.

What worked well

Taking time to work with the group and build trust and demonstrate to them that the project coordinator has heard their decision and supports it.

Areas for improvement

Generating ideas from the group was difficult.

6.2.3. Objective 4 Strategies to develop the skills and confidence of natural leaders to facilitate participatory (community-based) action research and advocacy

1. Identify natural leaders and facilitate identification of community assets and activities to increase participation in community life

Description:

Natural leaders shared the skills, abilities and talents that they could contribute. They also identified the interests they would like to pursue to promote social inclusion in the Khmer community

The volunteer (natural leader) participated in the CLP and used the skills she learnt to encourage other members in the group to take a leadership role (e.g., promote the project, recruit new [isolated] community members for the group, share ideas for future funding ideas and help organise activities for the group).

What worked well?

The volunteer's commitment to the Mobilising Communities project strengthened by participation in the Community Leadership Program (CLP) as well as her knowledge of services and organisations in the local area and her understanding of ABCD.

Areas for improvement

The group were motivated to act and participate in activities due to the encouragement of the volunteer, but not motivated enough to act and commit further to supporting the organisation of a group.

In addition to the time spent working on this project the volunteer had to attend fortnightly classes and complete homework for this course. This caused her to be exhausted and withdraw from both projects at times.

2. Support leadership training of natural leaders

Description:

Supporting one community volunteer with her participation in the CLP

Supporting the volunteer (with her leadership group) to organise two outings for the Cambodian group.

What worked well

In organising the activities the volunteer gained experience in ABCD, researching activities/ service providers and services available in the target areas for her community. She also gained confidence in her ability to organise and conduct outings with community groups.

Areas for improvement

Managing the dynamics of the leadership group required a lot of the project coordinator's time.

3. Develop participative action research projects with leaders to address barriers to social inclusion

Description:

Support and motivate leaders.

Encourage learning through experience.

What worked well?

Sharing information from the Mobilising Communities project with the leadership group.

The leadership group using regular Mobilising Communities meetings as a way to engage with the community.

Areas for improvement

Lack of follow-up with the leadership group; their participation ceased when their course ceased.

4. Engage with relevant agencies to implement strategies of participatory action research, including project working group

Description:

Bi-monthly updates to working group on progress of the Mobilising Communities project and the CLP group's project.

MIC, City of Monash and Whitehorse Community Health Services regularly shared ideas and contacts to support the action research.

Neighbourhood houses identified (and pledged support) to work with the Cambodian seniors group and support them to become sustainable.

Support from Monash Aquatic Centre and Monashlink for reduced cost activities and offering a service tour of their facility.

What worked well?

Connecting the group with Monashlink and the aquatic centre was successful. Both organisations have offered continued support of the group. All the group members are confident travelling to and using the services provided at these venues.

Connecting the group with a neighbourhood house has given them the opportunity to have a regular meeting place and the potential to join in with current activities/ groups.

Areas for improvement

Over time there was a drop off in the involvement of working group which resulted in less support to MIC and the project coordinator to carry out the strategies of the research.

Finding organisations to link the group to within the locations they nominated, which also aligned with the project geographical barriers.

5. Provide training for natural leaders and community members enhancing other skills development as required

Description:

The language barrier made it impossible for most of the group to participate in the CLP as the training was not offered in their spoken language. Interpreting and translated materials were not offered; in

any case, many members of this group are unable to read and write Khmer so this would not have eliminated the barrier.

To overcome this, volunteers were trained informally by visiting and speaking with leaders from local seniors' groups and through group discussions with the Project coordinator and the community volunteer participating in the leadership course. The strategies included:

Develop learning tool of the ABCD approach/ PAR.

Conduct training sessions with leaders.

ABCD information package developed for initial volunteers and discussions with each.

The Project coordinator spent time taking the natural leaders to visit the Lao Elderly Association Planned Activity Group (PAG) to give them the opportunity to observe and discuss how the group is run with the Lao group leaders.

What worked well?

The volunteers had hard copies of the ABCD theory to refer to as needed.

Connecting the leaders with leaders from the Laos group was an effective way for the Cambodians to learn informally.

Areas for improvement?

Engaging the volunteers to participate in ABCD training was less successful.

The following defining moments in the life of the project were provided by the MIC.

6.3. Project-Defining Moments

Month	Defining moment
2 – 3	Initiating contact with Cambodian community members in the target areas.
2	Meeting the primary community volunteer.
3	Supporting the community volunteer to enrol in the CLP.
6	Taking three group members to visit Lao PAG to ask questions and get a vision for their group.
7 – 12	Weekly water aerobics and shared lunch.

9 – 12	Working with volunteers to identify a regular meeting place and write funding applications.
12	A formalised leadership structure for the group was determined by the group. They have voted in a committee of leaders based upon their strengths (i.e., computer skills). The project coordinator worked with the committee to develop an engagement strategy for an additional nine months.

6.4. Impact of the Mobilising Communities Project on Participants' Lives

Source of data: Participants in Mobilising Communities activities

A group discussion was held in the final week of the funding with 15 participants who undertook activities organised through the Mobilising Communities project. The group discussion was conducted with the aid of two translators (Khmer and Mandarin). When participants were asked by the evaluator where they had heard about the project, the participants knew little of the project and wished to have it explained to them.

The impact of being involved in the group was described extremely positively by all group members. They described the happiness they felt at being part of a group that allowed them to feel a part of the community. They cited positive health benefits from participating in the social activities and from the exercise involved:

> *I love this activity because exercise makes me feel better*
>
> *Talking to each other makes me feel young and happy. Before this group I was taking 8 pain medication tablets per day, now I do not take anything. This is because of the exercise and meeting with my friends to laugh.*
>
> *My experience is we all like the group and outings. I feel well and have reduced pain after swimming.*

Many participants described the way in which participating in the activities had addressed the social isolation they had felt previously:

> *It is good to have a group. For the last 20 years I can't meet my friends like this. When I am home I am alone, I never meet people from outside. Here I share my ideas.*
>
> *I am happy and proud to be part of the group. I did not want to be involved with a crowd and enjoy life because I have been through so much. Because of the information and support I gave it a chance. I joined the group. Since I have been involved I see the amazing and important things that have changed my life. I can't wait to join this group every week, I look forward to it. I want to be part of this group – it is a new life for me. I am nearly 70 years old, but now I feel 50 years old. The group makes me feel young. I feel that there is a bright future for me now; I won't get bored with my life. If this project continues it will help my transition to old age.*

The participants described their enjoyment at having the opportunity to meet with friends and make social connections:

> *I like to make friends. I have not been in Australia for very long. I especially like swimming because it makes me feel healthy. The activities make me happier.*

I feel like part of the community.

6.5. Lessons Learned About Implementation – Areas for improvement

Sources of information: Project coordinator's structured journal and progress reports

6.5.1. Promoting the project

Having the volunteers (and others) speak to community organisations in a more organised way would allow for better coverage.

Khmer radio could be used to promote the project.

The project coordinator, who began re-visiting community groups towards the end of the project period, suggested starting this process earlier.

6.5.2. Developing group leadership

More time is needed to recruit and train volunteers.

More time is needed to observe and encourage natural leaders to take a leadership role in the group.

The leadership group should be encouraged to try to reach more seniors (not simply utilise group members).

6.5.3. Developing the cohesion of the group

Allow for more time to develop relationships before trying to gather and map information/ assets and use a more formalised setting/ approach.

Take the time to re-present information gathered from the group (to the group) to ensure group leaders and members are talking about the same thing.

Spend more time building the group's capacity to search for information themselves (e.g., search the internet for group's statistics).

6.5.4. Exploring community assets and opportunities for participation in planning and decision-making

Work in smaller groups

Spend more time discussing assets with the volunteer community leaders.

Take more time explaining the ABCD approach with the volunteer community leaders.

Before we began the activities, take more time introducing the concept to the community.

Re-visit the process later in the project.

6.5.5. Developing the story-telling strategy

Organise a group outing to the ACMI or to visit a group that has engaged in story-telling and oral history.

Develop a plan and source of funding for story telling (e.g., using TAFE and university students to film and edit at lower costs).

Community members who participated in the group discussion were unanimously in favour of continuing the group activities. The predominant view was that government funding was needed to enable this to happen. When asked if they felt there are other ways the group could continue, most participants thought the only alternative would be for people to use 'our own personal money'. They thought this would prevent many people from participating and could make the group activities unviable. Participants were not interested in approaching the wider Cambodian community for support. They would prefer to raise money for an orphanage, not the elderly. The view is the elderly get money from the government:

We are more fortunate than our counterparts living in Cambodia.

6.6. Summary of critical factors in successfully implementing the project

The evaluation lead to the identification of key factors that are critical for successfully improving social inclusion for the older Cambodian community.

6.6.1. Key factors in developing community leaders

Having sufficient time to identify and recruit appropriate community contacts.

Developing the confidence of community leaders through formal and informal leadership training.

High level of commitment required from community leaders.

High-level mentoring from a supporting organisation.

Identifying more than one community leader in a community to ensure project continuity and distribute responsibility for the project to more than one person.

6.6.2. Key factors in building relationships within the target community

Allocate sufficient time to gather resources, build trust, and allow relationships to develop between group members and facilitators.

Undertake adequate preparation in developing relationships before advancing.

Meet regularly with participants.

Share information in an informal context.

Communicate openly with community members.

Listen to volunteers and the community, gather information, check and clarify to ensure there is shared understanding.

Time emerged as a key factor implicated in all aspects of the process of building relationships with the Cambodian community. Taking sufficient time was a component that contributed to success and a lack of time was also seen as a something that affected how well a strategy worked.

6.6.3. Key factors in adopting a strength-based approach

Allow sufficient time to discuss the strength-based approach with community leaders and to reinforce the concepts of assets and strengths to the community.

Maintain a flexible approach to community participation that is driven by what the community wants.

6.7. Discussion - Mobilising Communities Project

The project achievements, the strategies implemented by the Mobilising Communities project to achieve the project's stated objectives and the recommendations emerging from the evaluation findings are discussed below.

6.7.1. Project achievements

> *I am happy and proud to be part of the group. I did not want to be involved with a crowd and enjoy life because I have been through so much. Because of the information and support I gave it a chance. I joined the group. Since I have been involved I see the amazing and important things that have changed my life. I can't wait to join this group every week, I look forward to it. I want to be part of this group – it is a new life for me. I am nearly 70 years old, but now I feel 50 years old. The group makes me feel young. I feel that there is a bright future for me now; I won't get bored with my life. If this project continues it will help my transition to old age. [Mobilising Communities focus group participant]*

The Mobilising Communities project represented an ambitious attempt to improve social inclusion for older people in the small Cambodian community in the inner east region of Melbourne. The project identified a natural leader who undertook formal leadership training in the CLP and worked in conjunction with the Mobilising Communities project coordinator and the Mobilising Communities working group to develop strategies to connect with the Cambodian community, build relationships, organise activities designed to enhance social inclusion and encourage participants in these activities to identify strengths that could lead to greater connectedness for this community. As part of this

project, a number of one-off activities were organised that were well-attended by older Cambodian people. Through the community consultation process, an ongoing activity (water aerobics) was organised with the support of MonashLink. This has continued as a weekly activity for a group of participants beyond the funded period of the project. More recent developments suggest that future activities will occur and some participants are keen to develop their skills in order to take on a prominent leadership role. Overwhelmingly, participants in the activities asserted that the activities had a large impact on their lives. They described health benefits, improved social connectedness and the desire that the activities continue.

6.7.2. Success of strategies to address project objectives

Objective 1: To examine the causes and impact of social isolation on older members of the Cambodian community and their strengths and resources.

1. Establish relationships with older community members and leaders.
2. Develop engagement strategies.
3. Recruit and train younger Cambodians as volunteer field assistants to implement engagement strategies.
4. Explore potential for developing an oral and written history of Cambodian refugee, migrant and resettlement experiences.
5. Research evidence on use of oral histories for strengthening marginalised communities and develop a best practice model.

Initially, some difficulties were encountered in identifying a community leader for the Cambodian community; time appeared to be a factor. This difficulty paralleled the experience of the CLP in efforts to recruit community leaders from areas of disadvantage throughout the inner east PCP catchment area. The success of the Mobilising Communities project relied heavily on the commitment of one community leader, who, with the support of the project co-ordinator and MIC, was able over the period of the project to build a volunteer leadership group from within the community.

While story-telling and oral history projects have worked very well in some migrant communities, this project showed that not all communities are ready to engage in this type of activity. The experience of attempting to engage the older Cambodian community in story-telling emphasises the importance of preparation, of listening to the community, and checking the readiness of community members for planned activities.

Objective 2: To provide opportunities for community participation in planning and decision-making to improve community connectedness.

Objective 3: To work with community members to develop strategies to improve their opportunities to participate and contribute to wider community life.

1. Facilitate regular community gatherings around cultural activities and food.
2. Explore community assets through group discussions.
3. Explore other opportunities for participation in planning and decision-making with the community.

Due to the small size of the Cambodian community in the Inner East and community members' limited involvement in community activities, the project focused heavily on activities designed to build relationships and encourage community engagement. The project showed that it is necessary to closely align project objectives with the level of resources and connections available in the chosen community.

The project participants did not immediately engage in discussions about community strengths. Some time was needed to process and reflect on this concept. Building confidence and self-efficacy among the group was necessary for them to feel more able to identify community strengths. The evaluation identified the necessity of adopting flexible approaches to engaging with the community. As a way of building trust, the project coordinator and community leader adopted a flexible approach to engaging with the community around activities that the group was most interested in. Building enthusiasm and the sense of belonging was needed before the group members could begin to think about what strengths they might bring to the group that could be used to further develop their community.

Objective 4: To develop the skills and confidence of natural leaders in the Cambodian community to facilitate community-based action research and advocacy.

1. Identify natural leaders and facilitate identification of community assets and activities to increase participation in community life.
2. Support and provide leadership training of natural leaders.
3. Develop participative action research projects with leaders to address barriers to social inclusion.
4. Engage with relevant agencies to implement strategies of participatory action research, including project working group.
5. Provide training for natural leaders and community members enhancing other skills development as required.

A finding that emerged from the simultaneous implementation and evaluation of this project and the CLP was that formal leadership training for community leaders was found to be accessible only for people with good English language skills. Some community members were also unwilling to engage in formal training, suggesting access to informal training in leadership skills is essential. The training and support of community leaders was taken on by the project coordinator with the support of the lead agency.

Objective 5: To develop a model to work with other socially isolated groups of older people from smaller, marginalised CALD communities.

The implementation and evaluation of the Mobilising Communities project has informed the development of a model for working with other small CALD communities. The model is also informed by relevant literature focused on the issue of community development work with refugee groups (see brief literature review). The model, which uses as its primary source evidence obtained from the evaluation, is described in section 7 of this report. The model should assist in guiding future social inclusion projects for disadvantaged groups of older people.

6.7.3. Recommendations resulting from the Mobilising Communities project

1. Continue efforts to develop and support a leadership team, develop relationships with the community and fund activities for the older Cambodian community in the Inner East.
2. Conduct a formal follow-up to gauge the progress of Cambodian group over time.
3. To deal with the language barrier for marginalised CALD communities to accessing leadership training, a train-the-trainer module could be added to the CLP for bilingual graduates. This module would train and support the graduates to train and mentor community members in leadership skills in their own languages.
4. For communities with limited networks and organisational structures a social inclusion project should set short-term objectives that are achievable within the project timeframe.
5. Though ABCD may be used as a model to guide the project, a flexible approach is required which caters to the level of organisation and natural leadership within the target community and its ability to engage in ABCD strategies at the outset of the project.
6. Check the readiness of the community group for each planned engagement strategy at different stages of the project.
7. Check the overall suitability of each planned engagement strategy for particular community group.

7. Model for Working with Older People from Smaller Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities

7.1. Overview

The focus of the Mobilising Communities project was older members of the small Cambodian community in the Inner East region of Melbourne, the majority of whom are survivors from the Cambodian genocide (1975–1978). The experience of working with this community in the Mobilising Communities project has informed the development of a model for working with other groups of refugees. The model is also informed by relevant literature focused on the issue of community development work with refugee groups (see brief literature review). The model uses as its primary source, evidence obtained from the evaluation and caution is warranted in attempting to extrapolate beyond these findings. Thus, the extent to which the successful activities undertaken with the Cambodian group transfer to other marginalised groups is unknown. The long-term success of the project still needs to be evaluated to determine the sustainability and potential growth of the activities begun by this group.

Table 7.1 describes the resources, activities and outputs of the project, as well as the short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes. This diagram should be read in conjunction with the description of individual components described in more detail before the diagram, as well as the critical factors in achieving success in Section 6.6. The model is also designed to be modified. For instance, future discussion may lead to agreement that there are other project resources that can be utilised.

7.2. Project resources

Key elements include: Time, the partnership, a lead agency with a special interest in the chosen community, funding bodies, a funded project coordinator, the CLP, community leaders, community assets (e.g., spaces, groups, strengths)

7.2.1. Time

Time is a key factor likely to contribute to the success of individual components of the project, which in turn will impact on the outcomes achieved by the community. It is likely that the timeframe over which the project evolves will be variable, depending on the different circumstances surrounding working with different groups in the community. For instance, it may be difficult to recruit volunteers from some communities, or there may be more investment of time in building trust in the community.

The impact of time in achieving successful outcomes for the community should not be underestimated. The literature points out that the scope of a community development project should be carefully matched to the time resources available, as a project with only a short-term vision may be detrimental to ongoing relations with the community.

7.2.2. The partnership

The synergy created by integrating different organisations in a partnership working towards a common goal is a vital resource in implementing and sustaining the project.

7.2.3. Lead agency with an investment in community development with the chosen community

This project demonstrated that the commitment of the MIC and the project working group played an important part in the success of the Mobilising Communities project. Integral to the success of a project is the requirement for a lead agency that takes responsibility for the project. It is likely that the community group of interest will be one of their stakeholders; however, it is essential that this agency also has an interest in this group at a higher level, beyond being just a stakeholder. This agency should be prepared to commit to supporting the group into the future.

7.2.4. Funding bodies

Access to resources through funding bodies is an essential contributing factor to the continuation of the project.

7.2.5. Funded project coordinator

The project coordinator operates as the liaison between the lead agency, community leaders and the chosen community. The project coordinator provides mentoring and support for the community leaders. They keep a history of the project, are fundamental sources of information in the evaluation of the project's success and receive support in their role from the lead agency and project working group.

7.2.6. Community leaders

Existing and potential community leaders are critical resources in developing connections to the community of interest.

7.2.7. Community Leadership Program

Formal training in leadership skills is contributes to the confidence and self-efficacy of volunteer community leaders. The CLP is a resource in providing leadership skills training and a structured, supportive context in which to develop a community project.

7.3. Project activities

Key elements include: Promotional activities, recruiting community leaders, research and culturally appropriate consultation, relationship development, leadership development training (formal and informal), ABCD training (formal and informal), mentoring community leaders, group discussions with the community, forming connections to community organisations

7.3.1. Promotional activities

To attract potential community leaders and members of the community to participate in activities it is necessary to promote the project widely. Face-to-face informal discussions and word of mouth may be most effective as a means to build trust, particularly in communities where written material may be difficult for individuals to understand.

7.3.2. Recruiting community leaders

The preparation involved in recruiting volunteer community leaders is critical to the success of the project. Identifying and recruiting volunteers who have high-level understanding of the community, have good connections within the community, are committed and exhibit leadership potential, is likely to be critical to the success of the project. The experience of the Mobilising Communities project showed that recruiting community leaders was particularly difficult in a community that had little experience of group membership and community organisation.

Mentoring is necessary to further equip the volunteers with the skills and confidence to act as leaders within their communities. The project coordinator adopts a mentoring role with volunteers. Access to formal mentors external to the project who are experienced in community development work should also be considered. Day-to-day support is provided by the project coordinator, who is the liaison between the lead agency and the volunteers. Support takes the form of both encouraging independence and acting as a source of guidance when volunteers require more assistance. While it is critical that the volunteers receive adequate preparation to engage with their community, it is vital that ongoing support (in the form of mentoring, support and access to more formal training) be available on a regular basis.

7.3.3. Community consultation

Consultation with the community involves a flexible approach to engaging with the community, which takes into account different cultural values. It may be appropriate on different occasions to use either a strength-based or a need-based approach. It is likely that different communities will understand these concepts differently and have different ways of engaging with the ideas of strength and need. Moreover, part of the trust-building process might involve engaging around finding a need, after which the discussion about community resources can occur.

Strategies for community engagement require intensive consultation with the community to ensure that the community are involved in the decision-making process.

Regular group discussions with the community can be undertaken to promote the project, encourage community members to take on leadership roles in the group, develop relationships and build trust, and to evaluate the success of activities undertaken by the group. It is important that consultation with community members is ongoing to regularly reassess their opinion of the appropriateness and success of the group activities. The idea of ongoing evaluation of the communities' progress can be introduced into group discussions.

7.3.4. Developing relationships with community organisations

Building relationships with community organisations that can provide resources to support the activities of the group is fundamental to the success of the project.

7.3.5. Leadership development training

Formal and informal leadership development training can be undertaken by community leaders. The CLP is a resource for formal training; however, informal training is necessary for community members who are unable to access formal training due to language difficulties.

7.3.6. ABCD training

Part of formal skills training may involve an introduction to the principles of ABCD. Informal training may also be delivered by using the skills of community leaders trained through the leadership program. However, the experience of the Mobilising Communities project suggests that care needs to be taken to be flexible in this approach. Above all, listening to the community and engaging with them around their specific concerns is likely to build the trust that is a precondition to moving towards a more strength-based approach.

7.3.7. Identifying community assets

Community assets, such as existing community groups, community organisations that can provide support to the group, community spaces that the group can access, and personal strengths identified among group members are essential resources to identify and mobilise to support the project's activities.

7.4. Project outputs

Key elements include: Community leadership, Mapping of community assets, Communities engage in social activities

The project outputs achievable from a relatively short-term intervention in a community with no existing contacts should be realistic. A key project output is the development of community leaders. Utilising the skills of these leaders to assist in mapping community assets, and developing and promoting community activities is another key project output. These outputs are likely to lead to a range of outcomes that can be built upon in future work with the community.

Table 7.1: Model for working with older people from small CALD communities

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Time	Promotional activities	Community leaders	Relationships built between community and people involved in the project	Health and wellbeing of group participants enhanced
Partnership	Recruiting community leaders	Community assets mapped	Community leaders independently working with their community	
Lead agency	Community consultation	Communities engage in social activities	Community takes ownership of activities	
Funding bodies	Relationship development		Community leaders empower their community to build connections	
Funded project coordinator	Leadership training (formal and informal)		Improved social inclusion/ participation	
Volunteer community leaders	ABCD training (formal and informal)		Social capital created	
Community leadership program	Group discussions			
Existing community organisations	Forming connections to community organisations			
Local government	Identifying community assets			

Note. The model is designed to be modified; future discussion may lead to agreement that other project resources can be utilised. Blank boxes are included for the addition of other factors.

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Appendices Data Collection Instruments

Appendix 1: Community Leadership Pre-Program Evaluation Questionnaire

Community Leadership Program for Social Inclusion

Pre-program Evaluation Questionnaire

As a first step in engaging with older people in your community you are asked to consider a few issues.

(Do not try to "censor" what you write, or try to give "politically correct" answers—just write whatever comes into your mind).

Firstly, please consider your own views about ageing.

1. How old is an older person? _____

2. What do you expect your life to be like when you reach that age?

_____

_____

What symbolises ageing for you?

3. List a few words or phrases that you associate with ageing in relation to the following areas:

Mind _____

Body _____

Social roles _____

Economic roles _____

Now, you are asked to think about leadership.

4. What are the qualities that you admire in a leader?

_____

_____

5. In what ways do you consider yourself to be a leader?

_____

_____

6. What leadership skills do you hope to develop during this leadership program?

_____

Next, consider the term 'socially inclusive community'.

7. What does the term 'socially inclusive community' mean to you?

_____

_____

Finally, consider how your leadership skills may be used to build socially inclusive communities.

8. How do you hope to use your leadership skills to engage with older people in your community during or after the completion of the leadership?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 2: Community Leadership Program Group Discussion Questions

Ice Breaker

Before you started the leadership program we gave you an evaluation form that asked you to reflect on your views of a leader and of older people. So that you can be reminded about the ideas you had at the start of the program we've handed back to you a copy of your original evaluation form to remind you. What we'd like you to do is have a look at the ideas that you had then and reflect on whether you think the ideas that you had at the start have changed? How do you think that they have changed? If they haven't changed, why do you think that is?

What we'd like you to do is to just jot down against your original answers how you would answer these questions now and when you've finished we'll collect the forms back from you.

OK so now you've had an opportunity to reflect on how you thought about leadership at the start of the program let's move on to discuss some other issues.

Question 1

The program was organised around the ABCD model of community development? Tell me what you have found useful about using this model; do you think that there are any drawbacks to the model? If so, what are they?

Question 2

Can you tell me what you think a community leader is?

Question 3

Do you think the leadership program has helped you to develop relationships within your community? What are the most useful skills you have learned to help you achieve this?

Question 4

Are there any other skills you feel could have been promoted by the program?

Question 5

Can you describe what has been most challenging about participating in the leadership program?

Question 6

In your opinion, what have been the most useful aspects of the program?

Question 7

In your opinion, is there anything you would change about the program?

Question 8

What type of on-going support do you think would be useful in helping you to run your community projects successfully? How do you think this support could be facilitated?

Question 9

Finally, what advice would you have for the next group of participants to undertake the program?

Conclusion

Thank you very much for participating in the group. We'd like to give you an evaluation form to take away that you can complete in your own time. Some of the questions are similar to those that we have covered in the discussion today, this is because we want you to have the opportunity to take some more time to think about them and respond in your own time. You can seal them in the envelope and return them to Jane at the last session.

Appendix 3: Community Leadership Post-Program Evaluation Questionnaire

Community Leadership Program for Social Inclusion

Post-program Evaluation Questionnaire

At the start of the Leadership Program you were asked to consider a few issues. Now that you have completed the Leadership Program we would like you to consider the following questions.

(Do not try to "censor" what you write—just write whatever comes into your mind).

1. What leadership skills do you think you have developed during the leadership program?

_____

_____

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about the Leadership Program:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The Leadership Program has helped me to:					
a. Improve my understanding of the benefits of social inclusion for older people.					
b. Improve my leadership skills					
c. Increase my confidence to be a community leader					

2 continued. To what extent do you agree with these statements about the Leadership Program:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2. I am confident that I will be able to:					
a. Transfer what I have learned to other members of my community.					
b. Develop collaborative relationships and ongoing networks with service providers, community groups, business and citizens that promote social inclusion of older people.					
c. Develop a community project aimed at improving social inclusion of older people in your community.					

3. How do you hope to use your leadership skills to engage with older people in your community after the completion of the leadership program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. In your opinion, what were the most useful aspects of the program?

_____

_____

_____

5. In your opinion, is there anything that you would change about the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 4: Community Leadership Group Discussion Themes Questionnaire

Would you please take a few moments to give us final feedback on the Community Leadership Program. The questionnaire is completely anonymous and no person will be identified in the write up of the results. The results will form a component of the evaluation of the Social Inclusion Project. Please return the questionnaire in the reply paid envelope as soon as possible. Thank you.

For each statement about the Community Leadership Program tick (√) in one Box

The community leadership program:	1 Disagree Strongly	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Agree Strongly
Had clear goals					
Was well-presented					
Was personally fulfilling					
Helped me to develop my project					
Stimulated my interest					
Was well organised					
Was a positive experience for me					
Helped me think more broadly about community development					

During the community leadership program:	1 Disagree Strongly	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Agree Strongly
I was helped to learn effectively					
All group members were encouraged to participate actively					
I received support to plan my project					
I received feedback about my progress					
My experience in the community leadership program has contributed to my:	1 Disagree Strongly	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Agree Strongly
Professional development					
Personal development					
Leadership Skills					
Knowledge of Asset Based Community Development					
Ability to develop community projects					
Networking skills					

The Community Leadership Program overall:

How satisfied are you with the course as a whole? *Please circle the appropriate number*

1 Not at all satisfied	2	3	4	5 Very satisfied

How satisfied are you with your achievements in the course overall? *Please circle the appropriate number*

1 Not at all satisfied	2	3	4	5 Very satisfied

Thank you very much for you time.

Appendix 5: Structured Journal for the Community Leadership Program Project Coordinator

Appendix 6: Structured Journal for the Mobilising Communities Project coordinator

Evaluation format

1. For each project objective, the project officers described:

    a. The strategies undertaken to achieve project objectives.

    b. Aspects of the strategy that worked well

    c. Aspect(s) of the strategy that didn't work as well as they would have liked.

    d. What they would do differently next time.

Appendix 7: Mobilising Communities Group Discussion Questions

1. How did you hear about the Mobilising Communities group?
2. What do you think are the positive aspects of having a social group for older Cambodian people?
3. Has this group helped you to have more social contact with people outside of your family?
4. Has coming to these activities helped you in any other ways?
5. Would you like the group activities to continue?
6. Do you think you could help the group to continue meeting in the future? How? (Prompt: joining in, phoning people, organising food …)
7. Do you think this group should approach members of the Cambodian community (individuals, Cambodian organisations or businesses for financial support)?
8. Do you think there are other ways that your group could get support?
9. What do you think is the future of this group?

Appendix 8: Mobilising Communities Project Description

The Inner East Primary Care Partnership (IEPCP) 'Social Inclusion for Older People' Initiative is the culmination of a collaborative process undertaken by a partnership of community agencies within the Inner East Primary Care Partnership (IEPCP). The Initiative aims to build capacity for social inclusion within the communities in the inner east catchment, reduce social isolation of older people, address barriers that prevent older people from CALD backgrounds engaging in broader community life, create a model to work with socially isolated groups of older people from smaller marginalised and/or CALD communities, and build community engagement with communities.

These aims will be achieved through **two integrated projects**: the *'Leadership for Social Inclusion Project'* and the *'Mobilising Communities Project'*.

The Initiative, is funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Department of Planning and Community Development, including the Office of Senior Victorians, Department of Human Services and City of Whitehorse.

The initiative reflects a number of key Victorian Government policy initiatives:

'A Fairer Victoria': helping older Victorians remain independent and healthy for as long as possible; Department of Human Services: an increased emphasis on the social determinants of health; Department of Planning and Community Development: a focus on building active, confident and inclusive communities; Office of Senior Victorians: promoting accessible social inclusion opportunities for older adults.

The **Mobilising Communities Project** proposes to work with older members of the Cambodian community in the inner east of Melbourne to reduce their experience of social isolation and improve their opportunities for participation in broader community life. The project also provides an important opportunity for IEPCP agencies to work together in new ways to build effective partnerships. It supports the sharing of resources and decision making, while building the capacity of the agencies to work more effectively with isolated cultural groups in their community.

Background

The Mobilising Communities project is a result of research undertaken by the IEPCP identifying older people's risk of social isolation in the inner east of Melbourne. Local evidence demonstrated that older people, in particular those from different cultural and refugee backgrounds, experience higher levels of social isolation and depression.

The **Cambodian community** in the inner east is a relatively small but much marginalised group who have limited access to social and community linkages and activities, and lack opportunities to build supportive networks. The population of Cambodian's aged 50+ in the inner east is 316. Older Cambodian's arrived in Australia as refugees from the Pol Pot regime and are survivors of torture,

trauma and have suffered significant family loss and grief. This has impacted on their settlement experience and many suffer from post traumatic stress disorder and depression. Limited formal education and literacy skills have severely affected opportunities to learn English resulting in the older Cambodian community being highly dependant on their children and grand children.

Aim & Objectives

The Mobilising Communities Project aims to work with the Cambodian community to increase access to community life for those aged over 50 years in the inner eastern region of Melbourne.

The **objectives** of this project include:

- To examine the causes and impact of social isolation on older members of the Cambodian community and their strengths and resources;
- To provide opportunities for community participation in planning and decision-making to improve community connectedness;
- To work with community members to develop strategies to improve their opportunities to participate and contribute to wider community life;
- To develop the skills and confidence of natural leaders in the Cambodian community to facilitate community based action research and advocacy;
- To develop a model to work with other socially isolated groups of older people from smaller, marginalized CALD communities.

Approach/methodology

The project will be conducted using a participatory action research approach including Assets Based Community Development (ABCD). The initial phase is aimed at strengthening the Cambodian community through increasing opportunities for social gatherings, events and celebrations. The focus will be on the identification of existing community resources, strengths, relationships and past successes to create a common vision that will support stronger community connections. Story telling, capacity and strengths mapping will be used to create a plan and set of activities for future connections. Phase two of the project will implement the activities determined in phase one and evaluate their effectiveness in reducing the social isolation of older members of the Cambodian community.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes include increased social connectedness and community participation for older members of the Cambodian community in the inner east of Melbourne; strengthened collaboration and increased capacity of the IEPCP to work more broadly with disadvantaged and marginalised communities; development of a transferable model of engagement; and benefits for younger members and families in the Cambodian community through participation of young volunteers in the project.

Evaluation

An external evaluator will be appointed to evaluate the initiative including both the Leadership and Mobilising Communities Projects. The Project will work closely with the evaluators. Documentation and dissemination of the model will be a major focus of the evaluation process.

Project Implementation

An overall steering committee meets monthly and guides the implementation and evaluation of the Initiative. A separate working group for each project has been formed to guide the individual projects comprised of representatives from funding bodies and key service providers in the inner east of Melbourne.

The project worker is located at and employed by the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) and reports to the working group.

Appendix 9: Summary of Evaluation Findings

Project evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

1. Outline the achievements, strengths, weaknesses and key learnings of the Initiative.

2. Document a model for working with marginalised older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

3. Develop best practice recommendations for ongoing efforts to improve social inclusion for disadvantaged communities more broadly.

The evaluation included quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to measure the effectiveness of strategies in achieving the project objectives, as outlined in the Project Evaluation Brief. A range of data collection methods were applied, including participant observation, informal discussions, group discussions and questionnaires.

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the two projects comprising The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative. Detailed discussion of the achievements and learnings of the two projects are presented in sections 5 and 6.

Evaluation of the Community Leadership Program

The project achievements, the strategies implemented by the CLP to achieve the project's stated objectives and the recommendations emerging from the evaluation findings are discussed below.

Project achievements

> *For me I just think I just learned the power of conversation before running this program, I wasn't that confident because I used to work with a project community and I am quite comfortable working with that community, but I wasn't sure how to contact or how to communicate with other communities. So that is the most important thing that I learnt how to be with the community, the organisation and how to know everything and just show your respect towards them and they will let you know everything what actually their interests are. [CLP focus group participant]*

The CLP successfully recruited a broad range of community participants to undertake leadership training to improve their capacity to develop community projects to enhance social inclusion. Through participating in the course, participants felt their confidence to develop community projects had increased; they gained valuable networks and experience in community consultation. Twenty participants successfully completed the training and a number of community projects (see Table 5.6) have resulted from the course that show promise in improving social inclusion for selected communities. The evaluation found the CLP course was a successful way of developing community leaders who have begun to address the important issue of social inclusion in their communities.

Success of strategies to address project objectives

Objective 1: To increase leadership skills of community members participating in the Leadership Training Program Objective 2: To increase participants' knowledge and skills to undertake action research projects and improve social inclusion for groups of older people in the IEPCP catchment

The key strategy implemented to achieve Objectives 1 and 2 was the Community Leadership Program. The main components of the CLP were: a two-day retreat, a one-day ABCD workshop, bi-monthly training sessions based on an adult learning approach, case studies, guest lecturers, guest listeners, and supporting CLP participants to develop community projects.

The two-day retreat was consistently identified as a highly regarded aspect of the course by both the participants and the other stakeholders. The evaluation findings indicated that the CLP promoted positive leadership skills among participants, created a high degree of enthusiasm for the course, and enhanced the connections among group members. Participants nominated the retreat as a major success of the course, providing a framework and strengthening bonds in the group.

Overall, CLP participants felt that the CLP had helped improve their leadership skills (e.g., effective listening and communication, networking and the ability to identify and mobilise community assets) and also increased their knowledge of ABCD. CLP participants saw the opportunity to observe and obtain the feedback and support from those in the group as an aspect of the strategy that worked well. All participants felt confident in their ability to develop collaborative relationships and ongoing networks. CLP participants identified the networks established and expanded, both within the group and in the wider community, as useful aspects of the program. They reported increased confidence in contacting communities, going and trying things they had not attempted before and greater awareness of community resources. CLP participants sought increased opportunities to practise establishing connections with communities at the beginning of the course.

Most CLP participants felt that the CLP had increased their confidence in their ability to develop a community project designed to improve social inclusion. Through attending the course, CLP participants successfully developed their own community projects focussed on enhancing social

inclusion for specific groups. Through developing community projects using ABCD principles, CLP participants had the opportunity to engage with community members, which increased their confidence in approaching community members in the future.

CLP participants identified a tension between competing aims of the program; the course endeavoured to equip participants with skills and also have projects as an outcome. Participants sought clarity about whether the CLP supported existing projects (or ideas for projects) that did not necessarily fit the ABCD model. Some participants wanted greater opportunities to practise the skills they had acquired in undertaking project work and many felt that the course needed to allow more time for project work.

Analysis of participants' views related to satisfaction with the course and with personal achievement during the course revealed some key factors that could be addressed to improve satisfaction. For instance, the degree to which participants believed they were helped to plan a project and then supported to develop their project were key factors in satisfaction. The evaluation findings suggest that building in targeted support (e.g., from external mentors), clarifying expectations at the start of the course and enhancing support for participants to get projects under way are likely to improve outcomes for future CLP participants.

Objective 3: Strategies implemented to foster collaborative relationships and ongoing networks between service providers, community groups, businesses and citizens to support social inclusion for older people

The two key strategies to achieve Objective 3 were 1) the promotion strategy (including: the Ministerial Launch, DVD production, rotation of the CLP sessions to different venues, and the graduation ceremony) and 2) the recruitment strategy.

The Ministerial Launch was a successful method for promoting the project, generating community interest and support, and fostering community connections. The graduation ceremony provided the opportunity for further promotion of the project and development of networks for CLP participants. Project planners reflected that time allocated to developing the DVD might be better spent in ongoing promotion of the program and in recruitment. They also suggested that in future the communication plan should be developed prior to commencement of the program so it can be used to guide the activities of the working party. Project planners also identified the need for more intensive ongoing promotion and reporting on the achievements of program participants as the course is delivered.

The recruitment process for the CLP was successful in recruiting a diverse range of participants, with high levels of interest and commitment in undertaking the leadership course. The CLP was successful in recruiting a broad range of future community leaders representing each of the municipalities of Boorondara, Manningham, Monash and Whitehorse. The successful applicants represented a wide range of ages, ethnicities, social and professional roles, and levels of experience in community work.

The diversity of applicants encouraged the development of connections between CLP participants, the CLP project coordinator and community groups.

Some difficulties were experienced in identifying individuals from within the targeted areas of disadvantage. The key factor of time is likely to play a role in the process, with longer and more intense searches potentially yielding suitable candidates. Recruiting professionals working in disadvantaged areas represents a partial solution, but may make establishing contacts with the communities more challenging, especially if communities perceive these individuals as attempting to impose external leadership.

Objective 4: Strategies implemented to develop a sustainable leadership program with private sector support for recruitment, marketing, volunteering and financial assistance

The two key strategies to achieve Objective 4 were the development of a communication plan and securing funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. Funding secured from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust increased access to the program by community members.

Objective 5: To improve social inclusion for groups of older people in the Inner East Primary Care Partnership catchment.

The key strategy to achieve Objective 5 was the development of community projects. At this stage, CLP participants have developed a number of community projects focused on reducing social isolation among older community members. Though these projects are at an early stage, initial indicators suggest that they will make a positive contribution towards improving social inclusion for older people in the IEPCP catchment. A follow-up outcome evaluation in the future would be a useful way to determine the effectiveness of the CLP projects in reducing social isolation.

Recommendations resulting from the Community Leadership Program

Recommendations for the CLP

1. Retain the intensive two-day retreat in order to enhance the cohesion of a very diverse group and introduce the leadership skills that will be built on throughout the course.

2. Retain aspects of the course that participants found useful, such as the ABCD workshop, case studies and guest listeners.

3. Include formal training in additional skills (such as conflict management, presentation skills, training in group dynamics) and research methodologies (e.g., interviewing skills, running focus groups, developing surveys).

4. Provide participants with a complete course outline at the beginning of the course, including clear statements of CLP goals and expectations of the participants, a structured curriculum (based on findings from the first CLP) and program timelines.

5. Provide a range of structured opportunities in the first few months of the CLP to practise ABCD methodology. Opportunities could include:

   - Developing an in-house project that serves as a model for the CLP group.
   - One or two sessions with representatives from established community groups to enable CLP participants to practise leadership skills such as connecting with communities and determining community assets and strengths.

6. Reinforce the skills introduced during the retreat throughout the course.

7. Introduce a structured approach to the use of readings.

Recommendations for developing community projects

1. Plan to have project ideas formalised early in the course.

2. Increase the amount of time dedicated to project work (e.g., allocate one day per month for CLP participants to work on their community projects and build in formal project progress updates into the curriculum).

3. Recruit project mentors who will act as informal guides to participants in developing their projects. Mentors might meet monthly with project group members during the planning and implementation stages to discuss ideas, air concerns and report on progress.

4. Contact CLP participants six months, then again in 12 months after they complete the course to gain updates on their continuing involvement in projects.

Recommendations for recruiting CLP participants

1. Invest sufficient time to recruit individuals who live in the communities of interest.

Recommendations about the Asset Based Community Development approach

1. Retain the focus on ABCD as an approach taught to participants, with the possibility that other approaches might also be considered.

2. Clarify whether projects must adhere to the principles of ABCD from the outset, or whether projects can use a modified approach.

Evaluation of the Mobilising Communities project

The project achievements, the strategies implemented by the Mobilising Communities project to achieve the project's stated objectives and the recommendations emerging from the evaluation findings are discussed below.

Project achievements

> *I am happy and proud to be part of the group. I did not want to be involved with a crowd and enjoy life because I have been through so much. Because of the information and support I gave it a chance. I joined the group. Since I have been involved I see the amazing and important things that have changed my life. I can't wait to join this group every week, I look forward to it. I want to be part of this group – it is a new life for me. I am nearly 70 years old, but now I feel 50 years old. The group makes me feel young. I feel that there is a bright future for me now; I won't get bored with my life. If this project continues it will help my transition to old age. [Mobilising Communities focus group participant]*

The Mobilising Communities project represented an ambitious attempt to improve social inclusion for older people in the small Cambodian community in the inner east region of Melbourne. The project identified a natural leader who undertook formal leadership training in the CLP and worked in conjunction with the Mobilising Communities project coordinator and the Mobilising Communities working group to develop strategies to connect with the Cambodian community, build relationships, organise activities designed to enhance social inclusion and encourage participants in these activities to identify strengths that could lead to greater connectedness for this community. As part of this project, a number of one-off activities were organised that were well-attended by older Cambodian people. Through the community consultation process, an ongoing activity (water aerobics) was organised with the support of MonashLink. This has continued as a weekly activity for a group of participants beyond the funded period of the project. More recent developments suggest that future activities will occur and some participants are keen to develop their skills in order to take on a prominent leadership role. Overwhelmingly, participants in the activities asserted that the activities had a large impact on their lives. They described health benefits, improved social connectedness and the desire that the activities continue.

Success of strategies to address project objectives

Objective 1: To examine the causes and impact of social isolation on older members of the Cambodian community and their strengths and resources.

1. Establish relationships with older community members and leaders.

2. Develop engagement strategies.

3. Recruit and train younger Cambodians as volunteer field assistants to implement engagement strategies.

4. Explore potential for developing an oral and written history of Cambodian refugee, migrant and resettlement experiences.

5. Research evidence on use of oral histories for strengthening marginalised communities and develop a best practice model.

Initially, some difficulties were encountered in identifying a community leader for the Cambodian community; time appeared to be a factor. This difficulty paralleled the experience of the CLP in efforts to recruit community leaders from areas of disadvantage throughout the inner east PCP catchment area. The success of the Mobilising Communities project relied heavily on the commitment of one community leader, who, with the support of the project co-ordinator and MIC, was able over the period of the project to build a volunteer leadership group from within the community.

While story-telling and oral history projects have worked very well in some migrant communities, this project showed that not all communities are ready to engage in this type of activity. The experience of attempting to engage the older Cambodian community in story-telling emphasises the importance of preparation, of listening to the community, and checking the readiness of community members for planned activities.

Objective 2: To provide opportunities for community participation in planning and decision-making to improve community connectedness.

Objective 3: To work with community members to develop strategies to improve their opportunities to participate and contribute to wider community life.

1. Facilitate regular community gatherings around cultural activities and food.

2. Explore community assets through group discussions.

3. Explore other opportunities for participation in planning and decision-making with the community.

Due to the small size of the Cambodian community in the Inner East and community members' limited involvement in community activities, the project focused heavily on activities designed to build relationships and encourage community engagement. The project showed that it is necessary to closely align project objectives with the level of resources and connections available in the chosen community.

The project participants did not immediately engage in discussions about community strengths. Some time was needed to process and reflect on this concept. Building confidence and self-efficacy among the group was necessary for them to feel more able to identify community strengths. The evaluation identified the necessity of adopting flexible approaches to engaging with the community. As a way of building trust, the project coordinator and community leader adopted a flexible approach to engaging with the community around activities that the group was most interested in. Building enthusiasm and the sense of belonging was needed before the group members could begin to think about what strengths they might bring to the group that could be used to further develop their community.

Objective 4: To develop the skills and confidence of natural leaders in the Cambodian community to facilitate community-based action research and advocacy.

1. Identify natural leaders and facilitate identification of community assets and activities to increase participation in community life.

2. Support and provide leadership training of natural leaders.

3. Develop participative action research projects with leaders to address barriers to social inclusion.

4. Engage with relevant agencies to implement strategies of participatory action research, including project working group.

5. Provide training for natural leaders and community members enhancing other skills development as required.

A finding that emerged from the simultaneous implementation and evaluation of this project and the CLP was that formal leadership training for community leaders was found to be accessible only for people with good English language skills. Some community members were also unwilling to engage in formal training, suggesting access to informal training in leadership skills is essential. The training and support of community leaders was taken on by the project coordinator with the support of the lead agency.

Objective 5: To develop a model to work with other socially isolated groups of older people from smaller, marginalised CALD communities.

The implementation and evaluation of the Mobilising Communities project has informed the development of a model for working with other small CALD communities. The model is also informed by relevant literature focused on the issue of community development work with refugee groups (see brief literature review). The model, which uses as its primary source evidence obtained

from the evaluation, is described in section 7 of this report. The model should assist in guiding future social inclusion projects for disadvantaged groups of older people.

Recommendations resulting from the Mobilising Communities project

1. Continue efforts to develop and support a leadership team, develop relationships with the community and fund activities for the older Cambodian community in the Inner East.

2. Conduct a formal follow-up to gauge the progress of Cambodian group over time.

3. To deal with the language barrier for marginalised CALD communities to accessing leadership training, a train-the-trainer module could be added to the CLP for bilingual graduates. This module would train and support the graduates to train and mentor community members in leadership skills in their own languages.

4. For communities with limited networks and organisational structures a social inclusion project should set short-term objectives that are achievable within the project timeframe.

5. Though ABCD may be used as a model to guide the project, a flexible approach is required which caters to the level of organisation and natural leadership within the target community and its ability to engage in ABCD strategies at the outset of the project.

6. Check the readiness of the community group for each planned engagement strategy at different stages of the project.

7. Check the overall suitability of each planned engagement strategy for particular community group.

Conclusion

The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative succeeded in improving the leadership skills of a group of community leaders in the Inner East region of Melbourne. Evaluation of the CLP against the project objectives identified promising achievements for the CLP in enhancing participants' leadership skills and increasing their confidence as community leaders. Community projects were developed by the end of the CLP that are designed to address the overall goal of The Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative of improving social connectedness (see Section 5, Table 5.6). Areas for improvement identified by the evaluation also enable the partnership to identify possible modifications for future programs. The Mobilising Communities project was highly successful in bringing together older Cambodians to participate in a range of activities and to develop stronger ties within their community. By the end of the project, community members had begun to independently organise activities and to take ownership of the group. This suggests that the achievements of the Mobilising Communities project are likely to have longer-term benefits for the community. The evaluation also highlighted the key factors in successfully implementing the program; in particular, the time and resources required to build a new community group.

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