

Organisation name

Community Resources Ltd

1.1 What would a partnership between CSOs and the government that achieves outcomes for Australians being supported by the community sector look like?

A partnership between CSOs and the government that successfully achieves outcomes for Australians and is supported by the community sector would involve collaboration, shared goals, and a commitment to addressing the needs and priorities of the individual communities. Here are some key elements of such a partnership:

-Clearly Defined Objectives:

The partnership should have well-defined objectives and outcomes that are in line with the broader goals of improving the well-being of Australians.

-Open Communication and Collaboration:

-Resource Sharing:

Both CSOs and the government should allocate resources, including financial support, staff, and data, to support the partnership. This may include grant funding, technical assistance, and sharing of research and information.

-Engaging the Community:

The community sector, which includes grassroots organizations, should be actively involved in the partnership. Their perspectives and insights are vital for understanding the specific needs of different communities and ensuring that programs and policies are responsive to those needs.

-Data and Evaluation:

-Flexibility and Adaptability:

The partnership should be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and emerging needs. As societal challenges evolve, the partnership should be able to adjust its strategies and priorities accordingly.

-Accountability and Transparency:

-Cross-Sector Training and Capacity Building:

-Conflict Resolutions

-Long term Commitment.

Successful partnerships often require a long-term commitment from both CSOs and the government to see sustained, meaningful change in outcomes for Australians.

Ultimately, a partnership between CSOs and the government supported by the community sector should be built on trust, shared values, and a commitment to improving the lives of Australians. By working together in a collaborative and coordinated manner, these entities can address complex social issues more effectively and efficiently.

1.2 How can CSOs and government streamline the sharing of information, particularly through utilising technology to effectively engage, distribute, share, influence and inform in a timely and efficient manner?

Define clear communication channels and protocols for sharing information. This should include defining roles and responsibilities for both CSOs and government agencies.

Create digital platforms and portals where information can be shared and accessed by both parties. These platforms should be user-friendly and secure. Examples include websites, intranets, and collaboration tools. Ensure that data shared between CSOs and government agencies is standardised. This includes using common data formats and metadata standards.

Develop legal agreements or memorandums of understanding that specify the terms and conditions under which data will be shared. These agreements should address data privacy, security, and intellectual property rights.

Ensure that the technology systems used by CSOs and government agencies are interoperable, enabling seamless data exchange. This may require the use of standardized APIs and data integration tools.

Provide training and capacity-building programs for CSOs and government personnel to ensure they have the necessary skills to use technology effectively for information sharing.

Utilise collaborative tools such as project management software, document sharing platforms, and virtual meeting software to facilitate real-time communication and collaboration.

Implement robust security measures to protect data from breaches or unauthorised access.

Establish clear channels for ongoing feedback and engagement even after program implementation. This can include surveys, public consultations, and forums for dialogue.

Define key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the effectiveness of information sharing efforts

Continuously assess and refine the information sharing process through feedback loops and lessons learned.

1.3 How can government ensure the community sector, including service users, and those not able to access services, have an opportunity to contribute to program design without imposing significant burdens?

Ensuring that the community sector, service users, and those unable to access services have an opportunity to contribute to program design is essential for creating inclusive and effective government

initiatives.

Consultations and online platforms to provide information and ask for feedback.

Collaborate with local community organisations and NGOs to reach marginalized or hard-to-reach populations. These organisations can act as intermediaries and help facilitate engagement.

Ensure that venues, materials, and resources used in consultation are accessible to people with disabilities. This includes physical accessibility, sign language interpreters, and accessible documents.

Identify specific groups that are historically underrepresented or disadvantaged and create targeted outreach programs to engage them. This could include low-income households, minority communities, or rural populations.

Provide financial support to community organisations and service user groups to facilitate their participation. This can cover expenses related to meetings, transport, or even compensating for their time and expertise.

Communicate the purpose, process, and outcomes of the program design consultations clearly. Provide timely updates on how input is being used and the progress of the program.

Establish clear channels for ongoing feedback and engagement even after program implementation. This ensures that the community's voice remains a part of the decision-making process.

Invest in education and capacity-building programs that empower community members to participate effectively in program design. This may include training in advocacy, proposal writing, and project management.

By implementing these strategies, governments can involve the community sector, service users, and those not able to access services in program design without imposing significant burdens, thus promoting inclusivity and better program outcomes.

2.1 What would adequate and flexible funding look like?

Adequate funding means that the financial resources provided are enough to cover the core expenses and goals of the initiative. It should allow for the implementation of planned activities and the achievement of intended outcomes.

Adequate funding is often provided over a sustained period rather than as a one-time grant. Long-term commitments enable organisations to plan for the future, invest in capacity-building, and create lasting impact.

In addition to project-specific grants, adequate funding may include core and operating support that covers overhead costs such as staff salaries, rent, utilities, and administrative expenses. This helps maintain the overall health and sustainability of the organisation.

Flexible funding allows the recipient to allocate resources where they are most needed and adjust priorities in response to changing circumstances. It provides autonomy to organisations or projects to make decisions based on real-time needs and emerging opportunities.

Multi-year grants provide stability and reduce the burden of frequent grant application and reporting cycles. They allow organisations to focus on their mission rather than constantly seeking funding.

Clear reporting and accountability mechanisms should be in place to ensure that funds are used responsibly and in alignment with the stated goals.

Funding should take into account the local context and the unique needs and challenges of the beneficiaries, or the community served.

2.2 What administrative and overhead costs are not being considered in current grant funding?

Indirect costs are sometimes referred to as overhead costs or administrative costs. They include expenses such as rent, utilities, office supplies, and general administrative staff salaries. Many grants have limitations on the percentage of indirect costs that can be charged, and this limit may not cover the full actual indirect costs incurred by the grantee.

Grants often come with reporting and compliance requirements, which can incur significant costs. These may include costs related to financial audits, program monitoring, and data collection and reporting.

Maintaining and upgrading technology and information systems can be expensive, but they are crucial for effective program implementation and reporting. Funding for IT infrastructure and software may not be adequately covered in most grants.

Ensuring staff are adequately trained and up to date with relevant skills is essential. Costs associated with training and professional development may not be fully covered by grants.

If a project involves travel or transportation, the costs associated with it, including accommodation, km's may not be adequately funded.

Promoting the project and outreach efforts to engage the target audience or community may require marketing and public relations expenses, which can be overlooked in grant proposals.

Grants often require some form of evaluation or impact assessment to measure the success of the project. The costs associated with data collection, analysis, and reporting may not be fully covered.

2.3 How are rising operational costs impacting the delivery of community services?

When operational costs rise, organisations providing community services, such as non-profit organisations or government agencies, may face budget constraints. This can lead to a reduction in funding available for delivering essential services.

To cope with rising operational costs, organisations may be forced to reduce the scope or quality of the services they offer. This can result in a decreased level of support to the community, affecting vulnerable populations and individuals in need.

Some community service providers may be compelled to raise fees or charges for their services to cover the increased operational costs. This can place a financial burden on individuals who rely on these services.

Rising operational costs may lead to budget cuts in staffing or stagnant wages for employees. This can result in a higher turnover rate and a decline in the quality-of-service delivery due to fewer skilled and motivated workers.

Community service organisations may be required to divert resources to maintain or upgrade their infrastructure and equipment to meet rising operational costs. This can detract from funds available for service delivery.

Organisations facing rising operational costs may delay expansion plans or innovative initiatives aimed at improving the quality and reach of their services.

Some organisations may struggle to maintain efficiency in the face of increased operational costs, leading to less effective service delivery and potentially harming the overall quality of services.

The communities that rely on these services may experience the most significant impacts. For example, individuals in need may face longer wait times, reduced access to services, or a decrease in the overall quality of support.

2.4 What have been your experiences with and reflections on the supplementation and change to indexation?

Aged care funding in Australia has undergone significant changes in recent years, with discussions around the need for additional supplementation for quality care and support for older Australians. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety highlighted several issues in the sector, including concerns about funding adequacy and indexation rates.

One of the key shifts in government funding for the Community Sector has been a move towards outcomes-based funding. This approach emphasises measuring the impact and outcomes of community programs rather than simply providing funding based on inputs or outputs. This change has led to increased demand on our organisation to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs and services.

There are concerns about the adequacy of funding. Funding levels do not keep pace with the rising costs of service delivery, especially in areas with higher living costs, such as rural and remote communities. This is a concern about the sustainability of services we provide.

Indexation adjustment to funding levels to assist with inflation and changes in the cost of living is not enough. It would be great to have a fair and transparent indexation mechanism that ensures that funding keeps pace with the rising cost of service delivery. Changes to indexation formulas across different funding and Governments can have a significant impact on the financial sustainability of our organisation.

Community organisations rely on government grants and contracts for their operations. As the demand for funding has increased, competition among organisations for available funds has also grown. This has led to concerns about struggling to secure funding and maintain our services.

Changes in funding and indexation can directly impact the services and support that we provide. We may be forced to reduce services, lay off staff, or find alternative sources of revenue if government funding is insufficient.

2.5 How can CSOs and the department work together to determine where funds are needed most to ensure equitable and responsive distribution of funds?

Conduct joint needs assessments to prioritise where funds are needed most. These assessments should involve a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, experts, and representatives from CSOs and government departments.

Work together to develop transparent budget allocation mechanisms. This may involve setting criteria for fund distribution, such as population density, poverty rates, or other relevant indicators.

Streamline the grant and funding application process for CSOs. Ensure that it is easy to access and navigate, with clear guidelines and criteria.

Recognise that needs may change over time, and both CSOs and government departments should be willing to adapt their strategies and funding priorities accordingly.

Collaborate on capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the abilities of CSOs in project management, reporting, and compliance with government requirements.

CSOs can advocate for policy changes that promote equitable distribution of funds and more effective government programs. Collaboration between CSOs and government departments can help to align policy objectives.

Establish a process for regular review and feedback on the collaboration's effectiveness. This will allow both CSOs and government departments to make adjustments and improvements as needed.

2.6 How can government streamline reporting requirements, including across multiple grants, to reduce administrative burden on CSOs?

Create standardised reporting templates that CSOs can use across multiple grants. These templates should be user-friendly and easy to fill out. The templates should be designed to capture essential information while minimising duplication.

Align reporting periods for different grants to reduce the frequency of reporting. CSOs often receive grants from multiple sources, and having different reporting timelines can be burdensome. By coordinating reporting periods, CSOs can submit consolidated reports for multiple grants.

Implement a risk-based approach to reporting requirements. CSOs that have a proven track record of accountability and compliance could have reduced reporting obligations, while those with a history of non-compliance may have more stringent reporting requirements.

Ensure that grant agreements are clear and concise, with reporting requirements that are straightforward and easy to understand. CSOs should have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

Use available data from previous reports and other government databases to pre-fill certain sections of the reporting templates. This reduces the data entry burden on CSOs.

Provide training and technical assistance to CSOs to help them better understand reporting requirements and use the reporting systems effectively. This can improve compliance and reduce errors.

Periodically review and update reporting requirements to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with the goals of the grant programs. Outdated or unnecessary reporting requirements should be eliminated.

3.1 What length grants are CSOs seeking to provide certainty and stability for ongoing service delivery?

Some CSOs may apply for short-term grants to address immediate needs or pilot new programs. These grants are typically for a duration of 1 to 2 years and may help organizations kick-start new initiatives or provide services during a specific period of high demand.

In some cases, CSOs may pursue multi-year grants that extend beyond the typical 3-5 year range. These grants offer greater stability and are particularly beneficial for organisations with well-established programs that aim to make a lasting impact on their communities.

Multi-year grants are beneficial in maintaining qualified staff to deliver the services. Many staff need to ensure that they can cover them, and their families increased cost of living and may not be interested in short, fixed term contracts.

3.3 What funding flexibility do CSOs require to enable service delivery and innovation?

CSOs require funding flexibility to enable effective service delivery and innovation. This flexibility is essential to respond to the changing needs of the communities we serve and to adapt to evolving challenges.

CSOs often require multi-year funding commitments rather than short-term grants. Multi-year funding provides stability and allows organisations to plan and implement long-term projects. This is particularly important for CSOs engaged in activities like poverty reduction, education, healthcare, aged care, homelessness, youth and other areas where sustainable, ongoing efforts are needed.

Providing core funding or unrestricted grants allows CSOs to cover essential operational costs, such as salaries, rent, and utilities. This support is vital because it frees up resources and enables organisations to allocate funds where they are most needed.

Funding models that emphasise outcomes and impact, rather than strict adherence to predetermined activities, give CSOs the flexibility to innovate and adapt their approaches based on what works best for their target populations. Outcome-focused funding allows organisations to experiment with new solutions and learn from their experiences.

CSOs should have the ability to reallocate funds within their budgets as circumstances change. This flexibility enables them to respond to emergencies, seize unexpected opportunities, or adjust their programs based on community feedback.

CSOs often have to navigate complex regulations and reporting requirements. Streamlining and simplifying these regulations can free up resources that would otherwise be spent on compliance.

3.4 What flexibility is required by CSOs in acquittal processes to support and encourage sector innovation?

CSOs play a crucial role in fostering sector innovation and supporting various initiatives. To do so effectively, CSOs need to exhibit flexibility in their acquittal processes. Acquittal processes are typically used by CSOs to report on the use of funds and demonstrate accountability to donors, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

CSOs should shift from traditional input-based reporting to outcome-focused reporting. Instead of just detailing how funds were spent, CSOs should emphasize the impact and outcomes achieved. This approach allows CSOs to showcase the innovative and transformative changes brought about by their initiatives.

CSOs should be flexible in their reporting and willing to adapt to changing circumstances. Innovation often requires experimentation and learning from failures. CSOs should be encouraged to share lessons learned from both successful and unsuccessful initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

In addition to financial reporting, CSOs should incorporate narrative reporting that highlights the qualitative aspects of their work. This can include case studies, success stories, and testimonials that demonstrate the innovative solutions and positive changes they have brought about.

The acquittal process should be streamlined and simplified, reducing the administrative burden on CSOs. Complex and burdensome reporting requirements can stifle innovation. CSOs should be encouraged to focus on their mission rather than excessive paperwork.

CSOs should be open to collaborative evaluation processes, where they work with stakeholders, including donors and beneficiaries, to assess the effectiveness and impact of their work. This collaborative approach can provide a more holistic view of innovation outcomes.

CSOs need to be given the latitude to take calculated risks in pursuit of innovative solutions. A risk-averse environment can discourage experimentation and limit the potential for groundbreaking innovations.

3.5 How can government improve the variation process, with consideration that CSOs must demonstrate alignment with the grant agreement and provide evidence of value for money outcomes?

The government should provide clear and transparent guidelines for CSOs on the variation process, including the criteria for requesting a variation and the documentation required.

Simplify and streamline the application process for variations to grant agreements. This can include providing online tools and resources to make the process more accessible.

Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that includes performance indicators and metrics to assess the impact of CSO programs and projects. This will help in demonstrating value for money outcomes.

Adopt a risk-based approach to variations, where variations are more closely scrutinised for high-risk projects or organisations, while low-risk projects or organisations may have a simpler process.

Consider involving independent third-party evaluators to verify the outcomes and value for money provided by CSOs. This can enhance transparency and accountability.

Foster collaboration and open communication between CSOs and government agencies. Seek feedback from CSOs on the variation process to continuously improve it.

Continuously review and refine the variation process based on lessons learned and evolving best practices.

4.3 How could larger CSOs support smaller CSOs? What are the barriers to providing this support?

Provide training and mentorship programs to build the skills and capacity of smaller CSOs.

Offer free or low-cost consulting services in areas like financial management, program evaluation, and strategic planning.

Share office space, facilities, or equipment, reducing overhead costs for smaller CSOs.

Share research, data, and best practices to help smaller CSOs make informed decisions.

Collaborate on advocacy campaigns and leverage the larger CSO's resources and influence.

Facilitate connections with other organisations, donors, and stakeholders, helping smaller CSOs broaden their network.

Collaborate on projects or programs that align with the missions and goals of both organisations.

Work together on fundraising efforts, increasing the chances of success.

Help smaller CSOs improve their governance structure and practices.

Assist in developing and implementing effective program evaluation and impact assessment strategies.

Barriers are Larger CSOs may have limited resources to allocate supporting smaller organisations. They must balance their own operational needs with support efforts.

Smaller and larger CSOs may have differing missions and priorities, which can hinder effective collaboration and support.

Smaller CSOs may be hesitant to accept help from larger ones due to concerns about autonomy, control, or influence.

5.1 What is your experience with and reflections on place-based funding approaches?

Place-based funding encourages active engagement with local communities. By partnering with trusted community organisations like ours, funders can gain valuable insights into the specific issues and opportunities within a given area. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the local context, which can lead to more effective solutions.

Building and maintaining trust within the community is essential for the success of place-based funding initiatives. Trusted local organisations often have established relationships with community members, which can facilitate trust-building efforts. These organisations are better positioned to navigate local dynamics and cultural nuances, enhancing the effectiveness of the funding.

Place-based funding allows for tailored solutions. Trusted local organisations can adapt their programs and services to meet the unique needs of the community. This flexibility is crucial because what works in one area may not work in another, even if the challenges seem similar.

Working with trusted local partners can enhance accountability and transparency. These organisations are often deeply embedded in the community and are more likely to be held accountable by the residents. This helps ensure that the funding is used efficiently and that the community's voices are heard.

5.2 What innovative approaches could be implemented to ensure the grant funding reaches trusted community organisations with strong local links?

Develop a digital platform or portal that facilitates the application process for community organisations. This platform can be designed to match local organisations with funders based on their specific needs, ensuring that the funding is directed to the most suitable recipients.

Foster collaborative partnerships between government, private sector, and non-profit organisations to pool resources and expertise. These partnerships can facilitate the efficient distribution of funding to trusted community organisations.

Appoint community navigators or liaisons who are embedded in the local community and can identify deserving organisations, assist with the application process, and provide ongoing support and feedback. Use geospatial analysis and mapping tools to identify areas with the greatest need and ensure that funding is directed to underserved communities.

Develop an inclusive application process that takes into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of communities, ensuring that all communities have equal access to funding opportunities.

5.3 Which areas do you consider have duplicative funding or gaps you think need to be addressed, and what is the evidence?

The Indigenous population in Australia often faces disparities in healthcare, education, housing, and employment. Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is an ongoing challenge. This is evident with The Closing the Gap initiative and reports from organisations like the Productivity Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission provide evidence of gaps in Indigenous funding and services.

Aged care is a critical issue in Australia, and there have been concerns about the adequacy of funding and the quality of services in the sector.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety has highlighted issues in the aged care system and provided evidence of gaps and inefficiencies.

Youth Homelessness often, funding is focused on providing immediate relief to homeless individuals and youth, but there are gaps in funding for preventive measures that address the root causes of homelessness, such as mental health services, affordable housing, and employment programs.

Some youth may experience gaps in services when transitioning from youth-specific support to adult services, leading to increased risks of homelessness. Bridging this gap is essential.

Reports and studies from government agencies, research organisations, and non-profit groups can provide evidence of funding gaps in the services provided for homeless individuals and youth in NSW.

5.4 Where there is a community-led change initiative, could shared accountability to community and funders (government) strengthen service delivery?

When all stakeholders are held accountable, they are more likely to respond to the needs and concerns of the community. This can lead to services that better align with the community's actual needs.

By involving the community in decision-making and holding funders accountable to the community's needs and expectations, local communities can feel more empowered and engaged in the change process.

When multiple stakeholders share responsibility, there's a collective commitment to achieving the desired outcomes, which can lead to more effective and sustainable service delivery.

6.3 What does success look like?

Meeting Community needs

Financial Sustainability

Growth and expansion for innovative ideas

Funding for research or innovation projects

Long term funding for programs and services