



# A CONNECTED INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE AND PLANET THRIVE

**Our Community Development Framework**



**DIVRS**

Darebin Information,  
Volunteer & Resource Service

# Our Community Development Framework

We take a community development approach to the way we work at DIVRS. Doing so supports our progress towards a connected inclusive community where people and planet thrive.

Community development principles provide a holistic approach to working with communities. We use strengths-based ways of working with people to support people identify and act on the issues important to them and their community. We acknowledge that communities can shape a positive future through connected efforts and sharing responsibility.

Our Community Development Framework was co-created by our team, volunteers and community partners and reflects our commitment to our vision, our community and positive outcomes through continual improvement.

Community development can look and feel different in different locations and projects as communities are diverse and unique. This framework is designed to guide how we work, how we develop projects and how we monitor and evaluate the impact we have in our communities. Rather than a step by step process it provides principles to guide the way we work.



# What do we hope to achieve?

Through using an evidence based, best practice strategic approach to community development and strengthening, DIVRS aims to:

- Activate community by connecting people to opportunities and their community.
- Actively create welcoming spaces for the people of Darebin to connect with each other, their community and local opportunities.
- Create opportunities for people to share their gifts and skills to strengthen a sense of belonging and connection to our community.

Our Community Development Framework supports our generosity of spirit at DIVRS. Being generous with our time, sharing information and collaborating are important to us. It enables us to foster relationships and contribute to positive outcomes for the people and communities we work alongside.

We use an asset based approach to work with the community and our partners to build on our strengths and community generosity to:

- Empower people to make choices and develop skills.
- Build local capacity for social and financial inclusion.
- Build local capacity for environmental sustainability.
- Connect and organise for greater impact.



# Our Language

At DIVRS, we believe in fostering a respectful, inclusive and caring environment in all our interactions with people. We consider our volunteers, people who participate in our programs or engage with our services, placement students, DIVRS staff and everyone involved in our initiatives as part of one community. Our approach is person-centered, acknowledging and respecting the experiences people have. We provide support by working holistically with each person and meeting them where they are at.

A key aspect of how we use language is avoiding fixed labels for people. We consciously do not use words or phrases such as 'in need,' 'disadvantaged,' 'marginalised,' or 'vulnerable.' We recognise such language can create divisions within our community between those who 'have' and those who 'need.' Instead, we choose inclusive language that promotes unity and shared experiences.

For example, when referring to our food initiatives, we emphasise that we 'share food with people' rather than 'distributing food to those in need.' This highlights the collaborative nature of our efforts and reinforces the idea that we are all part of a caring community. We engage with individuals as 'people', 'community members' or 'program participants' rather than using the term 'clients'. This choice of language reflects our commitment to building meaningful relationships and treating everyone with dignity and respect.

By adopting inclusive language, we aim to create an environment where all people feel valued and empowered. We strive to promote a sense of belonging, recognising the strengths and unique qualities of each person in our community. Through our language choices, we reinforce the principles of respect, inclusivity and care that are integral to the DIVRS Community Development Framework.



# The Framework



**Listen to understand**



**Welcoming and Accessible**



**Build Trust and Connect**



**Collaborate, Communicate and  
Collective Action**



**Evaluate and Celebrate**

## Listen to understand

We listen to people and our partners to understand local priorities and how we can contribute to supporting successful outcomes.

We do this by:

- taking time to listen
- valuing local relationships
- creating spaces to gather together
- developing a shared understanding.



## Welcoming and Accessible

We provide welcoming, accessible and safe spaces for people to come together to explore local opportunities.

We do this by:

- being culturally respectful and safe for everyone
- being person centred and flexible
- encouraging a diversity of ideas
- inviting and welcoming participation
- ensuring all of our opportunities to participate are accessible to everyone.



## Build Trust and Connect

We build on our listening and value local wisdom and knowledge to build trust and create connection.

We do this by:

- empowering people to make choices
- understanding community's own priorities rather than those dictated by others
- supporting capacity building and skills development
- having a flexible service system to meet local needs
- balanced and transparent partnerships based on mutual trust and respect
- working with the community rather than doing things for them or to them
- sharing information so that the community can make informed decisions
- doing what we say we will.



## Collaborate, Communicate and Collective Action

We acknowledge that community participation and connection grows when we actively encourage collaboration with diverse people and partners; communicate clearly and support community led collective action.

We do this by:

- identifying, connecting and mobilising community assets, strengths and resources to make collective decisions and take action
- sharing knowledge and resources
- building local capacity
- modelling collaboration by inviting others to participate
- clearly communicating regularly with our team, community and partners
- managing expectations
- being open to new knowledge and new ways of thinking
- keeping our purpose, strategies and action plans clear
- understanding that people have varying levels of commitment
- connecting and organising for greater impact.



## Evaluate and Celebrate

We value continuous improvement through learning together and prioritise time to come together to reflect and celebrate throughout a project or initiative.

We do this by:

- adopting participatory process to evaluation
- regularly coming together to debrief
- continuously collecting data to monitor our projects or initiatives
- celebrating project and initiative highlights with all collaborators
- sharing our learnings across our teams, our community and our partners
- sharing our stories
- learning from our successes and our challenges.



# Our Methodology

DIVRS's Community Development Framework is underpinned by Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and guided by the International Association for Community Development's International Standards (pictured on the next page).

In simple terms, ABCD focuses on recognising and building upon the strengths and assets that exist within a community. ABCD aims to inspire vibrant communities through adopting strength based ways of working together.

Rather than solely focusing on the problems or needs of a community, ABCD looks at what is already good and valuable within that community. It acknowledges that every individual has unique skills, knowledge and resources that can contribute to the community's well-being.

DIVRS believes in the power of the community itself. ABCD encourages community members to actively participate and take ownership of their own development. It emphasises that people are not only recipients of help or services; they are active contributors and agents of change.

Through the ABCD approach, DIVRS identifies and mobilises existing assets within the community. These assets can be diverse, including individual talents, local businesses, community organisations, cultural heritage and social connections. By harnessing these assets, DIVRS aims to strengthen the community's resilience, capacity and sense of belonging.

Overall, by using the ABCD approach DIVRS supports individuals to be active participants in their own community's development and fosters collaboration to create sustainable and positive change.



# What are the International Association for Community Development (IACD) International Standards for Community Development Practice?

In 2016 IACD released a new definition of community development:

**“Community Development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether they be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.”**

(IACD p.8)

Following the release of the definition, IACD gathered community development academics and practitioners to create a set of practice principles underpinned by the definition of community development to support community development workers in the field. The outcome of the engagement process was the launch of the IACD International Standards for Community Development Practice at the World Community Development Conference in Maynooth, Ireland in June 2018.

The standards identified eight equally important themes with key practice areas to guide community development practice.

THEMES	KEY PRACTICE AREAS
Values into practice	Understand the values, processes, and outcomes of community development, and apply these to practice in all the other key areas
Engaging with communities	Understand and engage with communities, building and maintaining relationships with individuals and groups
Participatory Planning	Develop and support collaborative working and community participation
Organising for Change	Enable communities to take collective action, increase their influence and if appropriate their ability to access, manage and control resources and services.
Learning for Change	Support people and organisations to learn together and to raise understanding, confidence and the skills needed for social change
Diversity and inclusion	Design and deliver practices, policies, structures, and programmes that recognise and respect diversity and promote inclusion.
Leadership and Infrastructure	Facilitate and support organisational development and infrastructure for community development, promoting and providing empowering leadership.
Developing and improving policy and practice	Develop, evaluate, and inform practice and policy for community development, using participatory evaluation to inform and improve strategic and operational practice

[www.iacdglobal.org](http://www.iacdglobal.org)

**Asset Based Community Development**  
Start with what's Strong rather than what's Wrong



**The Global Goals**  
What we do contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals



**Foundations that guide everything we do!**



**Person Centred**  
We work with the whole person & meet them where they are at.



**Power of Volunteerism**  
It's all about relationships & contributions.



# Community Development Readings & Resources

ABCD Institute. (2021) **ABCD Values**. DePaul University, Chicago.  
<https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/about/Pages/Values.aspx>

Better Evaluation. (2021) **Empowerment Evaluation**  
[https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/empowerment\\_evaluation](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/empowerment_evaluation)

IACD (2018) **The International Standards for Community Development**.  
<https://www.iacdglobal.org/international-standards-accreditation/standards/>

Ife, J (2013) **Community Development in an Uncertain World: Vision, Analysis and Practice** Cambridge University Press: Melbourne. pp. 267-299.

Jeder Institute. (2020) **Participatory Community Building Guidebook** (2nd edn)  
[https://www.jeder.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Participatory-Community-Building-Guidebook-2020\\_v2-1.pdf](https://www.jeder.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Participatory-Community-Building-Guidebook-2020_v2-1.pdf)

Kenny, S. (2011) **Developing communities for the future** (4th edn.). Melbourne: Cengage Learning.

Kenny, S. & Connors, P. (2016) **Developing communities for the future** (5th ed.). Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993) **Building communities from the inside out: a path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets**. Evanston, Ill.: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

**Every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given.**  
-John McKnight

Published by the Darebin Information Volunteer & Resource Service

[www.divrs.org.au](http://www.divrs.org.au)  
9480 8200  
285-287 High St, Preston 3072  
[admin@divrs.org.au](mailto:admin@divrs.org.au)

Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service is incorporated under the incorporated Association Act 1981.

It was formerly the Northcote Community Information and Support Service and Northcote Citizen's Advice Bureau and Information Centre.

It is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient.

ABN 80 927 699 259

All photos are published, owned and protected by DIVRS 2023©

