AAG
Australian Association of Gerontology

DEVELOPING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN CODESIGN

Report of the AAG workshop facilitated by Mark Elliot, Trish Cave and Peter Bragge, held on 22 November 2022 at the 55th AAG conference.

Report launched in August 2023

In collaboration with

OPAN | Older Persons Advocacy Network

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including members of the Stolen Generations. For further information see AAG's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Advisory Group (ATSIAAG).

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

The Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) and Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) regularly work with the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) to help inform their policy by providing participants from their network for consultations. Through this work it has been recognised that the term, codesign, is being used increasingly, but without a clear understanding of what is meant by it, or, what is expected from participants.

In order to help address this issue, the AAG workshop series: "Codesign principles for ageing and aged care engagement", and the Glenda Powell Travelling Fellowship were used as an opportunity to engage with experts in collaboration and health codesign. As part of these activities, the idea emerged to create a set of guiding principles to help assist older people to assess the opportunity and prepare to participate in codesign initiatives.

To support this ambition, a set of guiding principles were initially drafted, and then further developed during a codesign workshop (applying codesign was seen as a key means for the group to learn about it). This codesign involved key stakeholders and older people working on the draft, helping refine how to describe what codesign is, what the principles of codesign are, along with practical questions that can be used when assessing your participation.

The contributions and insights from the participants in the codesign activities led the authors to rework their draft guide, simplifying language, and extending the supporting information about the codesign process, benefits, risks and the mindset needed to engage with codesign.

The resulting document "Supporting Participation in Codesign" (appended to this report), is intended to support those participating in codesign, and those designing codesign activities for older people. This is especially important to help align expectations for all involved and provide the best opportunity for success. This report concludes with a set of recommendations for the further development of codesign capability for both participants and government.

BACKGROUND

Codesign is a relatively new and increasingly mandated approach to consultation across the public sector. As a result, more community members and representative organisations are being asked to participate. However, there is often little understanding as to how codesign works, its risks, benefits and the requirements needed to support effective participation. This is complicated by the fact that many of those being asked to participate will have previous experience with more traditional methods of consultation, which when applied to answering these questions can lead to misaligned expectations and approaches.

Due to these and other challenges, AAG, Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN), Collabforge and BehaviourWorks partnered to develop a guide for assessing the merit of participating in codesign processes, specifically, with government agencies and departments working with older people (see AAG resource: Supporting You to Participate in Codesign).

The development of this guide was also informed by a codesign workshop on 22 November 2022, with approximately 50 people representing:

▶ Members of the OPAN National Older Persons Reference Group

▶ AAG's Special Interest Group convenors

▶ AAG's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group members

▶ AAG's network of members and participants with lived experience

▶ Advocacy and policy staff from other peak bodies

The workshop, "Codesign principles for ageing and aged care engagement", was part of the AAG 2022 Conference in Adelaide, and was held as a hybrid event with participants convened at the Adelaide Convention Centre and online.

The following provides a report of this workshop, its approach, activities and results.

APPROACH & ACTIVITIES

The approach taken was to involve participants in a codesign workshop, to develop the guidance document, but to also help illustrate the ideas and elements involved in codesign.

The workshop was designed to deliver the outcomes of supporting participants to become more:

1. Aligned on the benefits and risks of codesign, with a better understanding of what is and is not achievable through codesign

2. Able to better plan and prepare for their participation

3. Able to better manage expectations up and with those whom they may represent

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Codesign Presentation

In order to provide an introduction to codesign, and to create a shared understanding for further discussion, the workshop commenced with an overview of codesign - what it is, why it is used and its risks and benefits, followed by a Q&A. This presentation was delivered by Mark Elliott, based on Collabforge's methodology and +15 years of experience delivering codesign projects in the public sector for government agencies around Australia.

For a reproduction of the concepts presented, see AAG resource: Supporting You to Participate in Codesign.

Small group review of draft guide to participation

Following the introductory presentation, participants worked in small groups to review and discuss a short (one-page) draft document, titled, "Have You Been Invited to Participate in Codesign?". The purpose of this activity was to test a prototype of a document that could be shared with a wider group, and that would also help deliver on the workshop (and project outcomes) listed above.

Participants were asked to review the content, marking it up as they went, and then to discuss what did and didn't make sense with their table, developing recommendations to be provided back to the facilitators.

The results of this feedback have been incorporated into the appended document (see below for the specific outcomes).

Role-play: Discussing codesign with government representatives

The next and final workshop activity was designed to test the one-page document by asking participants to engage in a hypothetical scenario in which they were invited to participate in a government-led codesign project. They were then asked to apply the guidance questions and prompts listed in the document to develop their own questions for government representatives, with the aim of gathering the information needed to inform and ultimately decide as to whether or not to participate in the proposed codesign workshop.

Participants then used the questions they developed in a role-playing activity, where facilitators acted the part of government representatives, who responded to their questions. (The facilitators have a great deal of experience delivering codesign with government and their performance was indicated by others in the room with experience as being "very realistic.")

RESULTS

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Results from the workshop activities were captured using a range of methods, including, note-taking, online surveys, handwritten feedback and recordings. The following summarised participant contributions were integrated into the appended codesign participation guide by the project team.

Codesign Presentation

1. Background is helpful for understanding codesign and what is being asked of us to support.

2. The "3C" framework helped illustrate the different modes of participation, including codesign.

Codesign Participation Background Provided in Guidance Document

1. The background is helpful but needs more detail and explanation.

2. More plain language needed when explaining the concepts.

3. Consider ways to break up text, while highlighting the key messages.

Participation Question Prompts Provided in Guidance Document

1. Address participant privacy more.

2. Include explicit reference about inclusion and accessibility (i.e., indigenous, dementia, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity).

General

1. The guide should be shared more widely across the sector to all involved in codesign.

2. The guide should be shared with those delivering codesign projects (e.g., government) to help inform their design and decisions.

The following quotes reflect key questions for government representatives proposing to undertake codesign activities. These quotes were captured during the role play activity and informed the final participation guide:

▶ 'Can I access materials prior? Will I get some time to think about my responses?'

▶ 'What will happen to my input?'

▶ 'I have memory / hearing difficulties, how will I be supported?'

▶ 'Who else have you been speaking to and what input / power do they have to influence decisions?'

▶ 'What do you mean by codesign, how are you actually going to do it? How will you make sure everyone is heard?'

▶ 'What feedback will I receive? Often we never hear back'

FACILITATOR INSIGHTS

Following the workshop, several online meetings were held with the project team to consolidate our reflections for the purposes of improving the participation guide. The following represent the project team's key take-aways:

1. Both sides (participants and government) require goodwill to be successful when undertaking any collaborative activity, which needs reinforcing in the guide, especially for those who have had prior negative experiences.

2. It is critical to understand the scope of the codesign under consideration (what is on and off the table, for a given activity). It's always okay to ask facilitators if this isn't clear.

3. Codesign can look different for participants from project to project and at different points along the timeline of the project.

4. It is imperative that participants understand their role in a workshop e.g., as a representative of others, or for their individual experience (what perspectives are they being asked to bring?).

5. To support quality participation, it is important for participants to understand how their contributions might inform the outcome or output of the workshop, as well as the final product. Key to this is understanding what will happen next in the design and policy authoring process.

6. The principles document should resonate with both sides - those designing codesign engagements and those participating in codesign activities - in order to help bridge the two perspectives.

7. Developing clear and concise shared language for codesign concepts between codesigners and participants helps participants understand and discuss their involvement with clarity and confidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed by the project team as a result of the workshop and project as a whole:

Codesign Training Resources

1. Provide information, reference materials and training for further understanding of codesign theory and methods for those who request it. (The authors considered including this in the document, however, it was thought this would confuse rather than benefit the majority of people this document is intended to support).

2. Provide a recording of the presentation by Dr. Mark Elliott, recorded on the day, or re-record this presentation specifically for the purpose of providing additional but not differing context, terminology and methodology. After hearing from Mark people picked up on and referenced terms and ideas as part of the activities. (Noting on the day the sound was interrupted by conference audio system faults).

Increase Accessibility

3. Consider providing translations of the document for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and possibly an adapted version for Indigenous groups.

4. Develop scripts and record a version of the document as discussion along with role-play questions with government representatives to support accessibility by all potential participants.

5. Government should consider developing a lived experience framework to support consistency of engagement with participants (this was a participant contributed idea).

Bridging Government Codesigners & Participants

6. Provide the document to government agencies and departments to distribute along with their invitations to participate in codesign activities.

APPENDIX

COLLABORATION DESIGN

The following concepts were presented at the workshop, "Codesign principles for ageing and aged care engagement", as part of the AAG 2022 Conference in Adelaide. The key ideas are reproduced here to help convey the core features of codesign.

Codesign is the process of designing policies, programs, projects or products with key stakeholders. However, codesign can take many forms and be interpreted in many ways, therefore it is important for participants to do their best to understand how codesign is being used and defined in the given context.

For the purposes of this project, the authors have adopted Collabforge's definition of codesign, which references their framework for collaboration, see Collaboration Design (2019) (tiny.cc/collaborationdesign).

This framework draws on three interrelated group processes to form an overall picture of collaborative processes like codesign (see below diagram).

Cocreation
Add / edit / delete rights to a shared pool of content

Cooperation
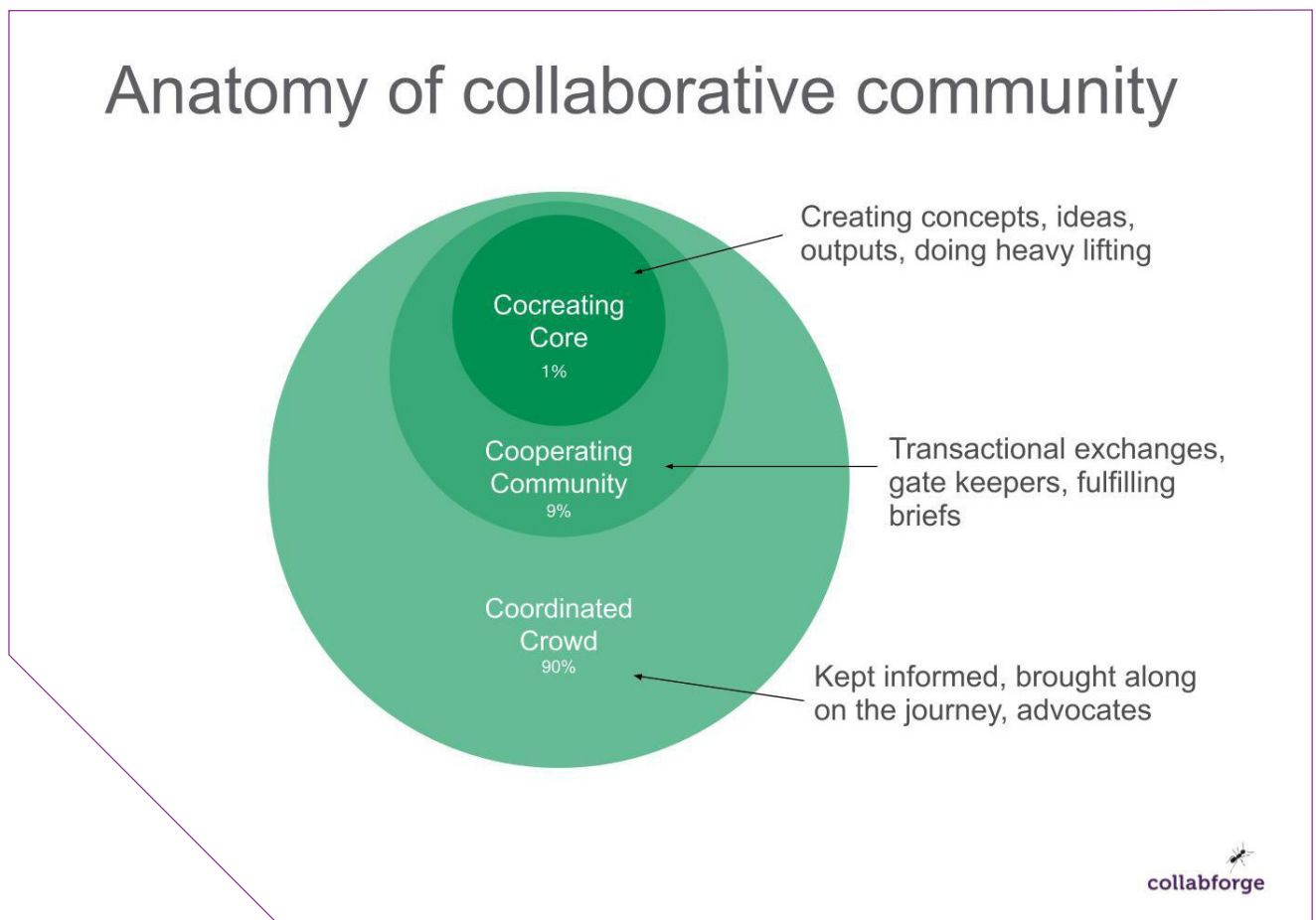Individual contributions to a process that aggregates for gain

Coordination
Individual elements brought into a space that foregrounds patterns

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Coordination provides a foundation for all forms of group work, by highlighting patterns that are useful for participants. These patterns create alignments, such as positioning in physical space (sitting near the right people) and language and cultural norms (being able to communicate and relate to one another). Examples of coordination include: shared language and social norms, workplace and conference environments, even internet search returns.

Cooperation can then be built on a foundation of coordination, using a coordinated group of people to contribute individually to an initiative, in order to aggregate these contributions for insight or consensus. Examples include surveys, voting or comments made in the margins of a document.

Cocreation, the process most relatable to codesign, builds on cooperation, by extending individualistic contributions into a more creative space. This allows participants to add, edit and even delete other participants' work. In this case, the contributions from participants does affect the work of others, with new interpretations of the whole being needed after each contribution. Examples are co-authorship of a single document, jazz and other forms of group improvisation and wiki page collaboration (e.g. a Wikipedia article).

The following diagram shows how these groups work processes can be applied to any collaborating group working on a complex challenge over some amount of time, such as a government policy codesign project.

Anatomy of collaborative community

Creating concepts, ideas, outputs, doing heavy lifting

Cocreating Core
1%

Transactional exchanges, gate keepers, fulfilling briefs

Cooperating Community
9%

Coordinated Crowd
90%

Kept informed, brought along on the journey, advocates

collabforge

CODESIGN = COCREATION

When considering the three group work processes represented by the above framework, in practice, codesign will therefore involve all 3Cs. For effective codesign to take place, some amount of coordination, cooperation and cocreation will be required. However, participants will often assume "codesign" means cocreation. And while in part this may be true, this is not always accurate, depending on the project or point in the overall policy process the participant is entering. For example, a participant with certain expertise may be asked to review a document, or complete a survey that is a smaller part of an overall codesign project.

Therefore, to manage expectations and evaluate the opportunity, it is important to gain clarity regarding the scope, focus and influence of the codesign, as well as how the activity you are being asked to participate in relates to the final result.

THE BENEFITS OF CODESIGN

Codesign is a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement that can gain more and deeper insights than other more traditional forms of consultation. It does this by directly engaging those most impacted by the final result of the codesign, eg those affected by the policy that was codesigned. Therefore, it can be an excellent way to deliver impactful outcomes like:

▶ Discovering and validating end-user needs and interests

▶ Fostering trust and shared understanding of constraints and limitations

▶ Generating shared ownership, buy-in and voluntary compliance

THE LIMITS OF CODESIGN

Codesign does have limits to its application and is not always the best option for engagement and consultation. The following provides several examples of this:

▶ Codesign can't be applied to every aspect of a project as it is too energy and time intensive and requires more lead time and attention to deliver than is often available to public servants.

▶ The influence of codesigners must also be carefully considered, as those "up the chain" may not always adopt the results of a given codesign effort.

▶ Codesign generates emergent outcomes as a group works together, and these new results may not have been expected, and may put the codesign "owners" in a challenging position.

▶ Codesing is not always the right approach and if applied to the wrong issue, with the wrong people or for the wrong type of challenge, it may produce more frustration than benefits.

▶ Codesign requires more resourcing than more traditional forms of consultation, so if it is under-resourced, it can undermine the trust and input from participants.

HOW AND WHEN CODESIGN IS BEST USED

Codesign can be applied with great results to a range of different stages in a design process. For example:

1. Problem definition

2. Stakeholder mapping

3. Solution development

4. Testing and refinement

Within these different applications, codesign can take many forms. While it is most often delivered in a workshop setting, these workshops can be on or off-line. Interactions can also be synchronous (happening at the same time in the same space) or asynchronous (for example via email). Codesign results can also be delivered by embedding participants into an overall project team to gain their insights at every stage of the process (this is one of the best approaches, but it is one of the most intensive for participants, and also limits the numbers of those who can participate).

To improve the experience of ageing through *CONNECTING RESEARCH, POLICY* and *PRACTICE*

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