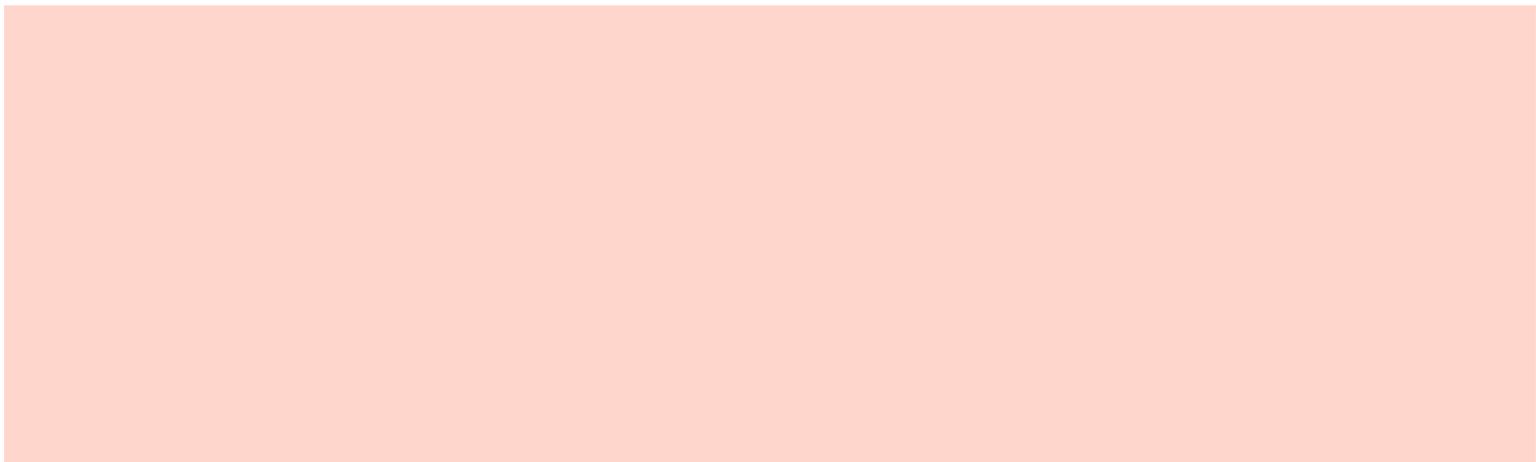# 15

Building partnerships with CALD structures

01 November 2017

What will this resource cover?

Building cross sector relationships and networks are an essential way to build capacity and knowledge within your organisation, as well as understand how to connect with CALD communities on a deeper level. This tool will introduce reasons why it is important for disability organisations, multicultural organisations and organisations specific to an ethnicity or nationality (ethno-specific) to work together to increase access and inclusivity to services for CALD people with disability. Some practical tips will also be provided, as well as a case study with some questions for consideration.

Essential information

Partnerships and networks with ethno-specific organisations and multicultural structures are essential in aiding the process of engaging with CALD individuals and communities and for information sharing regarding good practice. It can also build reciprocal knowledge sharing that can aid both yourself and the CALD structure you are engaging with, where you gain more knowledge of a community, and the CALD organisation may learn more about disability for example.

The word 'partnership' can mean many different things, however one short description of a partnership which has been developed by Vic Health can found here:

https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~/media/about%20us/attachments/fact20sheetpartnerships1.ashx

- **Networking** – involves exchange of information for mutual benefit

- **Coordinating** – involves exchange of information for mutual benefit and altering activities for a common purpose

- **Cooperating** – involves exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources for mutual benefit and a common purpose

- **Collaborating** – involves all the above plus a willingness to increase the capacity of another organisation for mutual benefit and a common purpose.[1]

These four elements show that partnerships can come in different formats, and can be ranked in terms of their level of involvement and input of time and energy. These partnerships can occur at a senior management and strategic level (such as strategic inter-agencies), or be more operational and direct with clients/communities (operational information sharing and client referrals). Both levels can also feed into each other.

Essential good practice tips

You may find that in some communities, there may not be large numbers of organisations that service that community, or there may be so many organisations that you may not know who to contact.

Finding out who to contact requires an assessment. Take the time to investigate an organisation's services, governance and clientele, for example:

- What **services** does the organisation or structure provide?

- What does the organisation's **governance** structure look like? For example, how many workers does the organisation have?

- Who are the **clients** the organisation works with?

After you have completed the above, it is then important to think about the best way to approach these organisations. For example, a formal email may not be the right method of contact for some organisations. Learn from approaches that don't work, and amend your engagement style appropriately. Be flexible in your approach. Continuous learning is the key to engagement. Mistakes are commonplace, and should be viewed as a learning experience.

Some additional examples to help start the process of improving connections between disability service providers, multicultural organisations and ethno-specific organisations include:

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[1] http://www.nada.org.au/media/14537/vhfactsheet_partnerships.pdf

- Research relevant community events that your organisation could attend or have a presence at to make connections with communities;

- When collecting data around CALD demographics, you may find that clients from a particular community are not accessing your service, however your service is located right in the middle of a high-density population of that particular community. Building relationships from analysis of data can also form the basis of a targeted engagement strategy. You could get in contact with the local ethno-specific organisation servicing that particular community, set up a meeting and work with them to identify engagement ideas;

- Place importance on meeting people at networking meetings, workshops and other opportunities where you may informally make contact, and build a meaningful working relationship down the track.

What these partnerships would look like, or produce could consist of the following:

- A **formalised inter-agenc**y that meets regularly, and is made up of ethno-specific structures, multicultural organisations and disability service providers. This inter-agency could be developed at a local level, or cover a larger area;

- **One off disability focussed forums** that bring together a range of people working with CALD individuals and communities with the purpose of sharing best practice examples and updates;

- A **targeted project** that brings together a specialised group of people from different organisations. This type of partnership would more than likely require an amount of funding and formal agreements between partners;

- **Combined training opportunities** that bring together disability workers and people working with CALD communities into a shared learning space. This can help participants learn in an environment where different perspectives are shared and appreciated;

- A development of an **online resource 'hub'** where staff can update a list of events, and connect with each other online. This would require a certain amount of time, resourcing and continuous review to be achievable and relevant; or

- A **combined event** where workers across sectors come together to organise a small event, e.g.- a small multicultural feast day for people with disability.

Building partnerships with CALD structures

A few important points to be mindful of when developing partnerships include:

- Making sure that relationships and partnerships are built on mutual respect, where expertise is valued and shared;

- A focus on building trust is imperative, but it can take time to establish. It is worth taking time to make sure that you are meeting with the right people, and are entering conversations with a community in a respectful way. Ethno-specific structures or multicultural organisations who have detailed expertise in how to approach communities, and knowledge of who the right people to contact are in those communities could be a good first place to call;

- A review of the purpose of a partnership, network, inter-agency etc should be undertaken at various times to ensure that it is still relevant and purposeful;

A note on person-centred care and community

It is also worth exploring the connection between choice, person centred care and community. When working with CALD people with disability, it is important to move beyond an assumption that person centred approaches automatically cover an understanding of cultural needs.

Moving beyond partnerships with ethno-specific structures and multicultural organisations and considering developing relationships within communities directly, it is important to consider the following points:

- As mentioned earlier, building relationships with CALD structures can take time and a build-up of trust. This is especially true when working within communities. Building relationships within communities takes time, respect and may not give measurable outcomes in the first instance;

- The use of bilingual workers, and recruiting workers who have detailed knowledge regarding their community will also aid the process of engagement. (This is explored further in Organisational Capacity section). When matching bilingual workers with clients and community, there should not be an assumption that a client will automatically want to work with a staff member from their own

background. For reasons, why this may be the case, see the *Thinking about stigma, disability and CALD communities* tool in the CALD Engagement and Participation section). There also could be boundary concerns that need to be monitored where bilingual workers could feel professionally challenged when working within their own community;

- The notion of individual choice could also be a foreign concept in some communities. For example, a young Muslim girl with disability may wish to participate in a range of risk taking activities, yet the wishes of her family and the wider community, including the local mufti, may be placing pressure on her not to partake in these activities. Understanding the subtle details of community, culture, collective societies and individual choice are important to unpack and be perceptive to when working with individuals with disability and their community.

An assessment of an individual's capacity to direct person-centred care

These questions also follow basic ABS Census search perimeters which makes it easier to compare the data that you have collected in your potential client base search against the data that you have collected to determine your actual client base.

A. What are the person's information skills?

B. What are the person's information access skills?

C. Do they feel that they have the right to determine the direction of their own future?

Case study

Maria is working with Rowda who is 34 and has an intellectual disability. Rowda has expressed that she would like to participate in some sports activities and social events. Rowda feels as though she has been making real progress with Marie's guidance, and she also feels as though she may be ready to move into independent living in the next year. In the next appointment with Rowda, her mother and father also attend. Rowda's parents express grave concerns about her moving into independent living, and also explain that their local Mufti has mentioned that he believes that Rowda's ideas about the activities she wishes to participate in are inappropriate.

Maria doesn't quite know where to start to try and work with Rowda to achieve her goals.

Key questions

How should Marie address these issues with Rowda and her family?

Should Marie learn more about Rowda's community to understand the reasons why the Mufti feels as though Rowda's wishes are inappropriate?

How should Marie work with Rowda to achieve her goals within her cultural context?

Who would you approach to support or partner your approach?