



GROWING OUR PEOPLE TO GROW OUR COMMUNITY™

The Gulf Academy – Information sheet 2 – Co design.

The Gulf Academy is a cornerstone of the vision that the communities of the Lower Gulf of Carpentaria have for their young people and the purpose is to produce,

“Self-reliant adults capable of competing equitably for employment, business, educational and cultural opportunities within the region and beyond.”

In many instances in the past and still relevant today, the conventional approach when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been attempting to bring stakeholders and partners together, to “work across silos” and deliver services **to** and **for** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Examples include various Council of Australian Government (COAG) trials, the Remote Service Delivery Strategy and under the previous Closing the Gap arrangements. All have been useful initiatives, however there is little evidence of sustained achievement, system change or improvement in people’s daily lives.

To make the Gulf Academy a reality requires partners and stakeholders to work together, to work **with** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Commitment to a genuine process of Co-design, we believe, is the key to delivering a successful Gulf Academy.

What is Co-design and Why is it different?

An effective co-design process works with service users, funders, communities, and service providers, coming together to make decisions together about how services will and should operate. When done well, co-design involves a major shift in the relationship between funders and service users, moving to a place where its ‘doing with people’, rather than previous failed instances ‘to’ people. In our view, the Gulf Academy is about systems change – systems that deliver services and support the residents of the Lower Gulf.

A fundamental difference with co-design, is the building of trust and combining the wisdom of lived experience with the expertise of professionals alleviating waste in terms of time and money by testing assumptions with the end users.

Co-design can be best described as an approach that identifies the people as experts in their story, experience and histories and provides the people with shared decision making, a strong and true voice in the design, delivery and evaluation of systems and programs that impact them, their families, communities, and organisations.

The recent release of the Closing the Gap, Commonwealth Implementation Plan supports the practice of Co-design through enabling policy and place-based partnerships to drive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led outcomes. ¹

¹ National Agreement on Closing the Gap July 2020. S 31.

Within the partnering arrangements in the Closing the Gap Agreement, shared decision making is a key feature identified as a necessary element for success involving:

- . Consensus, where the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties hold as much weight as the governments.
- . Transparency.
- . Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives speak without fear of reprisals.
- . Groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including women, young people, elders, and people with a disability can be heard.
- . Where lived experience is understood and respected.²

Significantly, the Closing the Gap agreement recognises the importance of adequate funding being available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to be full partners. ³

Support for a Co-design approach to the Gulf Academy also comes with widespread support over many years from individuals and organisations across Lower Gulf.

Next steps of Co-design.

Co- design will involve many partners with a diverse set of knowledge skills and abilities to work through what the Gulf Academy design will be and to make it happen.

It will take time.

It will require the establishment of a Steering Committee comprising of a co-design manager, community representatives, sector interest representatives, business, and key government agencies.

The Steering Committee will be funded as part of the Co-design with organisations and agencies making in-kind contributions for their effective participation. The first phase of the Co-design may include the development of:

- Detailed project plan (including stakeholder engagement).
- Operating guidelines and procedures.
- Communication strategy.
- Employment, education and training plan, detailed stakeholder and partner analysis.
- Philanthropic and benefactor analysis.

Co-design will then move into ongoing engagement through a range of collaborative design workshops over a 18month – 2 year period.

For more information, please contact the Gulf Academy Project Manager:

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² National Agreement on Closing the Gap July 2020. S 32.

³ Ibid S 33.