Community Development Network – a potted history

Contents

> There have been two generations of the Community Development Network in Canberra, in the early 1990s, and between 2003 and 2012.[1] Both periods have closely involved the support of the ACT Government's Health Promotion area.

The first generation of the CDNetwork (1994-1996)

In late 1993, the idea for a community development (CD) network evolved from discussions among a small group of community workers who shared an interest in CD in health and arts areas. Staff of the Community Development Consultancy Program of Health Advancement Services in the (then) Department of Health initiated a meeting of representatives from sectors including health, community services, arts, environment and overseas development to discuss the idea of forming a CD network. This group expanded to include people representing the concerns of Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and non-English speaking people.

1994-1995 Health Advancement Services fostered the development of the Network through secretariat support, and ran a two day workshop in March 1994 called *Community Development in the 90s*, conducted by facilitators from the Centre for Development and Innovation in Health in Melbourne.

This was followed by the formation of the CD Network in May 1994. 80 people attended, with a further 40 expressing interest in membership of the Network. Draft aims and objectives were

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[1] Records are kept in the CDNet archives.

refined, together with deciding on meeting times, intervals, venues as well as topics and activities for the Network. The Network met four times in 1994. 27 people attended the three subsequent meetings (ten of whom attended each meeting). A newsletter and calendar of CD events was distributed after each meeting (hard copies are held in the CDNet archives).

A report, *the First Year: Reflections on the first year of the Community Development Network of the ACT and Region* was written by the Community Development Consultancy Program. It provides a comprehensive record of the aims, objectives, vision and operating guidelines, achievements and setbacks. (A hard copy is in the archives held by the Secretariat of the CDNet.)

1995-1996   The coordinating group continued with secretariat and administrative support for the CDNetwork provided by the Health Education area of the University of Canberra's Faculty of Education. Ninety people responded to a mailing list update, signifying that the network was still substantial and robust. Four network meetings a year were planned. The first hour comprised introductions, sharing information and issues. This was followed by exploring topics decided on by small working groups formed around areas of interest, such as:

- Consultation/participation
- Models of good practice
- Collaboration/joint projects
- Social Capital.

By 1996, the network aimed to have quarterly meetings with one big event, such as a conference in Spring. By June, the number of people in the coordinating group had dwindled to three or four and the network was no longer viable.

The second generation of the CDNet (2003-2014)

"I live by CDNet. It's an absolutely fabulous resource…worth its weight in gold"

New member of the CDNet Working Group (2012).

In 2003, a small group of community development workers again identified a need for collaboration, networking, support and research. An inaugural meeting attracted over 40 participants, and strong links were made between the ACT Council of Social Service's Sector Development area and community development. This resulted in a strong partnership between ACTCOSS and CDNet, which continues today.

The Manager of Community Development and Settings Team in the Health Promotion Unit of ACT Health agreed to provide in-kind secretariat and administrative support to the Community Development Network (ACT and Region). In addition, the Health Promotion Unit provided $5,000 financial support in 2004/05. An HPU staff member from the Community Development and Settings Team was designated to spend on average one day per week working to achieve the goals of the Community Development Network. Both the Manager and HPU secretariat were actively involved in the CDNet Working Group.

ACT Council of Social Service agreed to be responsible for administering the grant from the Health Promotion Unit.

CDNet developed Terms of Reference and an Agreement with the Health Promotion Unit.

The activities of CDNet

1.   Projects

Provide a map of community development in the ACT including a limited but strategic list of organisations whose key role is in providing funding or programs towards development of communities within the ACT. The map will be limited to government and non-government organisations in the first instance.

2.   Communication

- Provide a list server, or other electronic communication mechanisms, to members of the Network
- Community Development Network newsletter or provisions to profile CDN in other newsletters or on websites
- Provide opportunities to members of the Network to access funding information and/or guidelines

4.   Forums

- Provide a minimum of 4 forums a year
- Provide forums as a means of improving skill development and training in community development
- Provide a means of networking

5.   Advocacy

- The CDNetwork will advocate for the development of healthy and sustainable communities. By January 2007, there were over 380 people on the email list.

In December 2007, due to restructuring at Health Promotion & Grants, the Manager of Community Development and Settings Team and the HPU secretariat regretfully were no longer able to be involved with the Working Group. HP&G were still to decide on their role in and participation on the Working Group, but this did not mean that ACT Health would cease its involvement with CDNet.

August 2008   Cheryl Hutchins, Senior Manager in Health Promotion, addressed a Working Group meeting and confirmed that ACT Health would not be providing secretariat support any more but would continue to provide funding of $5,000. Discussion followed about utilising the funding from ACT Health for secretariat support. It was noted that losing the secretariat support has impacted on communications and members having a central person to contact.

Creating a CDNet Secretariat position

The October 2008 Working Group meeting agreed there was a need for ongoing secretariat support for the Working Party and that $2,500 per year would be available to employ someone to provide these services. An MOU with ACTCOSS was drafted.

Early in 2009, the Working Group developed a duty statement and arrangements for employing a suitable person to provide ongoing secretariat support for the Working Group. It was anticipated that the secretariat position would work an <u>average</u> of five hours per month, with busier months being months when Working Group meetings (every 6-8 weeks) and forums were held (four times a year). The duty statement was advertised through the CDNet email list in May, and interviews took place in June. After the initial person to occupy the role left after only 9 months due to personal workload reasons, the Working Group decided that the secretariat should be chosen, if possible, from the Working Group who understood the workings of the CDNet and had shown some previous commitment to it. This has been the case to date.

Community Development Network Forums (2004-14)

Every year since 2004, the CDNet Working Group has organised between two to four forums or workshops. These are decided both by the interests of those on the Working Group and what they perceive to be key issues in the community sector at the time. Smaller working parties of 2-5 people then coordinate the forums or workshops, reporting back at the Working Group meetings.

The full list of forums run between 2004 and 2014 is at **Attachment 1**.

Growth of the CDNet email list with support from CASE and volunteer moderators

From the outset, CASE has enabled CDNet to create its email and website functions. [2] Two key members of the CDNet Working Group have provided voluntary email list moderation and administration: – Peter Cooper and Karen Realph

The CDNet email list has grown from 380 in January 2007 to 2300 in August 2014. The list has become a simple, indispensable communication tool for the community sector. The amount of 'traffic' on the email list has increased in the past few years to an average of 237 emails posted per month in 2013, a 27% increase since August 2012. On busy days, the email list can receive as many as 20 postings, with an average of 10 per working day.

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[2] CASE is a non-profit organisation formed to assist Australian community organisations in making better use of information technology (http://www.case.org.au/).

Table: No. of subscribers to the CDNet email list Jan 2007 to August 2014

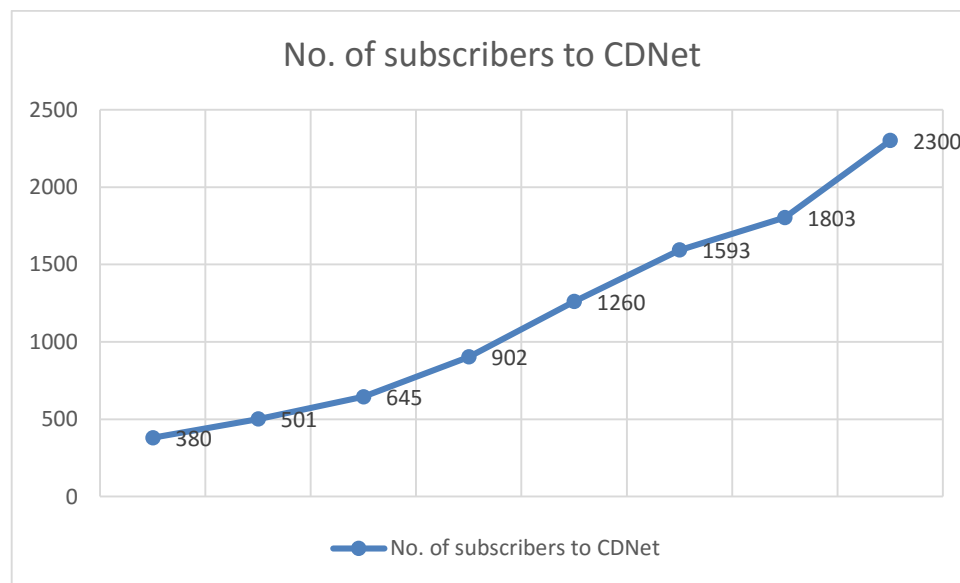|	No. of subscribers	Average annual % increase
January 2007	380	
August 2008	501	32%
May 2009	645	29%
August 2010	902	40%
August 2011	1260	40%
August 2012	1593	26%
August 2013	1803	13%
August 2014	2300	27%

Chart: Numbers of subscribers to CDNet email list between 2007 and 2014

CDNet email list administrator position

This role had been voluntary since 2004. In July 2011, the CDNet Working Group proposed that unspent funds be used, in part, to remunerate Karen Realph for her valued list moderation work.

Cheryl Hutchins was positive about using the funds as we saw fit, including to pay the email list administrator. She asked that a letter be sent outlining our plans for using the money.

The June 27th 2011 meeting agreed to pay Karen for 2 hours a week at MEA level 4.1 rate from 1st July 2011 for one year and then review.

This position, based on discussions with Health Promotion's Tony Blattman and the Working Group, was renewed for 2012-13 and 203-14, given its central importance to the community development sector in the ACT.

The current CDNet website was launched in April 2010 (http://www.cdnet.org.au/home). Thanks to the ongoing and highly valued support given to CDNet by CASE, together with Karen Realph's work, CDNet has developed its website, with further enhancements under consideration for ease of accessing information.

2013: the first Strategic Plan

In November 2013, the CDNet Working Group invited past and present members to create a strategic plan for the next three years.

The Strategic Plan is at **Attachment 2**.

Subsequently, the Working Group prioritized the 22 items in the plan, with the following items emerging as the most important or relevant:

1.	Engage with Government to discuss the merits of continued funding preferably for 3 years with commensurate funding to achieve the objectives in this strategic plan
2.	Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy for 2014 identifying organisations / personnel and the purpose for building the relationship eg funding, partnership to deliver service, building capacity, future proofing etc.
3.	Review the capacity and capability of the electronic distribution list to ensure that it is robust and provide recommendations as to the future proofing that will be required for the next 1-3 years.
4.	Investigate the opportunity to increase resources via paid and volunteer services so that the goals for 2014 can be achieved.
5.	Increase the communication / linkages between CD Net and Interagency Meetings.

During 2014, the following actions arising from these priorities are being worked on by a small working party:

1. Find out what stakeholders want from CDNet by designing a survey for the membership.
2. Focus on developing the CDNet product over the next three years. Hear the views of the Working Group and form a small working group to investigate what is viable, what resources would be required
3. Create a Reference Group of key informants from the sector
4. Develop a timeline for actions and evaluation.

I really actually truly love what CDNet does. I really really really do. It makes life so much easier for so many people. And what I love about it is just the simplicity of it. It really comes doing to that simple information sharing to make sure that everyone feels included or is inclusive in things because they know what's going on. That's a very necessary and wonderful thing.

New member joining the Working Group in 2013

Attachment 1: Community Development Network Forums and Workshops (2004-16)

2004

May	National Community Development Conference: *Wrestling Wicked Problems* (attended by 400 people)
July	*Community Development in the ACT – how can community development contribute to the achievement of the social plan?* (a combined Health Promotion/CD forum)
August	*Asset Based Community Development workshop* (Jodie Kretzman)
November	*For Love or Money – the Status of Community Development in the ACT & Region*

2005

June	*Community Development Evaluation* (Paul Bullen and Barbara Pamphilon)
July	*Wellbeing – A common thread linking community development and health promotion* (a combined Health Promotion/CD forum)
September	*Capacity Building for Sustainability Leadership*
November	*Charlie Pahlman Spring Networking Forum & Picnic*

2006

April	*CDNet Expo: Canberra Flavoured Community Development*
May	*Connecting with the ACT Government* (a combined Health Promotion/CD forum)
July	*Strengthening Mental Health & Wellbeing in Our Community* (a combined Health Promotion/CD forum)
November	*Playful Participation Symposium: CD and the Arts and Heritage*

2007

May	*Inclusion Conference 07 -* CDNet contributed $2000 in sponsorship
June	*Sustainable Consumption: Working with communities around climate change*
September	*Active Citizenship*

Petitions, e-petitions, demonstrations, protests, etc – what is the effectiveness of these; How to involve youth; Legislation affecting citizen's rights; E-democracy; Resources; New technology

November	*Engaging Emerging Cultural Groups*

2008

August	*Storying: A Powerful Tool for Community Development*
July - September	*Mapping the Community Development sector*

An online survey to provide a snapshot of who is working in community development (paid or voluntary), what community development projects are being conducted (funded or unfunded), and where the funding comes from. 48 individuals from 38 organisations participated, resulting in a

Snapshot of Community Development in the ACT and Region: Report on a community development mapping project, by Sue Hoffmann, released in December 2008. (http://www.cdnet.org.au/surveys)
September   Key survey findings were presented and discussed at the ACTCOSS Conference on Sector Development, September 4-5th 2008

2009

May   *Evidence Based Evaluation*

November   *Reflective Practice forum*

2010

April   Launch of New CDNet website & email

August   *Results Based Accountability Workshop* #1

November   *A shared sustainability stall at the Belconnen Future Footprints Festival.*
A collaboration between CDNet & The Sustainability Network. CDNet initiated coordination and funding of a shared stall, recognising that staffing stalls with volunteers at community fetes and festivals is quite a drain on small organisations' willing pool of volunteers. CDNet thus ensured that many groups could be represented and respond to festival-goers' varied interests in sustainability.

December   *Results Based Accountability Workshop* #2
This workshop was designed to build on the RBA Workshop #1 to get participants thinking in an effective way about guiding community organisations to plan, implement and measure their activities to build stronger communities.

2011

March   *Flourishing Me, Flourishing Communities: Building strength and wellbeing*
A half day capacity building workshop for community workers facilitated by Amanda Horne, (http://www.amandahorne.com.au)

July   *Research skills for Community Workers Workshop* (University of Canberra)

2012

March   *Flourishing Me, Flourishing Communities: Building strength and wellbeing*
A half day capacity building workshop for community workers facilitated by Amanda Horne

July   *Research skills for Community Workers Workshop* (University of Canberra)

2013

March   *Community Sector Forum: A snapshot of the ACT Community Sector and current issues in 2013*.

June   *Building a mentally healthy workforce: promoting self care*. A learning and networking opportunity for community sector workers.

2014

May   *NDIS Community Sector Forum*, with speakers and panel.

June   *Self-care Workshop for community sector workers*, facilitated by Amanda Horne.

2015

February   *ABS Showcase Workshop*, organised, promoted and catered for by CDNet

May   *Managing qualitative research and evaluation data without software*

Jun-Nov   *Three bi-monthly Community Development Peer Network Gathering* – a collaboration between CDNet and ACTCOSS

August   *ABS Research Skills Workshop #2,* organised, promoted and catered for by CDNet

November   *Assets Based Community Development Workshop*

Facilitated by international speaker Jim Diers (enabled by Bank of Ideas http://bankofideas.com.au/who had brought Jim to Australia for a tour of workshops.

December   *Champions of Change* workshop, in collaboration with SEE-Change

2016 (to date)

March   *Alternative Sources of Funding Workshop*, facilitated by Dion Klein (March 2016)

Feb-Jun   *Three bi-monthly Community Development Peer Network Gathering* – a collaboration between CDNet and ACTCOSS

Attachment 2: CDNet Strategic Plan 2014-16

The following plan was created in December 2013.

1. ASPIRATIONS: Mission, Vision, Goals - Purpose and Direction
Mission
• **To provide an accessible communication medium and professional development opportunities for Community Sector organisations and workers so that they can be supported to work collaboratively to meet the needs of vulnerable people living in Canberra and the surrounding region.**
Vision
• **CDNET is seen as an essential resource for those working in the Community Sector and those wishing to engage with the disadvantaged in Canberra and the surrounding region.**
Strategic Goals
• **To be acknowledged as an essential service that supports the Community Sector** • **To provide professional development opportunities that lead to innovative practice** • **To be the knowledge hub of activities, programs and services that are available for vulnerable Canberrans and Community Sector workers.**

2. STRATEGY: Actions & Programs / Events to fulfil overarching goals
YEAR 1 - 2014
• Review the capacity and capability of the electronic distribution list to ensure that it is robust and provide recommendations as to the future proofing that will be required for the next 1-3 years. • Investigate the ability for the CDNet website to offer blogs and other relevant forms of sharing information • Develop a partnership engagement strategy (which will include links to the CDNet website) • Provide learning and development opportunities for people to gain a greater understanding of what Community Development is • Increase the communication / linkages between CD Net and Interagency Meetings
YEAR 2 - 2015
• Develop a business and marketing plan to promote CDNet to the wider community • Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy with activities aligned to new business eg quarterly newsletter, informing Government of key community development initiatives and challenges that align with the Human Services Blueprint and Canberra Social Plan • Establish a "Bank of Ideas" which will provide the community sector with the opportunity to...?? foster greater collaboration, enhance service delivery
YEAR 3 - 2016

3. ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS / HUMAN RESOURCES: Capability, Performance measurement, planning, resource management, external relationship building
YEAR 1 - 2014
- Develop a program logic for the activities being delivered to measure the short term outcomes achieved by CDNet over a 12 month period   - Investigate the opportunity to increase resources via paid and volunteer services so that the goals for 2014 can be achieved   - Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy for 2014 identifying organisations / personnel and the purpose for building the relationship eg funding, partnership to deliver service, building capacity, future proofing etc   - identify professional development requirements for staff
YEAR 2 - 2015
YEAR 3 - 2016

4. SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE: Planning, Decision Making, Knowledge Management, Administrative systems, Physical and Technological assets to support the organisation
YEAR 1. - 2014
- Develop a Standard Operating Procedure manual outlining all key activities and tasks undertaken by staff   - Investigate the requirements to future proof the email distribution list and website   - Investigate the opportunity to include social media on the website   - Undertake a membership profiling exercise to assist with stakeholder engagement, value proposition statement for new members and new initiatives
YEAR 2.- 2015
YEAR 3. - 2016

5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: Governance, organisational design, individual job descriptions
YEAR 1 -2014
- Engage with Government to discuss the merits of continued funding, preferably for 3 years with commensurate funding to achieve the objectives in this strategic plan   - Review the current organisational structure and ensure it has the capacity and support mechanisms to achieve its goals   - As part of the organisational review structure - undertake a business continuity plan and risk management plan   - Review position descriptions and align with appropriate pay scale   - Policies and procedures are developed to ensure high integrity and increased capability so that CDNet can support the Community Sector and continue to be seen as a necessity for organisations (NFP & Govt) to communicate across the region so that they are able to achieve their own objectives
YEAR 2 -2015
YEAR 3 - 2016

6. CULTURE: The glue that binds the organisation together, including shared value and practices, appetite towards performance
YEAR 1. -2014
- Continue to build upon the current culture of collaboration , strong work ethic and accountability   - Continue to celebrate the diversity, skills and local knowledge that is provided by members of the CDNet working group   - Provide a thorough induction to new members of the working group so that they are able to fully engage in all conversations and participate in the activities to achieve the strategic objectives of CDNet.
YEAR 2 - 2015
YEAR 3 - 2016