



## National Network of ABCDE Learning Sites Readiness Criteria

### **Preamble:**

The National Network of ABCDE (Asset Based Community Driven Efforts) Learning Sites is being developed across Australia with the expressed intent of creating at the neighbourhood/small town level, a cluster of exemplary projects that intentionally promote rural and/or urban asset based community building practice and revitalisation efforts.

The core strength of the ABCDE Learning Site approach is that it enables people to change practice by practicing the change. In essence, the approach operates to five principles:

1. Every context is different, the challenge being to learn what works best for each unique location. While the Asset Based Community Development approach, known as ABCD, is an internationally respected and tested model that operates to a set of principles and emerging practices, it is not a defined *'cookie cutter'* model – it is place based, adaptive, responsive and innovative in a way that closed models cannot be.
2. The wisdom of local people always exceeds the knowledge of the experts.
3. Relationship building is viewed as the fundamental activity of community building.
4. The starting point for community building is *'what's strong, not wrong'*, thus the focus on assets, capacities, abilities and possibilities, rather than needs, disabilities and problems.
5. Peer to peer learning and sharing across the Network is actively promoted and viewed as the critical learning approach.

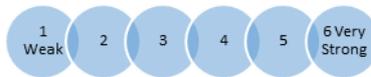
The Network consists of a group of neighbourhood/small town community clusters sponsored by a Support Agency which could be a local government authority, NGO, community health network or community bank.

Sponsorship of, and participation in such a Network is a bold step by any Support Agency and the cluster of local communities. The following set of readiness criteria aims to assist discussion whether involvement in the Network is a suitable option. The criteria also aims to help establish the level of assistance that may be required by the local government / organisation and the local community to become participants and subsequently, the kind of support they will require from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S., Nurture Development and The Municipal Association of Victoria to successfully participate.

### **Readiness Criteria for Consideration by the Support Agency:**

Below is a set of self-assessment criteria to evaluate the readiness and appropriateness of participation by both the Support Agency and participating communities.

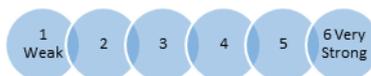
1. The Support Agency has an understanding of the principles and methodologies of Asset Based Community Driven Efforts (ABCDE) and the National Network of ABCDE Learning Sites; and is willing to invest time in learning more about ABCDE and to understand the complexities of the ABCDE way of working.



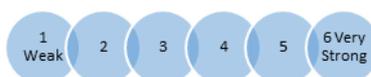
2. The Support Agency's motivation in participating in a network of change is to genuinely pursue a strengths based, community lead approach in the provision of effective support for sustainable community empowerment and the reshaping of delivery programs that are aligned with local community priorities. This requires a genuine commitment to starting with a '*what's strong, not wrong*' approach, and a view that community residents need to be perceived as citizens and co-producers, rather than consumers, clients or customers of programs/services. This is implicit acknowledgement that local families and communities have unique competencies that cannot be replaced by professional intervention, or service and program based responses.



3. The Support Agency and an enlisted cluster of 2-5 participating communities (200-3000 residents) are open to changing current practice to facilitate the growth of self-determination and social capital within the community. This includes the identification of, and the commitment by a team of Community Builders in each community – a local leadership team of 7-12 residents – willing to commit to instigating community conversations and social interaction activities across the neighbourhood/small town to map, connect, mobilise and celebrate their assets of place and develop their community vision and plan of action.



4. The Support Agency acknowledges that the ABCDE process is one of self-mobilisation and organising for change and is therefore committed to a '*leadership by stepping back*' approach in order to fully support the community to begin its intentional journey of discovery and action.



- The Support Agency commits to recognising and acknowledging that individuals and communities have unique competencies and contributions that cannot be automatically replaced by *'top down, outside in'* professional intervention and program/service delivery. The approach involves a *'bottom up'* discovery process whereby residents discover their assets and develop their community vision and strategy, including those actions which the community will do themselves, those which they can do with some help and those which they need outside agencies to provide.



- The Support Agency acknowledges that in undertaking an ABCDE approach the outcomes are not always clear at the start, risk taking is essential and there must be space and time for people to search and make mistakes. It must be acknowledged that relationship building occurs at the speed of trust, which always needs time. Network participation requires a minimum of a two year commitment, subject to an evaluation at the end of year one.



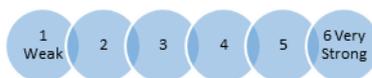
- The Support Agency commits to online and real time mentoring that is offered through the program.



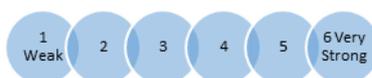
- The Support Agency commits to collating past evidence of previous partnership and collaboration efforts, stories of when they have previously supported and empowered citizens to instigate change and evidence of community based and cross sector service planning which could provide a structure for asset based approaches.



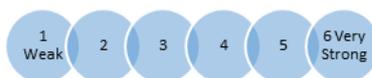
9. The Support Agency is willing to engage and take the lead on internal conversations with key stakeholders as to how to embed the ABCDE methodology within professional practice. Along with this, is a willingness by the Support Agency to enter into a conversation about how ABCDE will *'fit into'* their overall strategies.



10. The Support Agency has the capacity and active willingness to support the establishment of a Learning Site, including the ongoing mentoring and training support required for a functioning cluster; as well as participation in a National Network of a Community of Practice dedicated to learning how best to advance and deepen community building practice by contributing to a peer-to-peer sharing and learning network across Australia and globally.

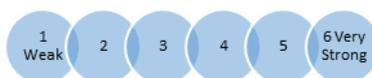


11. The Support Agency acknowledges the need of, and provides the resources for the necessary role of the Community Connector – a part time position (8-12 hours per week) to be *'a pair of arms and legs'* to assist the team of Community Builders fulfil their role. Community Connectors may be paid or seconded to the position. Such a person must be accepted and ideally chosen by the Community Builder team.



### Readiness Criteria for Consideration by Participating Communities:

1. Belief that the Project makes sense to the community at this point in time as a way forward to strengthen their community building efforts, build community capacity and achieve a future community vision and required actions.



2. Willingness to identify and form a team of Community Builders to act as the leadership group to oversee a two year ABCDE project within their neighbourhood or small town that has the objectives of –
- Mapping, connecting, mobilising and celebrating the assets, capacities, challenges and opportunities of their community through hosting a series of community conversations and social interaction activities;
  - Developing a network of associations;
  - Instigating new community led activity; and
  - Developing a Community Vision and Plan which as well as spelling out what the community wants to see happen over the next ten years, breaks those ambitions down into what the community will do themselves, what they will do with some help and what they need outside agencies to fulfil.



3. Willingness to be an active member of a cluster of communities coordinated by the Support Agency and engage in peer to peer sharing and learning opportunities.



4. Willingness to share with, and learn from other communities across Australia and globally, who are undertaking similar ABCDE initiatives.

