

CO-DESIGN

What it is, and how to do it well



CO-DESIGN
FRAMEWORK
GUIDE 2025



There are many things that can be CO-DESIGNED with a group of people. We might be planning an outing or holiday. Or we might be coming up with ideas for some TikTok videos. Or we might be working out a new business, like opening a café.

It means everyone gets to take part equally in designing and making it happen – not just one person doing it by themselves.

CO-DESIGNING

is when we meet as a group of people to work something out together.

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INTRODUCTION

This guide should be easy to read for people with reading disabilities or who do not know a lot of English. If you need help, please ask your support worker or family and friends.

Who uses this CO-DESIGN guide?

Our guide is for everyone:

- > People who do not know anything about CO-DESIGN – so they can find out about it
- > People running the CO-DESIGN group (the facilitators) – so they know what to do
- > People taking part in the CO-DESIGN group (the participants) – so they know what to expect
- > Family and friends of people taking part – so they know how to support participants

It might be shared with participants before the first CO-DESIGN workshop. It might be shared during CO-DESIGN workshops so everyone can follow along.

The way you use this guide will change from project to project. Use it to help get the most from your CO-DESIGN project.

Now, let's get started and see how fun and fulfilling it can be!

Note: we might need to change this guide. Turn to the final page to find out why.

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STEP 1: SETTING THE TONE

Making sure everything is ready before we start

3

2

1

Why do we need this step?

We need this step to make sure everyone understands our vision, values and to create a safe space. Also, we want to have high standards for all our CO-DESIGN projects.



What standards do we need to follow?

1. We need to follow the **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** Quality Standards. Read them here: www.ndis.gov.au.
2. We also need to follow Alkira's Standards. Read them here: www.alkira.org.au.

What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)?

The NDIS pays for services and supports for people with permanent disability. The NDIS also pays for services and support for people who need early intervention. Early intervention means they work with some people now, so they need less support later.

What needs to be done?

This all happens before we start the CO-DESIGN:

Organise an **Envisioning Session** where people like staff, participants, family and community members can share their ideas. We may need more than just one Envisioning Session.

1. Explain why the Envisioning Session is important. For example, an Envisioning Session is where we get to know Alkira's values and the NDIS Quality Standards for our CO-DESIGN project. It is also where we find out why everyone is taking part in this project.
2. Make sure everyone knows and understands Alkira's values and the NDIS Quality Standards.
3. Encourage everyone to say why they are taking part. Also, what do they want to achieve by taking part? Do they have any concerns, issues or questions?
4. Use creative activities – like **brainstorming** or telling stories – to get everyone involved in the Envisioning Session.
5. Set clear rules for deciding on ideas. Keep checking to make sure all decisions fit Alkira's values and the NDIS Quality Standards.
6. Ask people for thoughts and **feedback** through the Envisioning Session. Make sure everyone keeps up and agrees.

What is an Envisioning Session?

An Envisioning Session is the first meeting that takes place before the CO-DESIGNING meetings. It is where all participants are told about the values and standards. Also, participants get to ask questions and say what they want to achieve.

What is brainstorming?

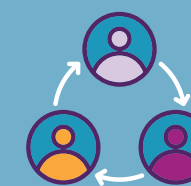
Brainstorming is when all the people in the group get to talk about their ideas. They might not have any ideas at the start – that is OK. They might hear some ideas from participants that helps them think of their own idea.

What is feedback?

Feedback is when people give us their thoughts about something – like thoughts about how the session is going. Feedback can be used by the person running the CO-DESIGNING to make it better for everyone.



Important things to remember



Inclusivity

Everyone should be heard and respected.



Transparency

Everyone should know what is happening, why it is happening, and how it fits with Alkira's values.



Continual improvement

Keep learning and changing, so we are always doing our best. We want to make sure all our participants are happy



Accountability

Everyone is responsible for sticking to **Alkira's** values and meeting the **NDIS Quality Standards**.

STEP 2: GETTING PARTICIPANTS ONBOARD



Making sure everyone feels included

Why do we need this step?

We need this step to make sure everyone understands our vision, values and to create a safe space. Also, we want to have high standards for all our CO-DESIGN projects.



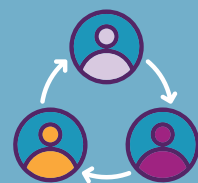
What needs to be done?

This all happens before we start the CO-DESIGN:

Plan out the CO-DESIGN workshops where participants, families, professionals and others can work together:

1. Make sure your workshops are friendly and welcoming. Everyone needs to feel respected and comfortable sharing their ideas.
2. Set up ways for everyone to share their thoughts. For example: whiteboard, lego and AI. This should happen regularly across the workshops.
3. Make it clear that everyone's ideas and thoughts are important.
4. Ask people for thoughts and feedback regularly. Make sure everyone keeps up and agrees with what is happening.
5. Really listen to what people have to say. We should be able to see their ideas in the decisions we make.

Important things to remember...



Inclusivity

Everyone should be heard and respected.



Empowerment

Everyone should feel in charge, because they get to make decisions and solve problems together.



Trust-building

Everyone feels safe to share their thoughts and feelings and be respected and listened to.



Flexibility

Be ready to change things to fit everyone's needs and timetables. because everyone is different.



Celebration

Always say thank you for good ideas and hard work. We are all working together to make things easier.

STEP 3: SHARING INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE



Making sure everyone has their say

Why do we need this step?

We need this step to make sure everyone knows how to take part in CO-DESIGNING. We want everyone to feel comfortable **expressing** the things that matter to them.



What does expressing mean?

Expressing is when we tell our thoughts, ideas and opinions to other people. There are many ways we can do this. We might do it by talking, or drawings or pictures. Or we might have a friend or support worker do it with us.

What needs to be done?

This all happens before we start the CO-DESIGN:

Prepare training sessions for the participants.

1. Think about how you will teach everyone important ideas, and what tools they will need.
2. Look for experts to help you teach, so everyone gets the support they need.
3. Plan fun activities and group discussions to make learning interesting.
4. Be ready to give everyone the chance to ask questions and share their own experiences.
5. Find pictures, models or visual aids to help explain ideas, what we are trying to do, and why it is important.
6. Think about using models or visual examples to show what the solutions from CO-DESIGN might look like. This will help everyone understand and give feedback.

You may only need one training session before CO-DESIGN or you might need more. Prepare training sessions for the needs of all participants in the project.

Important things to remember...



Accessibility

Everyone needs to be able to access the training sessions and visuals, no matter how they like to learn.



Empowerment

Everyone should feel in charge, because they get to make decisions and solve problems together.



Relevance

Everything in the training is about things that really matter to participants.



Continual learning

Everyone needs the chance to grow and learn with more training and support, if they want it.



Feedback loop

Get feedback about the training and visuals. Are they working? Use what people say to make the training better.

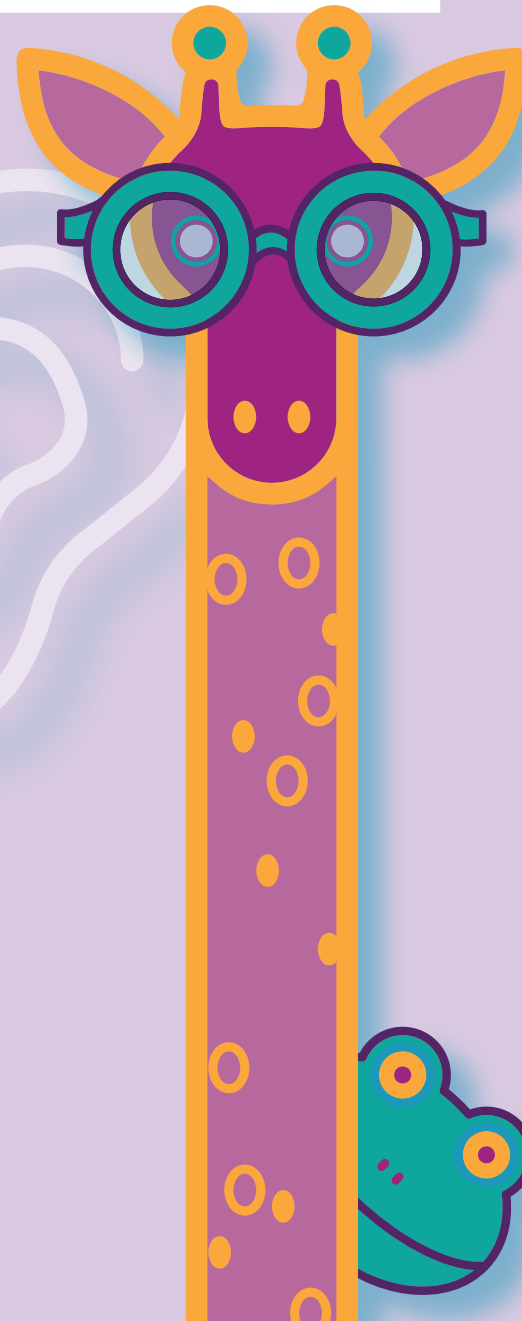
STEP 4: WORKING TOGETHER AND LISTENING

Making sure everyone's ideas are heard



Why do we need this step?

We need this step because we want to make sure everyone is working together really well. Everyone should be listening to each other and understanding what other participants want and need.



What needs to be done?

During the CO-DESIGN process:

Create feedback sessions to get information from participants about the CO-DESIGNING workshops. Do the participants feel good about the workshops? Use **feedback** to change workshops, if necessary.

1. Give participants different ways of giving feedback – like talking in person, filling out online surveys, or joining group discussions. They may want their support worker to give feedback for them.
2. Explain why it is important to share our thoughts and how it helps make our work better.
3. Make sure everyone feels safe to say what they really think, even if it is something they are worried about – they may want to give feedback **anonymously**.
4. Listen to what participants say. Ask questions to understand more.
5. Look at everyone's feedback and see if there are any shared ideas or problems.
6. Use different ways to understand the feedback, like looking at numbers or reading what participants say.
7. Talk with everyone involved. This includes talking to the people giving feedback, the people designing things and the team working on the project.
8. Keep making changes to plans based on what people say. We need to make sure everyone's needs and worries are taken care of.
9. Tell everyone about any changes made from feedback. Say why we have made the changes, so everyone knows we are listening to them.

What does anonymously mean?

If we give feedback **anonymously** that means nobody knows the feedback is from us – we are anonymous. We might give anonymous feedback because we are uncomfortable, for whatever reason. This feedback is still good and helpful.



Important things to remember...



Timeliness

Make sure we have feedback sessions at the right times to suit everyone.



Accessibility

Give different ways for people to give feedback, so everyone can join in.



Transparency

Be clear about how we will use their feedback, so everyone trusts us.



Actionable insights

Look for ways to use feedback to make real changes, not just hear what people think.



Continuous improvement

Use feedback to learn and change, so we are always doing our best. We want to make sure all our participants are happy

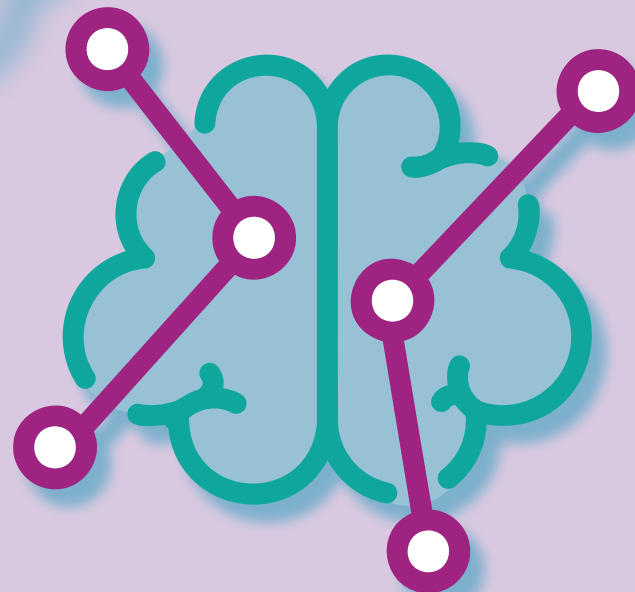
STEP 5: SAFE SPACES FOR CREATIVITY

Making sure everyone feels safe and comfortable

Why do we need this step?

We need this step because everyone should feel safe and respected when coming up with new ideas. This includes unusual ideas too.

We need to return to the **Alkira** and **NDIS Quality Standards** to help us create a safe space for everyone in our CO-DESIGN workshops.



What needs to be done?

This all happens during the CO-DESIGN:

Create an **environment** for the CO-DESIGN workshops where participants can be creative and share their own ideas:

1. Let everyone know all their ideas are important, even if they seem a bit strange or different.
2. Get participants to share their thoughts freely or openly, because we want to come up with new solutions.
3. Make the environment supportive. It is okay to take risks and share unusual ideas without worrying about being judged or laughed at.
4. Let everyone know that different ideas and **viewpoints** are important. Encourage participants to share their own experiences and insights.
5. Look back at Step 1 and remind everyone about the rules and standards of the **NDIS** and **Alkira** – we need to follow them.
6. Make sure the **Alkira** and **NDIS Quality Standards** are used to help with new ideas. Find ways to help participants be creative while still following the rules.
7. Keep checking to make sure ideas are meeting **Alkira** and **NDIS Quality Standards**, and everyone is feeling respected.

What is an environment?

An environment is the space where the workshops and creativity take place. Environment is the physical or actual space around us during the workshops. It is also the mood we create in the workshops, which can be positive or negative.

What is a viewpoint?

A viewpoint is the way you look at the world and things around you. You might see things differently to others. This is fine because your viewpoint comes from your own experiences and insights – no one is the same.



Important things to remember...



Psychological safety

Make sure everyone feels safe to share their ideas and take chances without worrying about being treated badly.



Respectful dialogue

Get everyone to talk to each other with respect and give helpful feedback.



Ethical considerations

Make sure all ideas follow the rules and everyone is treated fairly.



Flexibility

Try to find a balance between following the rules and trying new things. Being creative can sometimes mean changing the way you would usually do things.



Documentation

Make sure all discussions and decisions have been recorded. We don't want to miss anything.

STEP 6: MODELLING STUFF FOR PARTICIPANTS

Making sure everyone can see their ideas coming together

Why do we need this step?

We need this step so all participants can see how their CO-DESIGN solution is coming together. This helps everyone understand the results of their CO-DESIGN ideas and see how it will work in real life. We can then make changes to improve it, if we think it needs changes.

This step usually means creating a mock-up, simulation or **prototype** of the idea.

What is a prototype?

A prototype is a model, drawing or mock-up of something that has not been properly finished yet. Prototypes help us understand what something will look like, and how it will work when it is finished.



What needs to be done?

This all happens during the CO-DESIGN:

Use a variety of materials and methods to make your prototype. It might be a drawing or a sketch on paper. Or it might be a small version – a model – of what we are planning in the CO-DESIGN. Or it might be a design or wireframe on a computer screen that someone has done using a computer program. Or it might be a step-by-step plan of the project.

Make sure the Prototype Stage includes everyone's ideas from the CO-DESIGN:

1. Plan prototype testing sessions where the participants can play with and look at the prototype and give their feedback. How well does it work? Do we like the prototype, or should we try another idea?
2. Make sure participants understand why we are holding the prototype testing sessions. We want everyone to give us their feedback on the prototype.
3. Give clear instructions about what participants need to do with the prototype or plan.
4. Set up ways for everyone to share their thoughts and give feedback. For example: whiteboard, lego, and AI..
5. Record the feedback that comes from the sessions. We want to make sure everything is included in the next stage of the CO-DESIGN.



Important things to remember...



Engagement

Make sure everyone takes part in the prototype stage. All participants need to feel included and proud of the project. They also need to feel the project is their own.



Repetitive approach

Do the same thing over and over again in the testing sessions. This helps everyone understand what has been done and keep up with where the project is going.



Accessibility

How you can make your prototype understood? Think about: the language you use, the different skills of participants and making a prototype that participants can access or get to easily.



Flexibility

Listen to feedback then be flexible and willing to change things.



Transparency

Make sure everyone knows what is happening and no one is left behind.

STEP 7: BRINGING PROJECTS TO LIFE

Making sure it gets finished

Why do we need this step?

We need this step because we need to create a finished project from our CO-DESIGN workshops. This is when we see the ideas from our workshops come to life after the prototype testing. This step could also be called the Implementation Stage.



What needs to be done?

This all happens during the CO-DESIGN:

Find a way to let participants know how the project is coming together in the Implementation Stage. Share achievements and **milestones** as they happen:

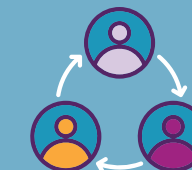
1. Make sure participants know what is going on in the Implementation Stage. Keep contacting them with information.
2. Ask for more feedback from participants along the way, so their ideas and feedback are always included in the finished project.
3. Make sure participants are still doing things for the project – taking on tasks, answering questions, checking on progress, taking part in other activities (e.g. advisory committees, working groups, etc.).
4. Continue to use participants to find solutions to problems that might come up in the Implementation Stage.
5. Prepare and host celebrations for the milestones that take place while the project is being finished.
6. Make sure all participants are congratulated and thanked for everything they have done.
7. Share stories from participants and other people who have helped. Everyone needs to know they have been an important part of the CO-DESIGN process.

What is a milestone?

A milestone is an important stage or event in the development of something. When CO-DESIGNING, the milestones might be: **1:** when everyone gives their ideas and we decide on a way forward, **2:** when the prototype is put together and we get to make changes to the project design, and **3:** when we finally see it all come together as a finished project.



Important things to remember...



Inclusivity

All participants are equally included in the project, no matter how much they have done.



Communication

Make sure all communication with participants is clear and to the point. This could include updates, changes and next steps for the project.



Engagement

Make sure everyone takes part. All participants need to feel included and proud of the project. They also need to feel the project is their own.



Recognition

Participants should feel that milestones and achievements are celebrated in a way that recognises everyone.



Continuous improvement

Use celebrations to look at what has been learned. What are the lessons? How could it be done better in future?

STEP 8: MAINTAINING THE PROJECT

Making sure the project keeps getting better



Why do we need this step?

We need this step to make sure everything is okay with the project as we move ahead. We want everybody to stay as involved as possible over time so that we can fix problems as they arise. Checking on the project regularly is a good form of **maintenance**.



What does maintenance mean?

Maintenance is when we check on something to make sure it is working. There are many ways we might maintain something. For example, we might plan regular checks of a motor vehicle or machinery. Or we might make sure a project is turning out to be what we want it to be, and not turning into something different.



What needs to be done?

This all happens during the CO-DESIGN:

Decide on times with participants to check on the project in the Maintenance Stage. This will give us a chance to change things if something is not quite right:

1. Use different ways to get feedback from everyone about the project. Ask lots of questions, do surveys, have group talks or interviews.
2. Make sure everyone is comfortable saying what they really think. We need to know what is going well and what could be done better.
3. Look at all the feedback and plan next steps.
4. Talk with everyone about how we can fix any problems together.
5. Do the most important things first. Keep asking everyone if things are okay as we move forward.
6. Write down all the changes we make. Tell everyone so they know what is happening and why it is happening.



Important things to remember...



Engagement

Make sure everyone feels part of the Maintenance Stage. This will help make the project better.



Flexibility

Listen to feedback then be flexible and willing to change things.



Step by step approach

Do the same thing over and over again, so everyone will know what they need to do.



Accountability

Everyone needs to stick to **Alkira's** values and meet the **NDIS Quality Standards**.



Continual learning

Record what we learn, so we can use it in future projects and make them better.

STEP 9: CELEBRATING THE WINS

Making sure everyone feels good about themselves

Why do we need this step?

We need this step to make sure everyone knows how important their work is. We do not want people to think they have been forgotten when the CO-DESIGN project finishes. Everyone should know their participation means something.

Their work should continue to **inspire** other people to take part in CO-DESIGN.



What does inspire mean?

Inspire is when your actions make people want to do something. This is usually because you have done good work or said something that makes people feel good.

What needs to be done?

This all happens during the CO-DESIGN:

Organise community events – like workshops, exhibitions or tours – that show what participants of the CO-DESIGN project are working on. Use these events to celebrate everyone's hard work.

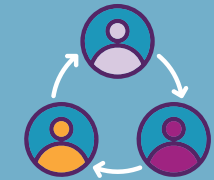
1. Give participants the chance to talk about or present their experiences at these events.
2. Invite other people who might be interested – like officials, partners and members of the community – so they can see an example of a successful CO-DESIGN.
3. Use **interactive elements** – such as live demonstrations, storytelling or hands-on activities – to help make the events interesting and get others to take part.
4. Create materials that celebrate the project – like photo albums, videos or stories – and show how the CO-DESIGN came together at different stages.
5. Give participants gifts – like certificates or trophies – for taking part in the project. This can be a reminder of their participation in the future.
6. Have events on the anniversary of the CO-DESIGN project, or on important dates for the project, so everyone remembers their success and success of the project.

What are interactive elements?

Interactive elements are the things that make the audience part of the show. The audience might need to answer questions. Or they might be asked to come up with ideas. Or they might touch, feel or smell something. These are all interactive things – not just a person talking at you.



Important things to remember...



Inclusivity

Everyone should be able to take part in the celebrations. This means people of all needs and backgrounds.



Gratitude

Give thanks to participants for what they have done.



Sustainability

Make sure celebrations do not harm nature or anything around us. Try not to make rubbish.



Legacy

Make sure everyone remembers the project into the future. This is very important for participants – it shows respect. It is also helps other CO-DESIGNING projects be their best.



Continuity

Keep the good work going. Keep celebrating. Keeping thanking participants. Keep the spirit of CO-DESIGNING alive.

STEP 10: WE ALL HAVE FUN!

Making sure everyone feels included

Why do we need this step?

Because good work should be good fun.
We want **everyone** to enjoy themselves.

What needs to be done?

This all happens right across the CO-DESIGN, from start to finish.

Reasons why this guide might change

1. If laws or rules change.
2. If people tell us there is a better way to co-design, or if we get feedback that something is not working.
3. If new technology comes out to make things easier.
4. When change happens in our group.
5. If we see other people doing things in CO-DESIGN that we like and want to include.
6. If we see a way to improve our guide.

**WANT TO
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ABOUT THIS GUIDE?**

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