Process Review: Community Hub Model

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Community and Culture

City of Ryde

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The Seven Stages of Creating Community Hubs

Introduction

Community Hubs and one-stop-shops have become buzz-words within Government as communities increasing demand responsive services and spaces where people can participate in services, group activities, hobbies, and advocacy.

Local Government is by far the largest contributor to community service infrastructure, and yet there appears to be a significant gap in both policy and scholarly research on the role of Local Government in re-invigorating place, and particularly its role as managing place through the provision of social and cultural infrastructure (such as community centres, childcare centres, libraries, sports clubs, halls) thereby promoting community cohesion and responding to community needs.

At the same time, there is growing concern regarding Local Government and its ability to manage its social and cultural infrastructure. It seems logical to expect communities to be reliant on the infrastructure available to them to organise, advocate, enjoy group activities or hobbies and receive community services tailored to their needs. And yet, little data exists on whether infrastructure is of any benefit and considering its mounting costs, the future for infrastructure provision into the future seems bleak (Montgomery 2005 p12; Productivity Commission 2008 pXX).

The interest in this topic is heightened when considering the funding allocated by Local Government to the maintenance and renewal of social and cultural infrastructure. Indeed this expenditure has one of the most significant impacts on Local Government's financial sustainability (Productivity Commission 2008 pXX). Most Councils do not have the funds required to maintain the level of service from social and cultural infrastructure they currently operate, creating infrastructure backlogs (Productivity Commission 2008 pXXIX). In 2012/3 these infrastructure backlogs in NSW were costed at $6.3 billion and are unbudgeted (LGSA 2012 p3; Cronshaw 2011 p1).

Part of this picture is that historically, social and cultural infrastructure was provided ad-hoc and usually under pressure from the community, resulting in poorly converted, single-purpose buildings scattered around local government areas. From the 1970s, the idea of one-stop-shops emerged in newer communities, to establish fit-for-purpose, multi-use, multi-tenant community spaces that met community needs. While the benefits of co-location appeared high, early examples resulted in places of stigma and disadvantage, such as the Park Community Centre in Adelaide (Montgomery 2005 p4).

This paper builds on the limited research available to reflect on the City of Ryde Model of infrastructure provision that extends beyond co-location to service integration, and meets the significant challenges of:

- responding to community needs appropriately;
- managing the significant costs in establishing, maintaining and renewing infrastructure; and
- establishing governance structures the maximise operational efficiencies, and facilitate partnerships to deliver holistic services with the community without new funding or new staff.

What is a Community Hub?

It is important to recognise that a Community Hub is both a physical building requiring particular attributes, a mechanism to facilitate service collaboration and integration and a place-making opportunity to build cohesive communities. Further, there is no one way to create a Community

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Hub. Fine, Parncharatnam and Thomson (2000) identified 10 models currently in operation in Australia, America and the UK (discussed further below).

There any many definitions of what is an ideal Community Hub. The latest definition is provided by Rossiter (2007) who combines the three elements mentioned above,

> *A conveniently located public place that is recognised and valued in the local community as a gathering place for people and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events.*
> (Rossiter 2007 p2; Bond 2010 p1).

This paper would suggest there is vital missing element to this definition – that of service integration. By co-locating activities, programs and services, Community Hubs present an opportunity to work in partnership and integrate services to provide more responsive and holistic care. Fine (1997) best describes what service integration looks like:

> *Improved access for consumers; increased efficiency, achieving more from the use of limited resources; and enhanced effectiveness, resulting in enhanced outcomes for consumers and funders*
> (Fine 1997 in Fine, Parncharatnam and Thomson 2000 p2)

Considering the wealth of urban design literature discussing best practise in physical aspects of community infrastructure provision, this paper will not discuss these aspects of a Community Hub other than to say that it should respond to the community, be easily accessible including being located within town centres and close to public transport, have flexible and adaptable spaces and an iconic design. However, in most cases these attributes are only available for new buildings and when retrofitting existing infrastructure. The lack of best practice physical attributes results in a requirement for a significantly more intense effort when working with the service organisations.

Does the Hub Model work?

The benefits of Community Hubs are still being determined. However, despite lack of rigorous research, it is widely acknowledged that establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships and integrated services provides improved results for the community (Billett el la 2005; Department of Education and Skills 2006; Einbinder et la 2006; Gardner 2003; Hayden el la 2002; Johnson 2003; Leiba and Weinstein 2003; Percy-Smith 2005, 2006; Rawstheorne and Eardley 2004; Wolff 2001 in Moore 2008 p29).

One study from Kentucky interviewed 34 child welfare workers, half located within a community hub model and half in single purpose locations. The study by Barbee and Antle (2011) found benefits for workers, government budgets and the community within the integrated service including:
- Workers – reduced stress, higher knowledge levels and higher collaboration
- Government – reduced turn-over rate by 31%, saving $320,000 per year (in 2011)
- Community – improved access and more efficient intake and assessment.

Community Hub service provision models

NSW, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia have all completed reviews on community hub models since 2005. All studies recognise a four step continuum built on work by Fine, Thomson and Graham (1998) and Leutz (1999). While built on over the past two years, the basic premise remains the same:

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Figure 1.1   The Continuum of Integration: A Basic Schema

⇐Autonomy   Integration⇨

Autonomy	Cooperative Links	Coordination	Integration
Parties/agencies act without reference to each other, although the actions of one may affect the other(s).	Parties establish ongoing ties, but formal surrender of independence not required. A willingness to work together for some common goals. Communication emphasised. Requires good will and some mutual understanding.	Planned harmonisation of activities between the separate parties. Duplication of activities and resources is minimised. Requires agreed plans and protocols or appointment of an external coordinator or (case) manager.	Links between the separate parties draw them into a single system. Boundaries between parties begin to dissolve as they become effectively work units or sub-groups within a single, larger organisation.

<u>Source</u>: Fine, Thomson and Graham (1998) and Leutz (1999) in Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson (2000 p4)

In a review by the Western Australian Government of their Community Hubs in 2011, the Department of Communities found that all services functioned within the continuum and that the nature of integration was more important in improving service results than the type of Hub or context with which the Hub operated (WA Department of Community 2011 p24; p25). The report went on to recommend that government should focus on the integration model and removing the barriers to integration to ensure improved service delivery.

The model above was extended by Bond (2010), who describes a fifth model, strengths-based participation, which adds participatory engagement with the community to identify their aspirations and strengths to define the services and model of integration (Bond 2010 p33).

Key leaning for each of the reviews included features that were required for success:
- Kentucky Child Welfare Service Hubs (Barbee and Antle 2011 pp1624-1628)
  - Features: A common philosophy of care, protocols for engaging and referring clients, streamlined paperwork, training for staff, and processes with a preference for a centralised computerised intake system.
- Western Australian Community Hubs (WA Department of Community 2011 p24; p25)
  - Features: Regular meetings, planning for combined projects, joint applications for funds, working together, offer of universal services as soft entry points for clients
- Australian Youth Centres (Bond 2010 p22; 29; 31; DHS 2010))
  - Features: Long-term case management, stable accommodation, long-term resourcing to enable a holistic approach, partnership with multiple services providers, welcoming spaces, development of a vision, leadership by champions, on-going consultation, centralised intake.
- Moore (2008 p30; p33) identifies the following key learnings from a literature review of Community Hubs in Australian and the UK, features included:
  - Effective leadership; colocation; training' language (Flood 2006)
  - Training; Respect, shared roles and responsibilities, interagency protocols (Leiba and Weinstein 2003)
  - Core philosophy underpinning interdisciplinary and inter-agency teamwork (Prelock et la 1999; Walter and Petr 2000)
  - Integrated team based on individual relationships supported by all the above (UK Department of Children, Schools and Families 2007).
  - A shared philosophy, multidisciplinary and multi-function team, shared leadership and management, service coexisting (Whalley 2006)

Moore (2008 p37-38) also identify the key barriers to establishing and operating an integrated services Hub based on Bertram et la (2004) and Warin (2007):

- Achieving inclusiveness and equality of access
- Communication
- Staff morale
- Staffing and funding.

A key challenge identified by Fine, Parncharatnam and Thomson (2000 p36) is that there is a financial and human cost associated with integration which should not be underestimated. There are costs before benefits.

City of Ryde experience

The City of Ryde had a number of challenges regarding its support of community services, including:

- Aging social infrastructure and its associated costs as described above.
- Changing demographics requiring different services from Council and the service sector.
- Current community buildings were purchased and provided to organisations up to 45 years ago based on a single purpose, single service model. This results in a lack of coordinated service delivery, a culture of competition, a lack of shared space and a lack of fit-for-purpose accommodation.
- Scant new resources available for services or social infrastructure.
- Service sector previously had little initiative in interagency referral, partnership or information share.
- Many services were not based in Ryde, providing only limited outreach services, most of which were poorly received.

These challenges are not unique to Ryde. However, the City of Ryde has attempted to overcome these challenges in two phases:

Phase 1 – Service Sector Development
An aim of the Sector Development Program is to further development of skills and networking opportunities to share up-to-date information between the Not for Profit and Government sectors by:

- Relationship-building with sector to establish trust, creditability and vision
- Supporting sector advocacy activities
- Encouraging or creating partnership projects between key players with small amounts of funding by Council
- Training for sector on key concerns
- Service mentoring between large and small organisations
- Community Grants support for small organisations, workshops

Phase 2 – Community Hub Development
Phase 1 established trust between the service sector and Council. The next step was to create community hubs as detailed in the next section, inclusive of a seven stage process. The City of Ryde has so far established two Community Hubs and is working on a third, including:

- West Ryde Community Centre – A Child, Family and Neighbourhood Hub
- Brush Farm House – A Learning and Development Hub
- Integrated Youth Service Hub – to be opened in January 2014.

West Ryde Community Centre
The West Ryde Community Centre is located in the heart of West Ryde Town Centre close to public transport and parking. It contains a large hall for public use, a village square where the community can relax or gather for special events, and public arts based on the history of the area.

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The Centre was created to co-locate eight complimentary services dedicated to the wellbeing of local children and families. Council has worked closely with the services to create a Memorandum of Understanding to underpin the operation of the Hub, establishing partnerships, mentoring, joint projects, improved referral pathways and the sharing of knowledge.

Brush Farm House
Brush Farm House is a premier historical property located in Eastwood. It contains a number of multipurpose rooms, a small community hall and large gardens. The House co-locates four services who are dedicated to learning and development. Council worked closely with the tenants to establish a shared vision, partnership projects, and processes to facilitate the maximum use of the building for the community.

Integrated Youth Service Hub
The latest Hub is being established in an existing building previously used as an Early Childhood Health Centre in Eastwood Town Centre. The Hub will co-locate three complimentary services, dedicated to the wellbeing of local young people and will also have space for sessional services. The hub will have an integrated service intake and intra-referral process. The Hub will open in March 2014.

How to Create a Community Hub

The City of Ryde model in establishing a Community Hub has seven distinct stages, described below:
- Identifying Needs and Planning
- Building Relationships
- Establishing Commonality
- Building Cooperation
- Progressing Coordination
- Creating Collaboration
- Transforming into a Hub.

Stage 1 – Identifying Needs and Planning
Council identified needs with complimentary service locations through advocacy from service networks, needs analysis, EOI process for vacant facilities or opportunities that presented themselves. The state requires the formation of need and selection of services:
- Identification of community needs
- Seek support of state and federal funding bodies for establishment of centre (if required)
- Services chosen based on:
    o Organisation's delivery of services, relationship with Council, interest in collaboration, participation in service networks
    o Service compatibility – that services are like-minded and complementary
    o The range of service from universal to targeted
       OR
    o Through the Expression of Interest process

Tip: For a Hub to work well, services should be complementary and not be in competition with each other. There must be the spectrum of services, from universal to specialised to ensure the space doesn't become a place of stigma and disadvantage.

- Establish anchor tenant to drive process and partnership tenants
- Allocation of space that meets the needs of a Hub for trial. Requirements include:
    o Located within a town centre
    o Close to public transport

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- o Enough space for service delivery, inclusive of multi-purpose spaces and smaller spaces for specialists services
- o Disability access
- o Provision of outdoor spaces.

Stage 2 – Building Relationships
The generation of goodwill and trust between Council and potential tenants is essential for all future stages. Goodwill is demonstrated on behalf of Council through formal and informal actions:

- Formal actions
  - o Provision of licence documents with fees based on costs-to-Council and subsidies provided that recognise tenant's capacity-to-pay and community benefits, rather than a subsidy against market rates or arbitrary Council-created figure. By using this cost-to-council model, tenants recognise Council's philosophical approach of the inherent validation of the value of NGOs and providing security of tenure. This approach creates an equal and transparent relationship, establishing a bond that removes defensiveness and creates new opportunities for partnership and leveraging opportunity costs garnered through the subsidy provision.
  - o Provision of one-point-of-contact for all related processes provides certainty to tenants that their voice will be heard and acted on.
- Informal actions
  - o Provision of insight into Council processes
  - o Provision of assistance with legal documents and explanation of terms into plain English
  - o Provision of advocacy within Council on behalf of tenants to establish the sense of an 'ally' within the Council.

Tip: Developing trusting relationship is vital to develop the good-will needed throughout all future stages. These relationships are achieved through listening, understanding different perspectives and acting on issues and opportunities as they arise. Informal connections are also vital – getting to know the services and workers plays an important part in establishing trust.

Stage 3 – Establishing Commonality
As discussed above, it is widely accepted that co-location of services provides the opportunity for improved community access to services and increased communication between tenants. Using the good will generated through Stage 2, all tenants are requested to meet to work out the details of co-location. At this meeting, Council leads the discussion to establish commonality and the opportunity for partnership or integration through:

Tip: To help everyone onto the same page, ask all tenants to write onto post-it notes what they would like to get out of the meeting and the Hub. Place the post-it notes on the whiteboard and come back to them at the end.

- Establishing a formalised meeting with service managers from all tenants and Council, with official agenda, minute taking, and Council as Chair
- Undertake games to establish commonality including:
  - o Card storming to develop a vision of the space, goals and objectives that are built through consensus decision-making.
  - o Team building games to establish trust between the tenants
  - o Recognise and emphasis tenants and Council equally contribute
- Through the establishment of a vision, highlight the development of a governance structure to underpin the operation of the hub to

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- Provide all services with a place at the table and a formalised decision making body with all parties having an equal share
- Effectively use limited resources
- Information share to provide relevant services
- Develop referral pathways between services
- Establish reason and potential for new funding
- Council's commitment to drive change

By highlighting these benefits, tenants see the potential of moving beyond co-location and Council drives the development of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Tip: Effective leadership is a vital component of establishing partnership and integrated service delivery. Council is best placed to drive the process of change as Councils can support all staff, work across organisational divides and can dedicate the resources to create new solution to local problems

Stage 4 – Building Cooperation

Stage 4 aims to focus discussion into the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding, inclusive of a vision, actions, expectations, roles and responsibilities. This is achieved by guiding tenants through discussions, recognising tenant's expertise, use of games to initiate discussions, and the provision of food and informal getting to know you, achieved by:

- Review vision and objectives in written form and wordsmith
- Brainstorm practicalities to establish governance, roles, responsibilities and expectations, including:
  - Financial arrangements
  - Insurance agreements
  - Operational considerations
  - Parking
  - Dispute resolution using a tenant centric, strengths based approach
  - Safety
  - Interview panels
  - Sharing resources
  - Sharing spaces

Tip: Hold tenant meetings in services tenancies and rotate meeting locations so that all partners get to know the building and services

- Brainstorm service model
  - Co-location model (eg BFH)
    - Events and Open Day / Launch – creates interest and momentum, a tangible achievement
    - Employee orientation
    - Limited partnership projects
  - Partnership (eg WRCC)
    - All the above and
    - Service gap identification and needs analysis,
    - Partnership projects (including involving multiple partners)
    - Advocacy opportunities
    - Use of bilingual workers
    - Referral pathway processes streamlined
  - Integration (eg Youth Hub)
    - All the above and
    - Standardisation/streamlining of intake, assessment and referral processes

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- Consolidated data management and info share
  - o Strengths-based integration (Creative Hub design)
    - All the above and
    - Participatory engagement with clients to determine all aspects of Hub
- Finalise MOU
- Establish regular Tenant Committee minutes

Tip: Games to ensure consensus decision-making that brings everyone on the journey. Card storming is a game used to develop a vision or to scope a project. Card storming involves the following steps:

1. Ask a Focus Question – eg What do you want to achieve at this Centre? Or what are the stages for this project?

2. Individual Brainstorm – participants write down on cardboard their ideas, one idea per piece of cardboard in as few words as possible. Star the most important ones

3. Share – all pieces of paper are put on the table where everyone can read them

4. Group – similar ideas are grouped together

5. Consolidate – Each participant takes it in turns to read out a cluster of ideas, suggest a preferred description which consolidates the cards, and seek the group's input into the final card to describe the idea so that only single cards remain on the table

6. Confirm – All cards are read out, the facilitator asks for additional ideas not included

7. Allocate timeframe (projects only) – Everyone is asked to put the cards in order from first to last job

8. Allocate responsibility (projects only) – Everyone is asked to put their name to different jobs based on recognition of their strengths

9. Finish – Thank everyone for their participation, talk about next steps

Stage 5 – Progressing Coordination

Stage 5 brings together three distinct segments including:

1. Seeking a commitment from service managers and organisational approval for the MOU
2. Tenants move into or prepare to move into their tenancies
3. Tenants work together on Hub identity (including its name, branding, signage etc)
4. Tenant Committee is established as the key decision making body for the Hub.

Tip: Its vital that service managers and service executives sign-off on the MOU to ensure its currency.

The following actions are required:

- Tenants, at Service Manager level, but with organisational consent, commit to and sign the MOU.
- Brainstorming of partnership projects and development by tenants of projects briefs.
- Plan Open Day and promotion with each tenant contributing a unique part to the day. Tenant Executives/CEOs will sign the MOU at the event which will also incorporate community activities and guest speakers.
- Practicalities are identified and managed
- Tenants to tenant relationships are further developed through informal networking.
- Individual tenants may have opening launches or celebrations as they move-in, creating momentum.

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Stage 6 – Creating Collaboration

The Open Day is an event which draws on the strengths of each tenant, with all involved and contributing something. The event should also involve the tenants working on something together to present, like a list of projects for corporate sponsorship which gets ideas rolling. The Open Day provides:

- a joint achievement where everyone has participated
- attracts community attention and new clients to services
- provides media opportunities
- Executives attend and sign MOU which provides a status to the event and also rewards the service managers by having their CEOs, Presidents attending their service and seeing their work. Service funders are also invited and likely to attend.

Stage 7 – Transforming into a Hub

Depending on what type of model of Hub the tenants choose to create (co-location, partnership, integration, or strengths-based integration), the establishment of the Hub's status through the Open Day, consolidates the MOU as a commitment from the Service Managers, Organisation and Executives. The transformation continues through:

- Reflection on success and use of examples of sharing to continue momentum
- Setting on-going Tenant Committee meetings with a driver (Council in first instance)
- Identification of joint projects, funding opportunities, new partnership opportunities
- Implementation of the MOU actions.

More information

For more information, please contact Christopher Hellmundt, Coordinator Community Projects (Community Buildings) on 9952 8302 or visit www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/communityhubs