

Community engagement to build a bridge:
an empirical examination of the strategic large-scale redesign of future health services.



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Background and Aim

Community engagement can result in better health outcomes across multiple morbidities. Hence, community engagement is being conducted in multiple ways, transforming how health services conceptualise, organise and deliver care, including through the community participating in long term care and strategic planning. The challenge for healthcare policy makers, managers and practitioners is finding ways to effectively collaborate with patients and the broader community to plan, deliver and evaluate services.

The study purpose is to examine how health managers engage the community with the strategic redesign of health services. We present strategies and actions for those tasked with managing large scale redesign and building new healthcare facilities.

Methods

- The study setting is a large health district in New South Wales, Australia and focused on four large scale redevelopment projects, total value at A\$2.8 billion.
- The study employed a multi-methods design comprising semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
- Participants were professionals (n=24) involved in the strategic planning of health facility redevelopment.
- Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report common responses.

Results and Discussion

Three issues emerged as significant factors influencing engagement, including: establishing a new mindset to service planning and delivery; future proofing service delivery; and, management of stakeholder expectations.

Collaborating with diverse populations introduces more ideas driving creative approaches to developing models of care and questioning about what other interventions can occur. Moreover, the benefits then extend further beyond the building process as engaging with the community leads to better health outcomes across multiple health issues that significantly impact individuals, populations and the healthcare system

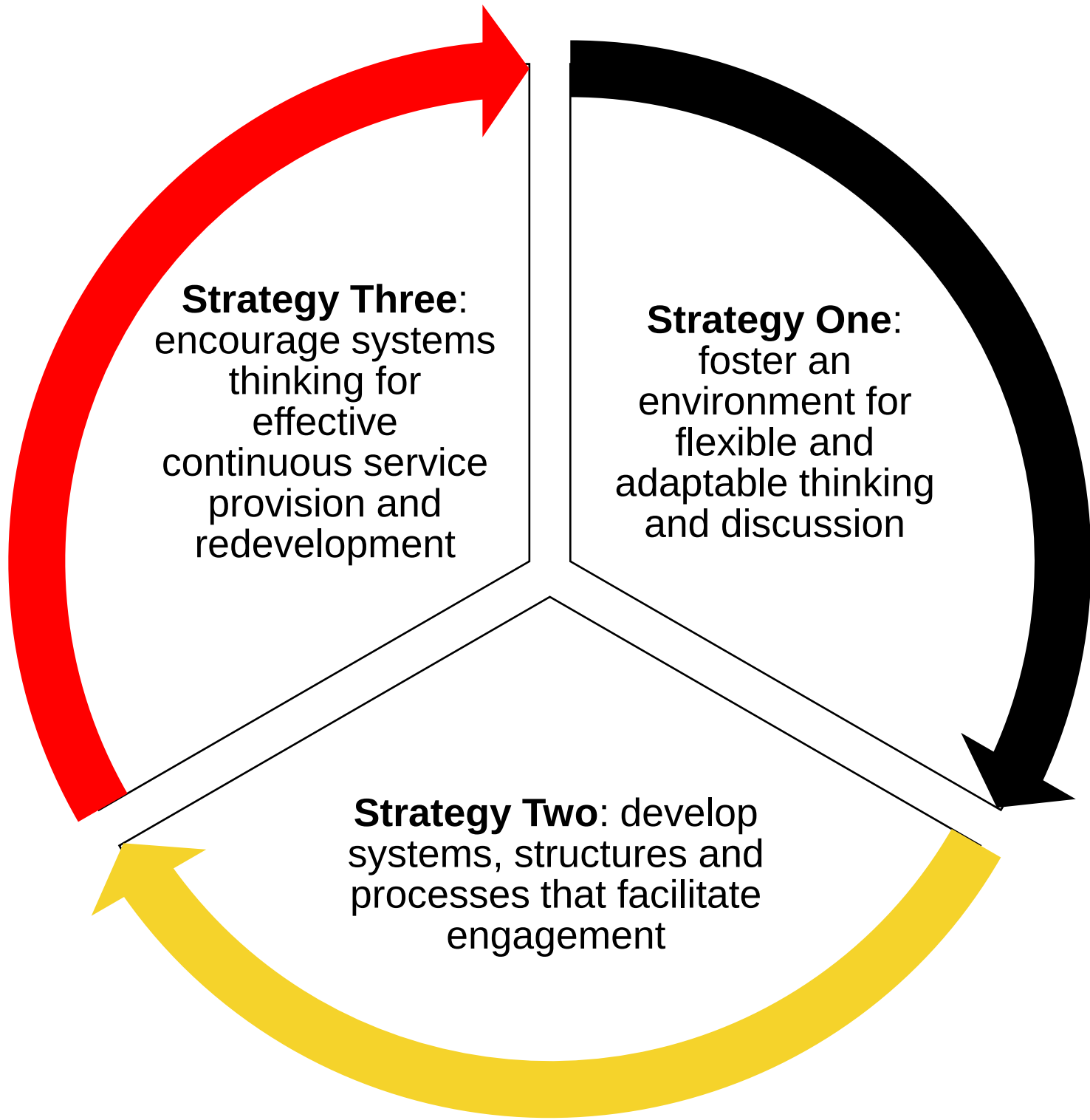


Table 1 and Figure 1. Redevelopment strategies to assess, understand and respond to external factors

Strategy	Themes	Sub themes	Action
Foster an environment that allows for flexible and adaptable planning/ thinking	Establish a new mindset to service planning and delivery	Holistic governance thinking and strategies for organisational alignment	1. Identify key clinical leads who can work closely with redevelopment executive to develop/form governance structures 2. Establish regular communication channels to facilitate problem solving, celebrate positive outcomes and overcome issues that arise 3. Seek opportunities to engage diverse stakeholders at a broader organisational level 4. Construct formal structures to govern programs and projects 5. Provide opportunities for different stakeholders to engage all aspects of the projects 6. Ensure regular communication and site visits to track progress
		Tangible community input	7. Provide the community with tangible opportunities to engage in planning through committees, user groups and arts projects
		Conduit for cultural change to siloed service provision	8. Provide feedback about changes that have occurred as a result of community contribution 9. Give permission to staff to make small changes in workflow to encourage a culture of continuous improvement 10. Lead by example, with the executive team demonstrating innovative thinking and action regarding governance and associated processes 11. Develop consultation groups and committees where the members are also those that will ensure the change works in practice 12. Structure consultation groups and committees so that they are multidisciplinary, multiservice and where relevant, multi-agency
Develop systems, structures and processes that facilitate engagement	Future proofing service delivery	Community involvement at the centre of redevelopment builds Integrating services for improved continuity	13. Ensure the governance group provides strong oversight through clear, practical agenda setting 14. Identify existing methods of engaging with internal and external stakeholders to build upon relationships 15. Avoid tokenism by starting the redevelopment process with community involvement as a key pillar 16. Recognise that staff are part of the community, and therefore dual stakeholder as service provider and user
			17. Develop models of care structures or templates that require teams to plan for integrative service provision 18. Provide evidence that meaningful community input has occurred through the involvement of key community partners 19. Develop structures that are inclusive and demonstrate a broad range of perspectives from within the organisation 20. Include leaders from outside of the organisation to encourage the development of new ideas through challenging the status quo 21. Set agendas that allow the team to have open discussion by encouraging a culture that allows questioning of conventional practice
		Understanding how infrastructure can be harnessed	22. Encourage teams to challenge traditional approaches to building and working within environments 23. Review different industries to assess opportunities to work differently
Encourage systems thinking for effective continuous service provision	Management of stakeholder expectations	Setting the direction	24. Consistently communicate the vision of what the redevelopment needs to achieve at every opportunity 25. Engage the leadership team in the vision and direction. Ensure that the team is communicating this to their teams 26. Ensure practical agendas and communications plans mirror the vision and direction
		Mediation and communication	27. Engage with clinical, corporate, community and academic experts in throughout the using formal and informal touch points 28. Engage with clinical/community/health experts who will be able to ‘broker’ expectations and ‘trouble shoot’ problems
		Adapting to external factors	29. Set a clear communications plan, ensuring that there is consistency of messaging throughout the program 30. Acknowledge when required that there has been a change brought on by external factors

Conclusion

Large redevelopment projects provide a platform for the strategic redesign of health services. When doing so, engaging the community with strategic planning, implementation and evaluation of healthcare services can lead to improved care outcomes. Community engagement with a forward-thinking lens fosters an environment that allows flexible, strategic planning. Additionally, strategic community engagement provides opportunities for codeveloped systems, structures and processes that facilitate ongoing engagement.

Further readings

Eljiz, K., Greenfield, D., Derrett, A. and Radmore, S. (2019), Health system redesign: Changing thoughts, values, and behaviors for the co-production of a safety culture. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, Vol 34 No 4, pp.1477-1484. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.2798>

Eljiz, K., Greenfield, D., Vrkleviski, L., Derrett, A. and Ryan, D. (2022). Large scale healthcare facility redevelopment: A scoping review. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, Vol 37 No 2, pp.691-714. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3378>

