What is a Neighbourhood House

Neighbourhood Houses are not-for-profit organisations where available funds are combined with a strong community volunteer input to ensure maximum benefit to the local community.

Each House or Centre is a legal entity in its own right, or is auspiced by one, and has a formal (and in some cases, financial) membership base.

The community is defined primarily, but not exclusively, by the geographical neighbourhood in which each House is located.
NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE SECTOR

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The Neighbourhood House sector works within a community development framework.

Change and growth occurs through informing and empowering individuals and communities.

Houses and Centres do not seek to do for others but to empower others to do for themselves.

Members and the community are encouraged to be actively involved in decision making and to have ownership of the programs and activities in their house or centre.

Neighbourhood Houses integrate learning into all aspects of their activities.
NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE SECTOR
PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Neighbourhood Houses actively work to redress structural disadvantage in society through their philosophy, principles and practices.

They are inclusive and supportive of people from diverse backgrounds and with varying abilities.

Houses and Centres aim to improve the social, environmental, economic and cultural infrastructure within their communities.
Building sustainable community connections with choice, opportunity and flexibility that is responsive to local needs and issues.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

The philosophy of the Neighbourhood House & Learning Centre sector is built upon ten key community development principles.

Community Participation – everyone has a valuable contribution to make and community members can join in at any level.

Volunteers and community members are integral to the decision-making, evaluation, provision, participation and direction setting at all levels of the organisation.

The community is defined primarily, but not exclusively, by the geographical neighbourhood in which Houses and Centres are located.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

Community Ownership – members are actively involved in decision-making and have ownership of the programs and activities in their House or Centre.

A voluntary management committee, collective, or board comprising elected members who live, work or participate in the local community governs each House or Centre.

The governance model operated is developmental, with the governing body working co-operatively and collaboratively with staff, volunteers, House/Centre participants and the wider community, thus generating a range of community benefits.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

**Empowerment** — a process that respects, values and enhances people’s ability to have control over their lives is put into practice.

This process encourages people to meet their needs and aspirations in a self-aware and informed way which takes advantage of their skills, experience and potential.

Change and growth occurs through informing and empowering individuals and communities.

Houses and Centres do not seek to do for others but to empower others to do for themselves.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

Lifelong Learning – learning is integrated into all aspects of their activities, thus building and supporting the personal skills, knowledge, abilities and resilience of people.

They develop the health, wellbeing and connection of people and their families, through formal and informal pathways in education, employment and self-development.

Inclusion – The diverse contributions that people make are valued, no matter what their background or varying abilities. Individual and local needs are acknowledged and addressed, often through informal interaction.

Identifying these needs and issues through a range of methods is instrumental to informing the planning and development of activities and programs.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

Access and Equity – situated in local community settings, Houses and Centres are accessible and welcoming.

They promote a fairer distribution of economic resources and power between people by aiming to improve the social, environmental, economic and cultural infrastructure within their communities.

Social Action – internal and external factors that impact on the local community are analysed and relationships between individuals, groups and organisations and within the community, transformed through collective action.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

**Advocacy** – in meeting individual and group needs, Houses and Centres act with, or on the behalf of, community members.

**Networking** – linking, forming alliances, collaborating and working with individuals, groups, other agencies, government and business are crucial.

The strength and distinctiveness of the sector model is the interaction between formal and informal methods to achieve connections within the local communities.

**Self Help** – individuals are supported in coming together in a caring group environment to share information, knowledge, skills and life experience in order that each participant can reach their own person goals.

Source: Building Victorian Communities: Outcomes of the N.H. & L.C. Sector
HOW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES PRACTISE THEIR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Through Governance & Management processes
• Being consultative
• Demonstrating an inclusive, non-discriminatory attitude
• Developing a strong team approach
• Engaging in participative decision-making
• Being representative of the local community
• Sharing information
• Using titles that don’t promote power and authority
• Regularly discussing community development principles
• Regularly evaluating the ways in which these principles are enacted within the organisation
HOW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES PRACTISE THEIR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Through programs and activities, by making sure they are:
• Relevant
• Affordable
• Promoted appropriately
• Reflective of the community’s needs
• In line with the organisation’s principles and objectives
• Regularly evaluated

By allowing and encouraging:
• Community input
• Local agency input
• Community feedback
HOW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES PRACTISE THEIR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Through volunteer involvement:
• Being accessible
• Encouraging volunteer participation
• Providing appropriate induction and training
• Providing appropriate supervision and guidance
• Being inclusive and non-discriminatory
• Providing meaningful, relevant work
• Sharing information
• Encouraging feedback

Ref: Karen Mackay (consultant/trainer)
HOW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES PRACTISE THEIR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Through marketing and promotion:
• Promoting the right image (encouraging, welcoming, open, user-friendly)
• Using appropriate non-exclusive language
• Providing relevant information
• Promoting the principles and ethics as well as the programs and activities.

Ref: Karen Mackay (consultant/trainer)
NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE SECTOR STRUCTURE

THE SECTOR

Community
Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres
Neighbourhood House Networks
ANHLC

Outcomes
Evaluate
Vision
Philosophy
Practice
Principles
Committee of Management Role

The COM is at the head of the organisation's structure of governance.

The COM has total authority, under the law, until some of that authority is parcelled up and given away (delegated) to others. Final decisions on important issues must always pass by the COM.

It is up to the COM to create the other organisational structures that will make it possible to carry out the mission.

Adapted from ourcommunity.com.au
Committee of Management Role

There are three main sets of ‘rules’ that the COM must follow in exercising its authority.

1. The Associations Incorporations Act 2012. This spells out the legal obligations of the organisation regarding incorporation.

2. The organisation’s Constitution. A breach of the constitution by the COM may result in a general meeting of all members being called to rectify the problem. A continued breach may even result in court action.

3. The organisation’s policies. Many policies apply to the COM and must be followed.
Committee of Management Role

The constitution and organisational policies should be reviewed on a regular basis to see that the House is operating according to the constitution and policies and to determine if any changes are needed to reflect the current status of the House or regulatory and legislative changes.
Committee of Management Role

The following are generally COM responsibilities:

• Setting and monitoring long-term goals
• Ensuring the mission or purpose of the organisation is adhered to
• Finalising budgets and allocating funds
• Taking responsibility for all legal matters
• Taking responsibility for compliance with regulatory requirements (e.g. annual general meeting, annual returns, audit, ATO, OHS etc)
• Appointing auditors and approving the audit of the financial records
• Evaluating COM members
• Appointing sub-committee members
• Managing sub-committees
• Establish and monitor risk management policy and implementation
• Employing a Coordinator and evaluating their performance
• Ensure effective organisational policies are in place
• Evaluating programs, services, and products

Adapted from ourcommunity.com.au
Coordinator’s Role

While the COM is responsible for organisational issues such as determining the direction of the organisation and ensuring compliance with its legal and contractual obligations, the Coordinator is responsible for operational decisions to make sure that the COMs goals are achieved and contracts fulfilled.
Sample Organisational Chart Showing Lines of Accountability

Committee of Management

Sub-committees

Coordinator

Volunteers

Staff

Working Group
Committee Member’s Responsibilities

Members are required to operate with due care and diligence, in the best interests of the organisation (fiduciary duty).

Members need to ensure that:
• The aims and objectives of the House are pursued
• The rules (constitution) of the House are followed
• The business of the House is conducted honestly and with integrity
• The House complies with all laws and any contractual obligations
• The House keeps proper financial records and can pay its debts
• They declare any personal interest that might conflict with the interests of the House or their fiduciary duty
Committee Member’s Responsibilities

All members of a Committee / Board of Management have a basic set of duties. They need to:

- Understand and fulfil their fiduciary duty
- Establish and review accountability procedures
- Establish policies and priorities (strategic plan)
- Make key decisions
- Monitor the implementation of plans and policies
- Establish and monitor a risk management plan
Keeping Everyone On Track

There are some important documents that keep everyone on the same track with a united vision if they are used as living documents and not simply filed away. They are:

1. The constitution
2. The mission, vision and or values statement/s
3. The organisations aims and objectives
4. The strategic plan

These should be used as the basis for all decision making.
Keeping Everyone On Track

While the constitution, mission statement and aims and objectives provide the broad framework and rules for the Neighbourhood House, the strategic plan spells out the specific goals that everyone in the organisation should be working towards.

A strategic plan should make clear:
• What the organisations goals are,
• How they will be achieved,
• Who will be responsible for assuring they are achieved
• When they will be completed.
• How you will know if you have achieved your goal (KPIs)

Goals that can’t be measured or that are considered ‘ongoing’ are often your core business and should not be on your strategic plan.
The strategic plan should be based on the communities needs and priorities determined through consultation. It should consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks the House experiences or is likely to experience. It should also be realistic.

By developing a strategic plan that is supported by the committee, members and staff (paid or unpaid) and which responds to community input and needs, the COM has a powerful document to guide it and everyone in the organisation.
Steps in Strategic Planning

Stage 1: Create the planning team.
Stage 2: Establish the relevant scenarios.
Stage 3: Develop or reaffirm the Vision and Mission.
Stage 4: Apply the SWOT Analysis filter.
Stage 5: Set strategies and reality checks against SWOT.
Stage 6: Develop Action Plans.
Stage 7: Filter actions against the scenarios to ensure robustness of actions under all scenarios

Source: Steven Bowman
http://www.conscious-governance.com
Relevant Scenarios – what might we need to know

Scenario planning is the development of several varied scenarios of equally likely futures. It is deciding what you think the future will most likely look like.

The point is not to select one preferred future and hope for it to become true. Nor is the point to fund the most probable future and adapt to it.

The value of strategic planning lies in the process of making strategic decisions that will be sound for all likely futures.

No matter what future takes place, an organization is more likely to be ready for it and influential in it, if it has seriously considered scenarios.

Source: Steven Bowman
http://www.conscious-governance.com
Relevant Scenarios – what might we need to know

Information search and Likely Futures Analysis
This step requires high quality information and research to determine the driving forces of change and critical uncertainties at work in the organizations working environment

In scenario planning, the team asks questions and poses possibilities about the external environment now, in five years, and in ten years..

Source: Steven Bowman
http://www.conscious-governance.com
Identify Key Driving Forces
Based on the information search, the first task in writing the scenarios is to look for driving forces of the macro-environment that become evident from the information search.

Look for the common themes running through your information search.

Look for predetermined components, those features that look as if they are going to persist under any scenario. They might include population statistics, demographics, and technology components. There are likely to be four or five of these key driving forces.

Source: Steven Bowman
http://www.conscious-governance.com
Identify critical uncertainties

Critical uncertainties are important as they form the basis for writing the scenarios, where you say “Oh wow, if that happened what would we do?”

One method to identify the important critical uncertainties is to rank the key factors and driving forces on the basis of two criteria: the degree of potential to occur, and the degree of impact if it does occur.

The point is to identify those three or four factors and trends that are most important and most uncertain. These factors then form the basis for the scenarios.

Source: Steven Bowman
http://www.conscious-governance.com
What do we know about driving forces?

- How many people live in the area and surrounds?
- How old are they?
- How well off are they?
- How healthy are they?
- How many families and children are there?
- How old are the children?
- How many single parents, people with a disability, unemployed?

**Example**
- Median age of persons 45
- Median individual income ($/weekly) 315
- Median family income ($/weekly) 713
- Median housing loan repayment ($/monthly) 715
  - Median rent ($/weekly) 120
- Average household size 2.2
- SEIFA score 910
What is SWOT?

**Strengths:**
- What are the advantages of your organisation?
- What do you do well? (What do you boast about?)

Don’t be too modest, but be realistic.

**Weaknesses:**
- What could be improved?
- What is done badly (what's embarrassing?)
- What should be avoided?
- What should you be doing that you can't?

Your organisation's strengths and weaknesses should be considered from an internal and external basis – do other people (your clients, other organisations) perceive strengths or weaknesses that you don't see? What do others think your organisation is good at? Do your competitors do any better? Face unpleasant truths.

Source: www.ourcommunity.com.au
What is SWOT

**Opportunities:**

- What good choices are you facing?
- What are the next steps?
- What are the trends in your community?

Useful opportunities can come from such things as changes in technology, changes in government policy, or changes in social patterns, population profiles, or lifestyle changes.

Source: www.ourcommunity.com.au
What is SWOT

Threats:

• What obstacles do you face?

• What is your competition doing? What is it planning?

• What are your funders doing? What are their plans?

• Are the required specifications for your services changing?

• How is the demand for your services? Are your clients less satisfied or more satisfied?

Do you have finance or cash-flow problems? Are your staff members all settled, or could they leave a gap suddenly? Could you do what you're planning if that happened?

Source: www.ourcommunity.com.au
How to use a SWOT analysis

Setting new goals

• How can we use our strengths to take advantage of the opportunities?

• How can we use our strengths to overcome the threats?

• What do we need to do to overcome the weaknesses before we can take advantage of the opportunities?

• How should we minimise our weaknesses to ward off the threats?

Source: www.ourcommunity.com.au