Doing community building
A resource for housing associations
Note: While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, readers should seek expert advice where necessary in relation to their specific circumstances.

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Glossary of Terms

A number of these terms and concepts are the subject of academic debate. This resource has drawn on definitions from the literature with the purpose of the resource in mind— to provide a resource for housing associations to engage in community building. It does not attempt to engage in the debate around the terms.

**Community:** Using a geographic based definition refers to a community from a particular local government area (LGA) or housing estate precinct. In the case of working in and around a housing estate - a grouping of up to several thousand households, whose occupants share common experiences and bonds derived from living in the same locality1.

**Community building:** People from the community, government and business taking the steps to find solutions to issues within their communities2.

**Community building initiatives:** Continuous, self-renewing efforts by residents, community leaders and professionals engaged in collective action aimed at problem solving that results in improved lives and greater equity and produces new or strengthened institutions, organisations, relationships, and new standards and expectations for life in the community3.

**Community engagement:** A spectrum of engagement from: seeking feedback and input into service delivery; strengthening the involvement of individuals and communities in policy development and service delivery; and expanding opportunities for informed decision-making about policy directions and priorities.

**Community renewal/regeneration:** An action which leads to the solving of urban problems in areas which have undergone decline. The aim is to achieve a lasting improvement in the physical, economic, social and environmental nature of an area and in doing so improve the quality of life for those living in the area.

**Place-based approaches:** Policy, planning, decision-making and resource allocation according to the needs of a defined geographically community (often involving multiple government and non-government agencies).

**Place management**: A coordinated initiative focusing on locality-based interventions to achieve targeted outcomes.

**Social capital:** Social connectedness from which norms of trust and reciprocity arise.

**Social exclusion:** Exclusion from ‘mainstream’ of society due to issues such as social division, inequality and lack of opportunity often resulting in unemployment, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor skills, bad health and family breakdown.

**Social cohesion:** Strengthening of social connectedness and reducing differences, gaps and inequalities between groups of people and people living in different geographic locations.

**Tenant participation:** The UK’s Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) defines tenant participation as: ‘a two-way process involving the sharing of ideas, information and power. That means tenants and their landlords working together to improve housing conditions and housing services. How it’s approached depends on the particular circumstances. What’s essential is a range of participation opportunities which allow tenants to get involved as individuals and collectively as part of accountable, organised groups’. An alternative definition can be found in the National Community Housing Standards, 2003: “Tenants contribute to and participate in the decision-making of the organisation.”

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1. The Housing Corporation and European Institute for Urban Affairs, 2000, Sustainability Toolkit
5. The term community renewal is often interchanged with community regeneration. In the UK the term neighbourhood renewal is used. This resource will use regeneration as this has gained more currency in recent years. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit ODPM online: http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1127158
6. Lawson S, Gleeson, B 2005 Shifting urban Governance in Australia, in P Smyth, T Reddel & A Jones (eds.) Community and Local Governance in Australia
7. Lawson S, Gleeson, B 2005 Shifting urban Governance in Australia, in P Smyth, T Reddel & A Jones (eds.) Community and Local Governance in Australia
8. Putnam in Bridge C et al 2003, Housing Assistance and Non-Shelter Outcomes, AHURI
Introduction

The NSW FHA Doing Community Building resource is intended as a practical guide to conducting community building in the local community.

The resource is designed to assist housing associations to understand what is required to undertake community building activities.

A primary focus will be community building initiatives often related to, or arising from, social housing estates.

Not all housing associations will currently hold stock in a public housing estate or even have one in their local area. They may nonetheless be undertaking community building activities through their approach to engaging and working with the tenant and wider community.

The resource will also assist these providers in further understanding how they might contribute to community building.

Overall, the resource aims to assist housing associations to further understand the role they can play in community building by identifying:

- the issues that they are trying to address through community building activities;
- the approaches that are usually employed to address them; and
- the capacities and resources needed to undertake these activities.

Policy environment

Tenant participation and support for the tenant community has long been a core value of community housing. Over the past few years, more explicit community building, both with tenants and the community of which they are a part, has become increasingly important.

For example, potential commercial partners have identified community building in mixed tenure developments as one of the main areas of added value they look for in partnering with a housing association to redevelop and manage housing estates. For developers, emerging areas of business such as delivery of large scale affordable housing initiatives and the redevelopment of public housing estates have highlighted the need to engage with the local community and to address perceived or real social problems.

Community building is little understood by developers – their business is in development, usually over as short a period as possible. Large affordable housing projects and redevelopment of public housing estates require a long term approach – in the case of private-public partnerships on public housing estates, up to 30 years. In these cases developers view lack of social cohesion, anti-social behaviour, and potential damage to property in mixed tenure (public and private) developments as a key risk to their investment. They will look to community partners to mitigate that risk.

Community building has also gained support among government policy makers in recent years as a strategy for addressing disadvantage and poverty. State governments, in particular, increasingly pursue place-based approaches such as community building as a means of addressing social exclusion in areas with high levels of poverty.

For example, the NSW Premiers Department initiated the Community Builders website (now maintained by Department of Community Services). The site has a range of resources to help facilitate a community building approach to place management.

It is not surprising that governments have focused on communities with high concentrations of social housing such as public housing estates. The very nature of public housing – with highly targeted eligibility criteria, based on receipt of income support and complex needs, means that these areas are likely to have higher levels of poverty than neighbourhoods with low concentrations of social housing.

However, it should be noted that areas with high concentrations of public housing are not necessarily ‘dysfunctional’, nor do they display all the measures of social exclusion. A number of studies of public housing estates have shown high levels of social cohesion and social capital resulting in a strong sense of community. Equally, other studies have shown disadvantage beyond estates in communities that would benefit from community building.

Overall many believe community building is a useful strategy to address disadvantage in communities. Debate continues around the outcomes that can be achieved by it and what initiatives are most likely to achieve them. This resource does not engage in that debate. Rather, it aims to build on the work previously undertaken by the NSW Federation of Housing Associations by providing a practical resource that identifies what approaches can be undertaken in pursuing community building objectives.
A framework for understanding community building

We need a framework to help understand where community housing fits in community building. A framework will describe what is meant by community building, build understanding of social exclusion and explain the role community housing can play in addressing disadvantage in communities. It will set the scene by building understanding of the issues prior to looking at community building initiatives.

What do we mean by community building?
Definitions of community building (of which there are many) often describe broadly what community building entails. The definition used by the NSW state government refers to community building ‘...as being about people from the community, government and business taking the steps to find solutions to issues within their communities’.

An expanded definition entails ‘Continuous, self-renewing efforts by residents, community leaders and professionals engaged in collective action aimed at problem solving and enrichment that results in improved lives and greater equity and produces new or strengthened institutions, organisations, relationships, and new standards and expectations for life in community’.

Community building is carried out in order to benefit members of the community and the community as a whole.

Benefits resulting from community building might occur in a range of areas. For example, different community building initiatives could result in improvements to physical infrastructure; increased investment in the area; improvements to health of community members; lower crime rates; improved employment opportunities and education; improved social and economic participation; and greater wealth distribution. Taken together or separately, the above benefits require a long term approach. They are influenced by one or a combination of social, economic, political and historical factors.

Social housing and community building
In social housing in Australia, community building is usually undertaken through community renewal or regeneration. These strategies are designed to achieve many of the same outcomes as community building (usually in a public housing estate). As well as engaging with the community, they usually involve improvements to the physical environment such as public spaces and housing.

In the UK, there is a national approach to ‘neighbourhood renewal’. The desired outcome is described broadly as reversing a spiral of decline. It is about working from the grassroots to deliver economic prosperity and jobs, safer communities, good education, decent housing and better health, as well as fostering a new sense of community among residents.

However, it is worth noting that community building is not confined to social housing estates. There are many examples where community building extends beyond social housing estates. For example, the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations in the US fosters community development through homeownership; supporting small business; fostering education and learning; strengthening job readiness; transforming streetscapes; and providing affordable homes and services. These are whole-of-community approaches.

What do we mean by social exclusion?
The language of social exclusion and inclusion is increasingly being used by policy makers and academics, particularly in the UK. A social exclusion task force sits within the UK Cabinet Office whose mandate it is to co-ordinate the government’s ‘drive against social exclusion, ensuring that the cross-departmental approach

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12 Ibid

14 Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2002 Fact Sheet 1: What is neighbourhood renewal?
15 Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations, information accessed online: www.pacdc.org
delivers for those most in need.’ The principals that guide the approach of the task force are identifying and targeting those most at risk; identifying what works; utilising best practice; promoting multiagency working; personalisation – rights and responsibilities; and targeting underperformance of service providers – government and non-government16.

That is, the UK government is targeting excluded (e.g. through unemployment, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor skills, bad health, family breakdown etc) communities. In this sense social exclusion has a tendency to be a ‘catch all’ way of grouping socially and economically disadvantaged people in a whole of government approach.

In the UK, social inclusion has become the key goal of a range of activities such as community building. Central to efforts to address social exclusion is the objective of improving social and economic participation. Policy makers and practitioners are therefore looking to address social exclusion by pursuing interventions that enhance and build social and economic participation. The goal of social inclusion suggests policy initiatives where the market, state and civil society work in partnership to create a more inclusive society17. In Australia, social inclusion has now become a priority for the new federal labour government and is part of the portfolio of the deputy prime minister.

While there are complex drivers of social exclusion (such as macro18 causes that are likely to be external to a particular area), area-based initiatives such as community building are gaining prevalence as part of the answer to achieving a more inclusive society. The focus is on addressing the needs of the community through using an ‘area based initiative’. Area based initiatives such as community building are able to:

• target resources to areas with high levels of poverty;
• be responsive to local needs; and
• identify and utilise local resources and opportunities.19

Building social capital can also play a key role in fostering a more inclusive community. Strategies that address exclusion through building confidence and social capital; building new relationships with outsiders such as service providers, and decision makers; and developing jobs and assets to link the area with the ‘outside world’ are likely to have a positive outcome21.

### Understanding the community housing role in community building

The community housing sector has long viewed community building as a key role. The National Community Housing Standards refers to contributing to sustainable communities by building community capacity (NCHS 4.2).

Community housing can play a key role in area based initiatives that address social exclusion. Indeed building stronger communities is one of five key themes in the NSW Planning for the Future: New Directions for community housing in NSW (2007/08 – 2012/13) to guide the future development of the sector.

As an area-based model, community housing is in an ideal position to participate and drive community building initiatives, particularly as housing intersects with key areas of disadvantage.

Housing associations can play an important role through their relationships in the local area and may be

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18 Some examples of macro drivers of social exclusion are income disparities and private sector disinvestment
19 Ibid
able to broker in other resources from those agencies. As a result, some may move into areas beyond housing such as training, employment advice and wider community activities. In doing so, they can play an active role in addressing a range of community needs.

The following table sets out the key strengths of community housing as they relate to what is required to undertake community building.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s required</th>
<th>Strengths of community housing</th>
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</table>
| Understand needs of community members                     | • Providers have a commitment to tenant participation  
• Membership of most housing associations is comprised of their tenants (can elect directors, change the organisation’s constitution)  
• Many housing associations also have tenant board members or tenant workers in their organisation. |
| Respond to changes in community needs (employment, education, health) | • Local providers are more ‘in tune’ with the needs of that community  
• Providers are able to respond to changes more quickly than a state-wide government body – flexible policy responses |
| Provide links to range of services                         | • Along with schools housing is a key focus of community members  
• Providers maintain a range of partnerships with local support services  
• Providers can link tenants with other services and initiatives (employment, training etc) |
| Ability to bring the key players together in a whole-of-community approach | • Providers maintain partnerships with other community organizations  
• Providers have close relationship with state and local government  
• Providers have some relationships with local businesses and can forge others such as through the chamber of commerce |
| Understand the ‘strengths and weaknesses’ of a community    | • Providers can identify and utilise local resources and pursue opportunities  
• Providers are focussed on the local community rather than the whole region or state  
• Local partnerships and linkages facilitate a flow of information providing an clear picture of ‘strengths and weaknesses’ of the community |
| Encourage economic activity                                | • Connections to local businesses, tenants, state and local government can be utilised  
• As providers move into developing affordable housing, there will be opportunities to initiate economic activity  
• Providers can forge partnerships with private sector financiers and developers for community projects |

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22 Ibid
Of course, there are some constraints in what community housing is able to achieve. A key constraint is that currently community housing has little capacity to change physical (non-housing) infrastructure in a community. Associations currently do not own the properties they manage, nor do they control public spaces, such as parks, surrounding them.

Another key constraint is the limited resources (both time and financial) that community housing providers have to allocate to community building activities. To take on a larger role in community building, these will need to be addressed.

Despite the constraints, there are many examples of community housing playing an active and central role in community building. Some have been documented in the NSW Federation of Housing Associations report *The role of Community Housing in Strengthening Communities: Community Renewal Initiatives Project*.

**Strengthening communities**

There are a range of issues housing associations might look to address to strengthen communities. They may pursue locally driven solutions as opposed to centrally designed programs; build capacity of communities to respond to change (such as economic changes); address reduced life opportunities in areas with high concentrations of social disadvantage; pursue social mix to break up concentrations of disadvantage; help address crime and inter-generational unemployment; maintain social cohesion by not displacing vulnerable groups; and sustain social and economic participation.  

![Diagram 1: Housing associations principals for working to strengthen communities](image)

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24 ibid
What issues are you trying to address?

Areas with high levels of social exclusion are likely to have some of the following indicators – low levels of workforce participation; poor education outcomes; poor health outcomes; high levels of crime; low levels of social cohesion and participation; and a lack of economic activity. Housing associations will want to be clear about which issues (or combination of issues) they are trying to address when undertaking community building initiatives. Community building initiatives might therefore be directed to one or more of the following issues:

- **Workforce participation**
- **Education**
- **Health**
- **Crime**
- **Social cohesion**
- **Economic development**

The process of community building is long term, and very challenging. It requires continuing cultural change in all the organisations that work with disadvantaged communities. It also requires a commitment not just to start community building but to sustain it, and to provide the resources and strategies required to make sustainable change a realistic possibility.

Against this backdrop, short term approaches can only be counter productive, as they undermine the capacity to build trust between the community and the organisations that work with the community. Long term capacity building is required for the community to develop the skills and confidence required to take their place at the table, where the decisions are made.

So, it should be emphasised that any approaches to community building are going to take time and resources. They will also require skills beyond housing management. The limits to what might be achieved by housing associations alone should also be recognised as most approaches will rely on the involvement of other agencies – local council, support providers, welfare, chamber of commerce, and state government departments.

It is important to be clear about what you are setting out to achieve in undertaking a particular project or initiative.

The following sections outline ways housing associations can help address the issues identified above. Each section contains a table listing what associations might need to do to help address that issue. It also lists constraints that housing associations may face, so that they have a clear understanding of what will be required prior to undertaking a new initiative. Many of these will overlap with what is needed, and the constraints of other community building issues.

Workforce participation

Greater workforce participation in any community is likely to improve the social and economic situation of that community. Community members will have a greater financial capacity to pay for health care and other services to improve their wellbeing. They will have more resources to pay for other important non-housing related expenses such as education for themselves or their families, further improving future job prospects.

More community members in the workforce may also lead to greater support of local businesses with further benefits for local employment; or other local businesses opening to meet increased demand.

Improving workforce participation is therefore a key goal for community building.

The core business of housing associations is to provide safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing. This in itself can positively impact on workforce participation. Greater security of tenure, reduced housing costs, improved dwellings, improved environment, and greater stability are likely to help build more settled work patterns\(^\text{25}\).

However, social housing may in some circumstances impede greater workforce participation through workforce disincentives and poor location (where available properties are a long way from workforce opportunities).

While the provision of core housing services by housing associations is largely within the control of housing associations, providers may have little or no control over some policy settings (e.g. income based rent setting, location of capital stock). Providers will be aware of, and try to manage these limitations if they target workforce participation as an issue to pursue as part of a broader community building agenda.

There are a range of activities and initiatives that housing associations can be involved in to assist workforce participation in their community. Largely, these are small scale and involve the tenant community. These can combine to have a more significant impact in communities where there is a joined-up approach involving local council, the chamber of commerce or other human service initiatives. The following approaches group different activities together.

- **Information provision** – organisations regularly inform or provide advice to tenants of employment opportunities (usually through their newsletter). This can be linked to contractors (such as advice on apprenticeships), partner organisations or positions in their own organisation. One organisation has a policy of informing the tenant community of positions vacant in their organisation before they advertise them more widely.

- **Work experience** programs and volunteer roles – an organisation may run a work experience program in their organisation or have a policy of taking on volunteers (usually from the tenant community). Volunteer roles might include a range of administrative tasks, community development or being a member of the board of directors. These help provide a first step to engaging with the workforce. Volunteer programs should (where possible) link to employment programs either within the organisation or externally. Some may link to micro enterprises within the community.

- **Employment program** – these are either for employment within the housing association or linked to other agencies or funding programs. Where employment is within the housing association, a number of associations draw on participants from their volunteer work program providing a pathway from skill development to paid employment. Other organisations use external employment programs such as the Commonwealth’s Community Development and Employment Projects\(^\text{26}\) (Indigenous employment program) by taking on administrative trainees. Others assist tenants with placements under a negotiated agreement with the various contractors used by the association.

- **Micro enterprises\(^\text{27}\)** - the establishment of these enterprises can be facilitated by a housing association involving members of the tenant community. They service the local community, often commencing with providing services to the tenant community. Some organisations have facilitated the establishment of, and utilise enterprises such as a handy person service, lawn maintenance, rubbish removal businesses and a catering service. Usually these will require funding for start up costs. Some housing associations may choose to fund this from their own revenue in the belief that it is part of their core mission. Others will work to broker loans or grants for this purpose.

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26 The aims of the Commonwealth Community Development and Employment Projects (CDEP) are to create a range employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Funding is provided by the Commonwealth to support community organisations to do this. More information can be found at: [http://www.cdep.com.au](http://www.cdep.com.au). At the time of writing the program was under review with some indication that ongoing Federal government funding was in question.

27 Microenterprise is a term that refers to small scale businesses with a localised focus, requiring minimal upfront capital input. They are often referred to in relation to developing countries and are known as the “informal economic sector” by economists. The term is also used in community building in disadvantaged communities in developing countries. From website: [http://www.adelantefoundation.org/microenterprise.htm](http://www.adelantefoundation.org/microenterprise.htm)
Table 2
What associations would need to do to undertake the above workforce participation initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of business</th>
<th>What associations would have to do</th>
<th>Constraints &amp; resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program development</td>
<td>• Writing funding submission • Attend meetings/ liaison with relevant agencies • Communication/ liaison skills</td>
<td>• Staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program management</td>
<td>• Trainee supervision Staff induction • Project monitoring &amp; review • Budgeting/financial skills</td>
<td>• Financial • Lack of ongoing commitment &amp; resources by other agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery</td>
<td>• Training provision • Postage/printing information • Specific program skills (e.g. handyperson skills)</td>
<td>• Capacity/ willingness to work with trainees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education
Poor education outcomes will often cause people to be excluded from better paid jobs or career prospects. However, poor overall educational achievements by schools in a community or by a large population of residents can suggest that the community as a whole is at risk of exclusion. Initiatives that aim to improve education in a community can empower members of the community and position them to participate more actively in the workforce. Again, the core business of housing associations of providing safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing is likely to result in a more stable environment for learning. There are also more specific initiatives that providers can pursue to improve education outcomes for tenants.

While many initiatives aimed at improving education in a particular community will be directed to achieving a vocational outcome – engagement with the workforce, other less vocational programs that empower community members (for example to understand their tenancy rights, improve living skills or parenting) also have an important role in affecting positive social change in a community. These initiatives will intersect with other community building outcomes such as health.

While housing associations in Australia are not currently involved in directly delivering education programs beyond work experience or on the job training, they may help link their tenants to education programs or be involved in life skills programs. Establishing and continuing links to other organisations will be critical to achieving improved education outcomes. In the future, as in the US, associations may choose to move into more direct provision of education programs.

There are a number of approaches providers may use to pursue better educational outcomes in the community.

• **Information Provision** – this might involve information sessions or workshops where local schools, TAFE or university speakers are invited to present information to tenants. Regular updates on educational courses in the newsletter or ensuring brochures are available in the office. One provider links children of tenants to education scholarships to pay for school attendance, taking a more active role in the provision of information to tenants.

• **Work with support agencies/local schools on education specific issues** – many organisations liaise with support providers to ensure tenants are supported in continuing their education. Some may also work with local schools to support school retention such as through breakfast programs or playgroups. One organisation works with a support provider that has a program that targets young people to help them attend high school and TAFE.

• **Broker or deliver non-vocational educational programs** – this might include: life skills and personal development training; education about tenant obligations and rights; and health and safety education. This will usually be brokered from another agency but might also be delivered in-house by the association. These might also serve as a first step to further education or training.

• **Deliver on the job and vocational training** – usually linked to an employment program this approach will provide training to volunteer or trainee workers within
the association. Organisations might have a policy of drawing on participants that have undertaken this program when positions become vacant, thus providing an educational pathway to employment.

- **Scholarships** – where an association directly provides scholarships to tenants and their families to undertake further studies. One association has an education bursary for up to 25 scholarships to assist tenants and their children to further their education and foster greater career opportunities.

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of business</th>
<th>What associations would have to do</th>
<th>Constraints/Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program brokering &amp; development</td>
<td>• Identifying educational need</td>
<td>• Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community resource information</td>
<td>• Management time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Program design</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appointment of educators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Liaison &amp; negotiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program delivery</td>
<td>• Promotional skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organisational skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensuring equity</td>
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Safe, secure and stable housing is considered as having a positive impact and is generally recognised as being a foundation of health\(^{29}\). Appropriate housing might have a positive influence on a range of health areas – health of aged/elderly people, mental health, preventative health, injury health issues, community care, and wellbeing health issues\(^{30}\).

Along with the intrinsic benefits of appropriate housing provision, there are initiatives that are likely to assist in improving health outcomes of clients. Many of these intersect with others. For example, the improved financial position of someone who has recently entered the workforce as a result of an employment initiative will be able to better afford medical care, medicines or healthier food. It may also improve their sense of self-worth or general wellbeing. Equally, lower crime rates in an area are likely to have a positive impact on health or participation in community activities, and potentially reduce isolation.

The link between housing and health has been recognised at a NSW State Government level. Human service departments are involved in a number of government auspiced programs: Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative\(^{31}\) (HASI); Joint Guarantee of Service\(^{32}\) (JGOS); and the Housing and

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**Health**

While the links between housing and health are largely intuitive, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence in Australia relating housing to health\(^{28}\). As the issue has gained some attention in recent years this is starting to change, particularly in relation to Indigenous health and mental health.

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\(^{29}\) ibid

\(^{30}\) ibid

\(^{31}\) The Mental Health Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative is a project in the NSW State Government Action Plan: Framework for Housing and Accommodation Support for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders. It has been developed in partnership with NSW Department of Health and Housing and non-government organisations in the mental health and housing sector.

\(^{32}\) JGOS is a strategy to guide the coordinated delivery of mental health, support and housing services between the participating agencies in NSW. It is intended as a framework for non-government social housing providers from the Aboriginal and community housing sectors, non-government mental health service providers and non-government SAAP service providers to participate in at a local level.
Human Services Accord33. These provide a framework for a joined up approach to housing and health. Initiatives at a local level will contribute to community building outcomes in this area.

With strong links between health and other community building outcomes, it is important therefore to be clear about what you are trying to achieve. Beyond the core role of ensuring people are matched to the right type of housing, partnerships with support providers and ensuring that health initiatives are coordinated with housing will be a key way to affect positive outcomes in health. The following approaches group activities that can benefit the health of tenants.

- **Information provision** – The same tools and skills apply here to information provision mentioned above – newsletter articles on health courses, programs or services; activities where information is distributed to tenants; and brochures available in the office. One organisation seeks funding to hold regular seminars on health issues.

- **Facilitating community activities** – regular community activities or projects will improve the wellbeing of socially isolated members of the community. Renewal activities such as: developing and maintaining community gardens; holding social events; and supporting a social club are often supported by housing associations. Some of these may have a particular purpose or focus – one organisation links social events with mental health programs; another Aboriginal housing organisation targeted Aboriginal Elders and linked activities with NAIDOC week.

- **Forging and maintaining appropriate support partnerships** – A key role for associations pursuing health outcomes for tenants will be to ensure that the appropriate partnerships or agreements are in place to support their tenants. Most associations already maintain a number of partnership arrangements that support tenants’ health. For example, one organisation that maintained agreements with disability and mental health organisations also initiated a sport program. Another partners with local youth, mental health and aged care support services.

- **Identifying need & brokering services** – Another key role is that of identifying existing or emerging health needs of tenants and brokering appropriate services to support those needs. One organisation identified a support need for single mothers with new born babies and brokered a home nursing service through the Department of Health to provide support. The constraints to doing this should be recognised. A primary constraint may be that the appropriate services do not exist in or near the community. Brokering may then become more of a lobbying approach to the appropriate levels of government.

<table>
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<th>Table 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What associations would need to do to undertake the above health initiatives.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of business</th>
<th>What associations would have to do</th>
<th>Constraints &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating health related activities</td>
<td>• Organisational - notifying tenants, preparing venue etc.</td>
<td>• Time/human resource Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for tenants</td>
<td>• Grant application skills</td>
<td>• Degree of tenant involvement in planning meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Liaising &amp; planning</td>
<td>and tenants participation in club functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ability to work with diverse organisations and people, insurance</td>
<td>• Establishing and maintaining tenant interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support rather than run the project</td>
<td>• Building skill set of tenants to be involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership &amp; program</td>
<td>• Regular meetings involving senior staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brokering &amp; maintenance</td>
<td>• Networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community liaison with stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33 The Accord is a formal agreement between NSW Government agencies. It provides an overarching framework for human service agencies – both government and non-government – to work in partnership to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. The Accord recognises that affordable and stable housing can maximise the effectiveness of other services, such as mental health support, disability services or family support.
Crime

The causes of crime intersect with a range of socio-economic factors. High crime levels may be evident where there is a high concentration of low-income households and low levels of employment and education. But other areas with similar measures may have lower levels of crime due to a high level of social capital and social cohesion.

Community building initiatives aimed at reducing crime will often involve addressing social cohesion, participation and the broader economic status of a community. Regeneration activities such as addressing poor street lighting, ensuring housing design doesn’t create inactive public space and other precinct regeneration activities will also play a role.

Indeed a key, though contested link between housing and crime on housing estates is based on architectural design features and the idea of ‘defensible space’. While it is debated, the concept highlights the potential influence of the built environment on crime. Another link is based on whether there is thought to be a ‘sense of community’ or not which can serve to enhance collective policing and social norms to reduce crime.

One suggestion is that the link between housing and crime relates to the degree to which housing can impact on community viability and cohesion. Taking this approach, a key role for housing associations trying to reduce crime will be to focus on initiatives that build social capital in the community.

It is worth recognising some constraints to initiatives focussing on the built environment and shared spaces. Specifically, most housing associations lack of direct control over the ‘bricks and mortar’ and public space design issues. Changes in this area will require working and negotiating with local council and Housing NSW.

Approaches to addressing crime in a neighbourhood might be grouped broadly into two categories – initiatives directed at particular incidences of crime (for example bag snatching in a particular area), and those that function more broadly to build community cohesion (for example community activities and participation).

- **Coordination with other local agencies** - will be central to contributing to reducing crime in the community. One housing association holds regular meetings with all local agencies including police, health, housing, local government (and others) to address issues regarding crime reporting and responses on an estate.
- **Supporting crime related programs** – programs may include community policing (such as Neighbourhood Watch), working with government agency programs that deal with crime and safety. One association is on the board of a federal government employment program that also runs programs on dealing with crime and safety.
- **Build community cohesion** – a range of activities from appropriate allocations to facilitating community events and programs to engage with the community in a sustained way. See discussion on building social cohesion.

**Table 5**

What associations would need to do to undertake the above crime related initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of business</th>
<th>What associations would have to do</th>
<th>Constraints &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking &amp; support for</td>
<td>• Administrative support Mediation</td>
<td>• Labour intensive to contact stakeholders and get agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crime related programs</td>
<td>• Understanding benefits of holistic approach to crime</td>
<td>to be involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ability to work with community and establish good relationships</td>
<td>• Reluctance to highlight where other agencies could be more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ability to be flexible &amp; innovative in the approach to working with the community</td>
<td>pro-active – (eg police)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Complexity and interrelatedness of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>See table Table 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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34 Radburn designed housing –
Social cohesion

Social cohesion is a complex concept that manifests across a number of levels, the definition of which is the subject of some debate. There is some agreement on two aspects of it – that it is about strengthening social connectedness; and reducing differences, gaps and inequalities of people or groups37. There is also another more contested aspect of social cohesion which relates to the cultural environment in which social interaction takes place. This is about shared values, connectedness, a common purpose and shared identity38. This resource has focused on the first two aspects – strengthening social connectedness and, reducing inequalities.

The relationship of housing assistance to social cohesion can be summarised as follows39:

- Housing policies can improve social connectedness by addressing inequalities – predominantly income and health inequalities
- Housing policies can improve social connectedness by providing stability and longevity so that social relationships related to place and a sense of belonging can develop – including through rental arrangements that allow tenants to ‘stay in place’ or through assisting in home purchase (such as through shared equity schemes)
- Housing policies can improve social connectedness by allowing renters some control over the area in which they live by providing choice and ensuring areas are appropriate to the needs of tenants

Housing associations may work to build the second of these thus ensuring long term tenancies where possible and in the future be in a position to enter into shared equity or other home purchase schemes, providing a continuum of housing options to stay in place.

Currently, head-leasing is the tool through which housing associations might have some impact in the third area above – providing an element of locational choice and avoiding concentrations of poverty where possible.

As housing associations increasingly move towards ownership of their assets, they will have a greater capacity to address this area.

But a key focus for housing associations will be on the first of these through community building initiatives.

Building social cohesion is therefore a key area where housing associations can play a role. Housing associations already work actively with their tenant community by facilitating tenant participation. Through their partnerships with other local agencies they also have direct and indirect contact with a range of community members beyond their tenant community. There may be opportunities to build wider participation through these connections.

Initiatives designed to improve workforce participation, education or reduce crime in particular may also provide opportunities to enhance social cohesion through fostering a sense of community – through employment programs, school initiatives and greater security. Improvements in these areas can help create a more positive perception of a disadvantaged community and reduce perceived or real stigma creating further opportunities to build cohesion.

Other benefits can flow from a greater sense of community, such as reduced social isolation. Indeed, reducing isolation may be one of the outcomes providers will look towards when encouraging tenant participation. While the focus of housing associations will be predominantly on their tenants, encouraging social participation in the community will often extend beyond their tenants and have greater community cohesion as one of its goals.

- **Provide information, seek tenant views and listen to tenants** – this might include providing information about community events in newsletters and on a website, to organising social events as a means of providing information, seeking tenant views or listening to their concerns. Others use a tenant outreach service as an opportunity to listen to tenant concerns for those unable to come into the office or link tenants to the local technology centre.

- **Auspice a community project** – One model often used to encourage wider participation is a community project. These involve members of the tenant population and wider community coming together to work on a project that can benefit the community. An

38 ibid
39 ibid
example is where tenants of one provider came together to improve local public space by creating a ‘Dream Park’ designed by local tenants. Funding was sought by the provider from Housing NSW, local council and others for the project which not only encouraged participation for the duration of the project but had a lasting social use for the local community. Another common example is that of the community garden or neighbourhood beautification, for which the provider can play a facilitator role – seeking funding and support from relevant agencies. Consultation and joint dialogue and decision making with tenants is critical to the success of any community project.

- **Tenants advisory groups and tenant councils** - are a common model for facilitating meaningful participation in the decision making processes of housing associations. Some organisations will also have dedicated board positions set aside for tenants. For example, representatives of one housing association tenant committee attend each board meeting, report back to the committee; provide input to the board on policy changes; and manage the tenant satisfaction survey process.

### Table 6
What associations would need to do to undertake the above social cohesion initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of business</th>
<th>What associations would have to do</th>
<th>Constraints &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Information provision & consulting tenants | • Presentation skills  
• Mediation  
• Facilitation | • Staff time |
| Establish & maintain formal tenant structures | • Facilitation  
• Training & capacity building  
• Strategic planning  
• Relationship building with community partners | • Maintaining ongoing tenant interest |

### Economic development
An emerging role for housing associations is that of contributing to economic development. It draws together and builds on the range of other initiatives by retaining community building gains made, and utilizing key relationships to focus investment in the community – chamber of commerce, local council, local businesses and employment agencies and well as state and federal government. In doing so it harnesses the work of all government departments, local public services, the community, private and voluntary sectors to tackle deprivation and drive through improvements and economic development.

As housing associations grow, taking on a broader role in the community, the capacity to affect economic change in the community grows. The experience of housing associations in forging and maintaining local partnerships, their capacity to understand local opportunities and facilitate the involvement of local players in initiatives and, draw in government funds, as well as the fact that as they grow they become a key contractor in the local economy positions them well to be a key player in driving economic change. The capacity to drive economic change is greater where associations have an asset base or are part of a consortium such as in a private public partnership in estate redevelopment.

Indeed, developers and private partners participating in estate redevelopment will look to the association to utilize their position in the community to facilitate the retention and attraction of new capital into the community. They will also look to them to manage one of the key risks to their investment – maintenance of the value of assets and more broadly any stigma associated with the area. Driving economic development in a community is therefore a key role for housing associations in this emerging environment.

A broad understanding of the flow of capital into and out of the community is needed in considering driving economic development. A starting point is to retain as much of that capital in the community as possible and leverage further benefits from key players. For example Argyle Community Housing decided to map the flow of capital into and out of the Claymore housing estate and looked at ways of trying to capture that capital – through
micro-enterprises, contracting and local investment (see diagram 1).

- **Providers as purchasers** – Associations purchase a number of products and services in their day to day business. Some may chose to direct much of this purchasing to the local community as part of their approach to community building. Of course price and availability will be a consideration but some will consider the benefits to the community may be worth potentially paying a little more than they could otherwise procure services and products. For example some organisations use local trades-people for their maintenance. One association has a policy of purchasing their cars from the local dealer rather than elsewhere. This recognises that as more money is retained in the local economy, there are benefits to the community. As organisations continue to grow (and particularly in regional/rural areas) this has greater potential to contribute to the economic development of the community.

- **Brokering program funding and services** – A key role for housing associations trying to drive economic development will be in brokering appropriate program funding and services into a community. One association brokered the involvement of the federally funded Business Enterprise Centre in training tenants that were interested in setting up their own small business. Following the training they provided further support when the business was being set up. The brokerage in this case involved identifying an appropriate program and who funded it, and inviting the local Federal member of parliament to a meeting to discuss how they might help, and securing a commitment of funding. In another case, after speaking with local tenants an association met with Centrelink to discuss changing their work for the dole scheme to support a community garden rather than working a long way from the community on less meaningful work. They were also able to broker funding to employ a coordinator of the scheme to support it.

Another approach as associations grow is to use their position in the community as leverage to broker more active involvement and support to community building goals. As some organisations become the largest (or significant) rate payer in their local government area, they could approach council on that basis to discuss how council might contribute. For example one organisation involved in local clean up days was able to secure council involvement and a waiving of fees to remove and dump the garbage. In another approach they were able to secure land to use for developing affordable housing. This is a significant contribution to the capacity of the housing association to drive local economic development.

- **Engaging local businesses and key agencies to support economic development** – Some associations have been successful at gaining local business support through sponsorship of various community building activities, been actively involved in establishing a no-interest-loan schemes, and used local councillors and members of the local chamber of commerce on the their board to draw local government and business understanding and involvement into improving economic activity in the community. Other associations are involved in regional interagency social development groups and social committees that meet regularly to discuss ways of coordinating activities to improve social and economic development in the area.

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**Table 7**

What associations would need to do to undertake the above economic development initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of business</th>
<th>What associations would have to do</th>
<th>Constraints &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support establishment of micro enterprises</td>
<td>• Community liaison skills • Contract management Fund raising skills</td>
<td>• Limited market opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote benefits of investment and negotiate with key agencies</td>
<td>• Communication • Networking • Fund raising skills • Financial skills • Brokerage skills • Property development • Strategic forward looking board • Understanding drivers of the local economy</td>
<td>• Gaining and maintaining Council, chamber of commerce and key agency support • Maintaining a coordinated, long term approach economic development • Time to develop relationships – executive officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The diagram below is a simple tool that outlines specific areas of capital flow in and out of the community and strategies for capturing it. Developing a comprehensive tool might start with the development of a matrix that outlines:

- The different forms of investment in the community;
- Where that investment comes from - local, state or federal government; private sector – if so what part of the private sector;
- Other forms of investment that may contribute to the community that might be targeted by the provider; and
- The strategies to capture current investment and attract new investment – these might not always be led by the housing association

Associations may also want to have a broad sense of how much capital is coming into the community in each of those areas so they can gain an understanding of how much they might be able to retain and what might be done with it.

**Diagram 2:**

*Argyle Community Housing local economy flowchart*

**Key requirements for pursuing community building**

**Ongoing resourcing**

Resourcing community building is a key issue to be addressed if the sector is to play a wider community building role. Consistent, long term efforts are needed to build effective tenant involvement in community renewal activities. The work can be time intensive. It can also be frustrating and outcomes are often uncertain. In this context, and with so many competing demands on staff time, it is hardly surprising that community housing providers find it difficult to fully resource tenant participation and community building or that they name time as a key constraint to undertaking all of the approaches discussed above.

Many community building activities will involve considerable demands on staff time. Learning about different economic development initiatives; organising, facilitating or attending a wider range of partnership meetings – for example with health services, the police, local government place managers etc; and consultation activities with a wider range of community stakeholders; supporting micro enterprises; negotiating with local businesses or local chamber of commerce are just some of the activities that will take extensive staff time to undertake.

A key issue to consider is who is responsible for community renewal. For example, housing associations working on estates in the UK have a dedicated community development worker. While the issue of scale impacts significantly on an organisation’s financial capacity to maintain such a position, there are only a few specialised workers who have this as their main role in NSW housing associations, although as organisations are growing they are increasingly taking on a community development worker. Some may argue that because renewal is a key role for community housing the responsibility for it should run through all the organisation’s activities and part of all housing workers’ roles. The risk with this approach is that if it is part of everyone’s role, it may be no-one’s direct responsibility.

Effective community building such as what is required on estates, needs a dedicated community development worker. Otherwise there is likely to be some conflict in the different roles housing workers may be asked to take on – such as chasing people for rent arrears and community
building. Consistency and relationship building are also very important to successful renewal strategies – if initiatives are started and not followed through, tenants lose confidence and are less likely to get involved in the future. As associations continue to grow, more organisations may be able to consider employing specialist community development workers.

In addition to a major commitment of staff time, significant other resources are also required. These are likely to include printing and postage for newsletters; venue hire and catering; external training; translators; child care; transport, especially where the stock is widely scattered; and grants to support tenants’ groups own activities.

A clear understanding of what resources are required will inform associations’ decision about what activities and approaches they are able to undertake, and what is needed to undertake them successfully.

A partnership approach
Most community building activities will require the involvement of a range of organisations to have a lasting impact. This doesn’t mean that everything related to community building involves more than one organisation. Rather, that pursuing community building outcomes will benefit from utilising a partnership approach with relevant organisations.

Core business for housing associations is to provide housing for low and low - moderate income earners. However, as discussed earlier housing associations are well placed to play a central role in community building. It is one of the key benefits of the community housing model. Pursuing positive outcomes over areas such as employment, education, crime, health, social cohesion and perhaps even economic development will require some form of partnership. Any partnership built around community building objectives will require time and financial resources to be successful. The time taken to establish a partnership and start to operationalise objectives will be significant. The following addresses some of the issues to consider in creating a partnership to undertake community building.

Key lessons of community building partnerships:
- **Leadership** – strong managerial leadership plays a vital role in promoting shared ownership of the process, cementing the partnership, providing evidence of commitment to the project, bringing visibility to the partnership, encouraging financial and human resource commitment to the project and driving forward the partnership objectives.
- **Building a consensus around a vision** – partners need to develop a shared vision for the future involving community stakeholders to enthuse and serve as a benchmark for measuring progress.
- **Translating the vision into achievable objectives** – concrete objectives and targets must be developed from the visioning process. These should be objectives of the partnership rather than a list of what is already being done by individual partners. Objectives will need to include resources (financial, human) and monitoring systems.
- **Stakeholder inclusion** – along with service provider partners and local residents, local businesses are key stakeholders to include, particularly where the goals of the partnership are to influence workforce participation or drive economic development.
- **Inclusiveness versus effectiveness in partnership** – an important issue to consider is how to involve relevant stakeholders while ensuring a manageable partnership arrangement. The partnership structure will need to have streamlined decision and management processes to be effective but ensure that decisions reflect wider stakeholder requirements.
- **‘Nurturing’ partnerships** – nurturing of relationships among partners to build commitment and to ensure partners understand the benefits of involvement that run in conjunction with community building objectives. This may involve building bridges and understanding with less enthusiastic partners.
- **Having the right skill set** – it is important that staff with the partnership responsibility have the right skill set and sufficient allocation of time to undertake the

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role. Communication, diplomacy, building of trust and mutual understanding, learning to share power are some of the skills required to foster and work within a partnership

- **Developing a culture of partnership** – initial tasks of establishing a partnership will be to break down individual partner organisations’ cultural barriers and any mutual suspicions that might exist. This may include changing the way each organisation works to ensure it can work effectively in a partnership. Monitoring of partnership processes and outcomes will assist in identifying barriers to working together effectively.

**Partner agencies**

Associations already partner with a range of different agencies to support the tenant community. Multi-agency approaches are the only way to proceed with community building activities. Partnerships need to be formed, allowed to grow, and resourced to continue. Both partnerships and communities are complex and ever changing. Different partners have different needs and interests, even if they are also committed to working together for common goals.

Different sections of the community also have different needs and interests which need to be taken into consideration when designing both the process for regeneration and other community building activities. This can help overcome the risk of partnership fatigue, where volunteers and staff who are involved in one organisation or project end up involved in many.

Partnerships will vary from formal partnership agreements to memoranda of understanding to informal agreements depending on the service.

**Diagram 3**

partnerships that a housing association may have in a local area.
The housing association represented above is well placed to play an active role in encouraging a multi-agency partnership approach in the community it serves. It is also positioned to draw in other key partners and drive a joined up approach to creating a sustainable community. This might be done through a memorandum of understanding or other arrangement. Working with the range of organisations such as the above will also provide further leverage in brokering other services, funding or other support for community building initiatives.

Community Involvement

History shows that community building cannot work without effective community involvement. Short term success may be gained from work done to a community, but for long term, sustainable outcomes, it is essential for it to be undertaken by and with the community. It is only when the community is actively involved that the community building activities can be based on the specific challenges and opportunities facing the community. The challenge for any agency wishing to promote regeneration is to work within the community and to engage the community as a whole.

Of course, housing is not the only important feature of residents’ lives, community housing organisations and the Department of Housing are not the only key player within the community. Other agencies both government and non-government, and other organisations both formal and informal, need to be involved.

A genuine commitment to community participation in every stage and at every level is what is required. While involving the community is intrinsic to the community housing model, concrete and explicit activities are most likely to lead to positive social and economic outcomes in the community.

Tenant participation – a core principal

Central to community building based around housing is engagement with, and involvement of, tenants. Tenant participation is a core principal of community housing. This too is clearly outlined in the National Community Housing Standards which outlines that associations should develop tenant participation within the organisation (NCHS 3.2).

Tenant participation or tenant involvement has been discussed by many in the government and non-government sector. It is a core component of driving community building activities using housing as a starting point. It is also a core principal of community housing.

Broadly speaking, tenant participation is the involvement of tenants in the activities of their landlord. It can encompass activities ranging from seeking tenant feedback about the association, to tenant involvement on a tenant advisory council, to tenant board members. The idea of a ‘ladder of participation’ is often used to illustrate the range of participation options that may be adopted.

The type of activities undertaken will also depend on what is trying to be achieved. The type of participation facilitated and supported by a housing association will need to reflect that and will need to encompass strategies for wider community engagement. Differences in the size and geographical spread of organisations also have a significant impact on the types of involvement techniques that will be required. Of course, tenant choice to be involved or not should be a fundamental principal of all approaches to tenant participation and should guide providers in the way they engage with tenants.

For community building to be successful a full understanding of how tenant participation can be utilised to drive it is required.
Success factors checklist

The following questions might help guide the approach taken to community building.

Characteristics of the community

- Is there a sense of community - do community members consider themselves part of the same community, is there social connectedness evident already?
- Are the objectives for your community building project flexible and based on immediate concerns of the neighbourhood?
- Do community members understand, are they motivated, open to change and have an interest in the issue?
- Is the focus of activity within a defined and manageable geographic area and is there a stable population of people to work with?
- Do organisations or associational groups (religious, sports, business, other) operate effectively in the community? Can they be tapped into as a resource for a community building effort?
- Do any common issues offer a basis (eg better health care) for building cohesion and do people in the community have a history of working together?
- Does the community have potential leaders or champions of community building activities that may be interested in being involved, if not what is needed to identify and train others?
- What is the history (if any) of previous community building efforts?
- If the community has no experience what is the best way to get started, taking some small steps, rather than moving immediately into a full blown initiative?

Characteristics of the community building process

- Do the people participating in the community building initiative represent the population? If not, are their mechanisms to help new participants feel accepted and part of the process?
- Is communication part of the overall community building process and does it occur in a timely way? What options exist to reach out to groups not already involved?
- Does the community building effort have a variety of techniques and strategies to reach as many people as possible?
- Do multiple community building efforts presently exist in the same community, working with the same people? Is there competition between the groups?
- Do group members know what steps need to occur to accomplish tasks and ultimately reach goals and have a clear understanding of priorities?
- Do goals and activities reflect the needs of most of the members of the community and do people know about the benefits expected from the goals?
- Do we have efforts going on to build relationships with outside agencies, political officials, the media, and funders as relationships are built within the community?
- Does this community building effort have both long and short term goals as a way to develop community members’ skills and are the activities planned for this effort reasonable, given those skills?
- Does the community building effort have enough information about the issues for the community to take action?
- What training do participants need in this community building effort? How can it be obtained?
- Is training an ongoing part of the community building process (tasks, activities, meetings are considered a learning experience), or is it a one-time effort?

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Could we advance our community building process faster with the help of an outside expert?

Does this community building effort rely too heavily on the person who provided the spark for initiating the group?

What needs does our effort have for leadership from multiple sources, and for leaders with different styles?

Is the community building effort at a point where it needs outside resource to grow and what are the needs and agendas of our funders? Do they coincide with our needs?

**Characteristics of community building organisers**

- Do the organizers for this community building effort understand the social norms, values, and culture, and understand how decisions are made in the community?

- Do the organisers of this community building effort understand the demographic make-up of different groups in the community and how they relate to one another?

- Do organisers of this effort understand the needs, frustrations, and problems facing the community?

- Do community members believe the organisers are fair and have the best interest of the community in mind?

- Do the organisers spend time in the community getting to know people and plan to be involved over a long period of time?

- Does the person organising this community building initiative have the skills to build trusting relationships with community members?

- Does the community organiser have the same goals and mission as the rest of the community members and will they follow through on commitments?

- Do community organiser candidates for this effort have the experience needed or is training needed?

- Are the organisers able to adapt to changing situations, people, politics, and social climates?

**Some useful websites:**

- **UK Neighbourhood Renewal Unit**
  www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

- **Joseph Roundtree Foundation**
  www.jrf.org.uk

- **NSW Government Community Builders**
  www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au