Our Projects, Our Way

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Central Land Council’s Community Development Program delivers results because communities use their own money to pay for projects they prioritise and plan.
“Nobody tells us what to do, we make our own decisions.”

FROM: A Community Development Committee Member, 2012 Monitoring Report, p.65

Our Community Development Program

The CLC is a statutory authority governed by a representative council of 90 Aboriginal People elected from communities in the southern half of the Northern Territory. For over 30 years the CLC has supported Aboriginal groups to reclaim and manage their traditional lands.

In 2005, the CLC started a major new program where its constituents drive their own development.

A Community Development Unit (CD Unit) was set up to work with Aboriginal groups that choose to use income from royalties, rent, lease, and compensation payments to achieve their social, cultural and economic objectives. Supporting constituents to use payments from land use and other agreements is a statutory function and an important growth area of the CLC. The unit’s unique strength is its ability to facilitate and implement the informed decisions of Aboriginal groups to invest this money for sustainable community benefit.

Our Goal and Objectives

The CD program’s long term goal reflects the dual aspirations of CLC constituents: strong and resilient Aboriginal people who can maintain their identity, language, culture and connection to country while participating fully in mainstream Australia through better health, education, training and more employment.

The program’s objectives are to:

• Maximise opportunities for Aboriginal engagement, ownership and control, particularly regarding the management of their own resources;

• Generate lasting social, cultural and economic outcomes that benefit and are valued by Aboriginal people; and

• Build an evidence base about the CLC’s community development approach and share lessons learned.

Our Approach

For the CLC community development is a flexible way of working that involves a set of principles and strategies that build strong, self-reliant communities through the achievement of specific community objectives.

At the heart of our CD approach is facilitating processes that ensure local participation and control. That’s because initiatives are most effective and sustainable when the people they seek to benefit are actively involved in all aspects of project design and implementation.
Community development is complex, particularly in our challenging Central Australian context, and results take time. To give our program the best chance of working we’ve set out our community development approach in the CLC Community Development Framework. It draws on the local and international evidence of what works.

It is based on the following principles:

- **Social justice** – supporting marginalised groups to assert their human rights and to have their basic needs met.
- **Self-reliance** – building strong, resilient and independent communities.
- **Equality** – changing power relations that marginalise people and sharing power within communities as well as between communities and outsiders.
- **Learning** – recognising the skills, knowledge and expertise people contribute and develop by taking action to address issues.
- **Co-operation** – working well together, based on mutual respect of diverse cultures and contributions.

**Our Track Record**

A growing body of evidence suggests that the CLC’s long term community development approach is working. One of the strongest signs of this is that Aboriginal people are increasingly choosing to forgo individual payments and instead invest their money in community benefit with support from the CLC.

From 2005 to 2013 a growing number of Aboriginal groups across the CLC region have invested over $25 million to over 400 social, cultural and economic projects. They vary from small infrastructure projects to multi-million dollar, multi-year programs.

Their investment has attracted millions of dollars in co-contributions from governments and industry.

Our community development strategies include:

- Facilitating **highly participatory processes** where Aboriginal people set their own development goals and make **informed decisions** at their own pace;
- Fostering **project ownership and local control** by refraining from suggesting project ideas;
- Working with Aboriginal people to design, implement and monitor projects that draw on their **local knowledge and external advice** to ensure projects last;
- Building on ** Aboriginal peoples’ strengths** and learning from successes;
- Strengthening **Aboriginal governance and effective leadership** at all levels;
- Forming **partnerships** with organisations that bring complementary skills, expertise and additional resources;
- **Monitoring and evaluating** each project to ensure accountability and continuous improvement; and
- **Adapting** our processes to local contexts and lessons learned.

Annual monitoring and an independent evaluation show a broad range of achievements and outcomes from the many projects delivered by the end of 2013:

- Development and implementation of an evidence-based community development approach supported by Council and increasingly being taken up by constituents.
- Specific benefits highly valued by Aboriginal people:
  - Early childhood and parenting support to get children school ready
  - Safer and healthier communities
  - Maintenance and strengthening of Aboriginal language and culture
  - Education, training and employment
  - Enterprise development
- Aboriginal people participating in their projects and reporting a greater sense of control and ownership.
- Evidence of greater capacities and capabilities of Aboriginal participants.
- A very cost effective operation where 85% of income is directly funding ‘on the ground’ services and outcomes.
“Learning Centre is here for people to learn. It is a yapa place. It’s been built by WETT mob. They’re the ones been helping build the centre here for yapa.”

FROM: Willowra Community Member, La Trobe Evaluation.

“These projects are helping the community. If there weren’t these projects the community would be different. It’s a really positive feeling in Lajamanu now.”

PHOTO CREDIT: Peter Eve and Tracks Dance Company

MAJOR PROJECT TIMELINE

2005
Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) Project

2007
Tanami Dialysis Support Service Project

2008
Granite Mines Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC) Project

2010
NT Parks Rent Money Project

2012
Community Lease Money (CLM) Project
How We Work Together

The CLC understands the need for flexibility in the ways we work and in our relationships with others but generally we work in the following way:

The Decision Makers

The Aboriginal group takes the lead by:

• Deciding on a process, which often involves forming a governance group;
• Agreeing on a collective vision of a better future and prioritising actions to realise it;
• Planning projects that address community priorities;
• Choosing organisations capable of delivering their projects;
• Contributing money, local knowledge and labour to the projects;
• Working with the CLC and delivering organisation to monitor project implementation and solve any problems; and
• Giving feedback about the project and sharing lessons learned.

The CLC

CLC community development workers support Aboriginal groups to take collective action by:

• Facilitating community and governance group planning meetings and informed decisions;
• Inviting identified organisations to submit plans for delivering projects and where necessary to input into the planning;
•Seeking approval for expenditure on completed plans;
• Negotiating funding agreements with project managers;
• Managing contract compliance and delivery of agreed outcomes; and
• Collecting information and feedback for project evaluation and sharing lessons learned.
The Project Managers

Once a group has identified an organisation as a potential project manager, the CLC asks the organisation to submit a project plan and briefs them about the group’s initial planning. These organisations are expected to:

- Participate in further project planning meetings where invited by the CLC;
- Develop a fully costed plan for the consideration of the governance group or community;
- Negotiate and enter into a funding agreement with the CLC;
- Deliver the project in line with the funding agreement and the CLC’s community development principles and strategies; and
- Give feedback for project evaluation and share lessons learned.