Dementia Australia

Support. Change. Prevention.

Community Engagement Program Guide

Dementia-Friendly Communities

Overview

The Community Engagement Program (CEP) supports local community groups, businesses, and organisations to work with people living with dementia and care partners to develop grassroots projects that address an identified opportunity that reflects a specific need. Drawing on local skills and expertise, in-kind contributions, resources and capabilities of the local groups and organisations, solutions will be designed and tested and improved on together – blending professional with lived experience expertise.

Successful project applications will be those that demonstrate how people with a lived experience of dementia (both people living with dementia and carers) have been/will be involved at each of the following stages of co-production:

Stages of Co-production

Stage	What it means	Practical example
Co-discovery	People living with dementia, carers and community partners work together to identify local needs, barriers, strengths and priorities.	People living with dementia join a neighbourhood walk-through to identify confusing signs, inaccessible entrances and welcoming local spaces.
Co-plan	People living with dementia and carers help decide the project goals, activities, roles, resources, timeframes and measures of success.	A working group agrees which access issues to address first, who will lead each activity and how progress will be measured.
Co-design	People living with dementia and carers shape the initiative, resources or services so they are accessible, relevant and responsive to lived experience needs.	People living with dementia test and refine a dementia-friendly venue guide, including its wording, layout, colours and navigation advice.

Co-deliver	People living with dementia and carers take active, supported roles in implementing the project alongside community partners.	People living with dementia co-facilitate awareness sessions for local businesses and share practical suggestions drawn from lived experience.
Co-evaluate	People living with dementia and carers help assess what worked, what did not, what changed and how the initiative could be improved.	Participants review feedback and accessibility observations, then recommend changes for the next round of activities.

CEP Grant Program Aims

The **aims** of the Community Engagement Program are:

- To increase the number of Australian communities that accept, support and include people living with dementia so that they can live the life they choose and engage in the activities that are important to them
- To demonstrate the practical application of dementia-friendly principles in diverse Australian communities and locations
- To create new resources that complement those already available from Dementia Australia for use by other communities and which meet the needs of people living with dementia, their families and carers.

Key Principles

The Community Engagement Program will fund projects that incorporate the **key principles** of dementia-friendly communities:

1. Meaningfully engage people living with dementia.
2. Challenge stigma and build understanding of dementia.
3. Provide accessible and inclusive places, spaces and activities for people living with dementia and care partners.
4. Acknowledge the potential of people living with dementia by actively seeking, and making possible, their contribution to shape a dementia-friendly community.
5. Provide practical community-based support and solutions to enable people impacted by dementia to participate in community life in the way they choose.
6. Promote the importance of consistent, safe and reliable transport options.
7. Promote how to create easy to navigate social and physical environments.
8. Encourage businesses to deliver friendly, respectful and responsive programs and services.

Grant round 7 opening and closing dates

This Round will be open from 27h November 2026 to 8th January 2027 at 5pm (AWST).

Funding and Eligibility

To support the development of local dementia-friendly community initiatives, grants of up to $15,000 each are available. Funding will support new project activity from 1 April 2027, for 12 months. Funds can be used to cover the costs of salaries, consultancies, printing, postage, event costs, catering, room hire, supplies and small equipment.

Administration overheads, existing program/service, construction and large equipment costs are ineligible.

Community Engagement Program grant funding is open to applications from:

- Local community groups or associations, or an individual member of a group, committed to making their community dementia-friendly and have identified an unmet need in consultation with people living with dementia.
- Community organisations, businesses and health service providers **ONLY** for proposals focused upon the development of an independent, community-led dementia-friendly community working group and associated activities.

  Aged care providers are not eligible to apply.

The selection process will prioritise applications that meet the following **criteria**:

- **Meaningfully consult and collaborate** with people living with dementia and care partners in the planning, design and delivery of the project.
- Bring together **collaborative local partnerships** with dementia alliances, networks, councils, service clubs, local business, education and community organisations.
- **Meet the needs** of one or more of the following **priority groups**:
    - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
    - Young Onset Dementia and Younger Carers
    - Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
    - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Plus (LGBT+)
    - Isolated, rural and remote communities.

Application and Selection Process

Applications will be administered via an online Expression of Interest process in Survey Monkey. Expressions of Interest received will be assessed by Dementia Australia staff and a group of Dementia Advocates – people living with dementia, carers and former carers.

Applications will be assessed based on how well responses align with the:

- Aims of the Community Engagement Program
- Principles 1 to 4 of dementia-friendly communities
- Community Engagement Program eligibility criteria (see table on page 7).

Successful applicants will be invited to draft a 12-month project plan outlining how they will achieve the project set out in their Expression of Interest application. The Dementia-Friendly Communities team will be available to support applicants with the development of their project plans.

Applicants must be willing to work collaboratively on evaluation activities as required. This includes demonstrating how participant feedback and continuous improvement data will be captured.

Timeframes and deliverables

Action	Date
Grant round announcement	18 November 2026
Information sessions held	Session 1: 25 Nov at 1:00pm AEDT Session 2: 26 Nov at 4:30pm AEDT Session 3: 11 Dec at 1:00pm AEDT
Online Expressions of Interest application portal opens	27 November 2026
Expressions of Interest applications close	8 January 2027
Funding offers made	From mid-Feb 2027
Workplan finalisation and contracts signed by	15 March 2027
Request for invoice	15 March 2027
Project funding begins	1 April 2027
Project funding finishes	31 March 2028
Final project report, acquittal and resources submitted	1 May 2028

Completing the online Expression of Interest

Information is provided below to help you plan and complete the online application. You must answer every question in the online application to be considered – **incomplete applications will automatically be eliminated from the review process.**

It is recommended that you draft your responses in a Word document and then copy and paste them into the online application. This way you can avoid losing your work should there be an issue with the online portal. Importantly, it gives you an opportunity to read through your project proposal to make sure you have captured all relevant information and presented it in the best possible way.

In the **About your group or organisation** section we are seeking information about your group or organisation. We want to get a picture of who you are and what you do (or plan to do) to support people living dementia and carers in your local community.

Before proceeding it is highly encouraged that you read the information provided in this guide to maximise your chance of success. All the best.

About your group or organisation: guidance notes for each question	
Organisation/group name	Please provide the name of the business, group or organisation that will be taking the lead on the project.
Contact person (first and last name)	Please provide the first and last name of the key contact person representing the organisation or group. We will communicate with this person on a regular basis via email.
Contact person email	Please provide a direct email address for the key contact person as this will be the primary means of communication. Avoid providing generic emails unless the contact person is the sole monitor of that email box.
Contact person phone number	Please provide a direct phone number, preferably a mobile number for the key contact person.
Your role	Please provide your job title or a short description of the role you undertake e.g. club secretary and treasurer
Postal address	The organisation or group's postal address is needed for the grant agreement and should include the city, state and postcode e.g. Bunbury, WA 6230

State or Territory	This is a required field as some states and territories have been prioritised and will attract a higher rating score. For instance, the Northern Territory has received limited funding in previous rounds and will attract the highest score possible.
Is your organisation/group incorporated?	Please indicate whether your organisation or group is incorporated. The project funding (grant) must be provided to a legal entity (such as an incorporated body) and not an individual. Broadly speaking, when a group incorporates, it becomes a legal entity which can do things in its own name. For example, an incorporated association can own land, borrow money and enter into contracts.
If you answered 'No' to the previous question, please provide the name and contact person's details of the auspiecing agency	Provide the contact details of the agency and person who will be responsible for administering the grant money. This is likely to be different to the group and person(s) responsible for managing the project. The agency and contact person will be named in the grant agreement and will be ultimately responsible for the acquittal of project funds.
Briefly tell us why your organisation/group has chosen to support people living with dementia and carers and what support you currently provide (e.g. peer connection, social activities, information and resources).	Please provide a brief overview of your organisation's purpose, size and key objectives. This information will provide us with a picture of who you are and what you do as an organisation to support people living with dementia in your local community. Describe what information, data or evidence you have gathered locally from people living with dementia and carers accessing your services and supports. This is the WHY your organisation or group is choosing to support people living with dementia and carers local to you. Please do not quote local or national prevalence data. We want to hear what you have observed or heard when supporting people locally with a lived experience of dementia.

In the **About your project** section, we are seeking specific information about your proposed project. It is expected that you will have meaningfully consulted with people living with dementia and carers to help identify and define the opportunity, ensuring it reflects a real need, and commenced co-planning with them and other key community partners.

The next table provides guidance notes on addressing the eligibility criteria.

About your project: Eligibility criteria (please limit to 250 words each question)	
Qu 7 Please provide an overview of your proposed dementia-friendly project.	**Briefly describe what your project is about.** E.g., to create a community garden that is inclusive and accessible to people living with dementia from the local Chinese community. **Include the reasons why you have chosen this project.** E.g., at a recent community meeting, people from the Chinese Seniors group identified that access to gardens with familiar plants for gardening and cooking was missing for many people living with dementia. **Outline how you will implement the project by briefly summarising the key stages/tasks/activities.** E.g., hold a meeting with people living with dementia and carers from the Chinese community to talk about gardening, the types of plants, accessibility issues, design the garden based on feedback and create the garden using a small working group of people living with dementia, carers and volunteers.)
Qu 8 Will your project address an identified need in one or more of the following priority groups?	Please answer yes or no to this question based on whether you will be addressing an identified need in one or more of the priority groups: • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities • Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community • Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Plus (LGBT+) community • Regional, rural and remote communities • Young onset dementia and younger carers

	If you answer ‘no’, you will go to question 11. If you answer ‘yes’, you will be asked to provide details about the priority group or groups your project will involve.
Qu 9 Please select the priority group(s) your project will focus on	Project applications that address the needs of one or more priority groups will be scored higher than those that do not. This is because the priority groups listed often miss out on or cannot access mainstream services and programs. Select all options that apply to your project. For example, you may be delivering a Yarning circle to Aboriginal women living with dementia in a regional town.
Qu 10 Please describe in detail how you will involve people from the priority group(s) in the designing of the program or service they will receive (think about how they will shape it).	It is important to show how people impacted by dementia from these priority groups will help to shape the initiative you plan to deliver. Using the example of the Yarning circle, you might approach potential participants and ask them questions about their preferred topics for conversation, or where and at what time of day the activity could take place and what food and drinks they would prefer. Even if you think you know the answer to these questions it is important to ask them to build trust and ensure meaningful and respectful engagement.
Qu 11 Explain what steps you will take to make sure you provide a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment for the priority groups.	Creating welcoming, safe and inclusive spaces requires careful consideration and deliberate effort to embed structural, relational and emotional support. Whether these spaces are in-person or online, we need to be conscious of intersectional considerations and acknowledge that individuals hold multiple and overlapping identities (race, gender, ability) that will influence feelings of safety and inclusion. Creating truly safe spaces requires moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches to address systemic power dynamics, ensure accessibility, and foster inclusive, trauma-informed environments. By applying the following principles, you will be more likely to achieve a welcoming, safe and inclusive program or service: **1. Safety** Ensure the physical and psychological safety of everyone involved—both staff, volunteers and participants.

	• **Physical:** Making spaces welcoming and accessible. • **Psychological:** Communicating clearly and kindly to build an atmosphere of respect. **2. Trustworthiness and Transparency** Conduct your group or organisation activity and make decisions with transparency to build and maintain trust. • Explain "the why" behind decisions • Maintain consistency and follow through on commitments. **3. Peer Support** Recognise that support from people with similar lived experiences is a key vehicle for building trust, safety, and hope. • Promote mutuality and shared stories. • Use peer support to foster a sense of belonging and community. **4. Collaboration and Mutuality** Level the power differences between staff and participants to support shared decision-making. • View the relationship as a partnership ("doing with" rather than "doing to"). • Recognise that everyone has a role in the (healing) process. **5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice** Strengthen the experience of choice and self-advocacy by recognising individual strengths. • Help individuals rebuild a sense of personal control. • Provide options and involve people in every decision concerning their care and support. **6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues** Actively move past cultural stereotypes and biases to offer responsive services. • Recognise and address historical trauma.

	• Incorporate protocols that are sensitive to racial, ethnic, and cultural needs.
Qu12 Demonstrate how people living with dementia will be involved at each stage of the project (from problem/opportunity identification through to implementation) in below areas: - **Their role** - **Project co-designing and co-planning** - **Project co-delivery**	People with a lived experience of dementia are not defined by their condition or caring role. Each person has skills, expertise and interests they want to continue to use and develop. It is important that people living with dementia are treated as valued contributors to the project and not only as potential recipients or participants in the dementia-friendly initiative or activity. **Their role:** participants could play a role in: - Decision making e.g. budget allocation, activity choices - Framing and contexualising e.g. shaping how problems, research questions, goals are defined - Guiding design and delivery e.g. informs usability, accessibility and cultural safety of the activity - Evaluation and accountability e.g. they help interpret findings, judge what success looks like and holds the project lead to account. Project co-designing and co-planning (how you plan to meaningfully involve people in shaping the project and what is delivered): - Formal structures e.g. focus groups, surveys, advisory group - Informal structures e.g. casual discussions, online or paper-based feedback tools - Brainstorming ideas - Project-based methods e.g. working group Project co-delivery: - Formal e.g. co-presenter or co-facilitator, developing guides and workbooks - Informal e.g. setting up space/room, making refreshments, handing out materials, taking photos, creating name tags – the list is literally endless.

Qu 13 Have you identified potential community partners, business or groups?	Please answer yes or no. It is important to connect with others in your community who can help and support you in the delivery of your project. This might be the local Council providing a meeting space, or CWA providing catering, or Lions club providing volunteers, or local radio promoting your activities and events.
Qu 14 Provide detail of the groups, organisations and businesses you will collaborate with and how they will be involved (role and function)	Please identify any known or potential businesses, organisations and groups you will partner or collaborate with to deliver the project. These may be informal or formal partnerships and could involve sharing or giving of resources, equipment, staff, skills, meeting places, etc. For example, the Local Council will provide a dedicated space in the Community Centre for weekly activities and events. Council staff will promote events and activities via Council events page and via their networks. The CWA will provide catering (savoury and sweet bites, tea and coffee) and will serve morning or afternoon tea at each event/activity. Lions club will provide activity support. Between 2-3 Lions club members will help with room set-up and pack down on a weekly basis.
Qu 15 List the desired project outcomes	This is about capturing any positive changes that occur as a result of the project. Think about and ask the participants what success will look like. Consider how the project will benefit people living with dementia, carers, or the wider community (e.g. increased awareness and understanding of dementia, improved social connection). Include outcomes that can be measured using both quantitative measures (e.g., attendance numbers, participation rates, repeat visits) and qualitative measures (e.g., participant feedback, wellbeing, sense of belonging, carer observations).

Qu 16 How will you know if you have achieved the project outcomes?	Evaluation is important because it demonstrates whether the project achieved its intended outcomes and helps improve future activities and provides an evidence base for funding applications. How will you know if your project has achieved its goals? Capturing participant feedback is an easy way to see if the project has delivered positive outcomes. For example, you could ask people to rate their feelings of isolation and loneliness at the first session and then ask them the same question at the final session and see if there is a positive change.
Qu 17 What level of funding are you seeking?	Please indicate the range of funding you are seeking. You do not need to know the exact amount at this stage, just an estimated figure. This will help us to determine how many grants we can offer.

Please complete your application by answering the questions at this link:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/K32Z5MR

If you experience any issues or need support to complete the online questions, please contact Matthew Peterson, Community Liaison Officer at **matthew.peterson@dementia.org.au**