



Our3021 Summary Qualitative Evaluation Report



Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the work of the community members who willingly contributed their time and commitment to the various projects rolled out as a part of the four year Our3021 project, as well as their time taken during interviews and focus groups to gather evaluation data.

We also gratefully acknowledge the work and contribution of all project staff and partner organisations including Brimbank City Council, cohealth, IPC Health and HealthWest, who supported and assisted in ensuring the success of Our3021.



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1. Overview

Our3021 was a four year project (2014-2017) that worked towards creating a stronger, healthier and more socially inclusive community within the local government area of Brimbank, in Melbourne's western suburbs. The project was named after the municipality's postcode of 3021. The project aimed to empower and mobilise communities to improve their health and wellbeing. Our3021 utilised an asset-based approach to build-on and harness the existing capacity of community members through community-led health and wellbeing projects.

Governed by an innovative workforce approach, Our3021 developed and trialled a multi-agency model. This consisted of a partnership between Brimbank City Council, IPC Health, cohealth and HealthWest Partnership. The partnership model provided a shared pool of resources and staffing that allowed for a greater reach and engagement than individual organisations could have achieved independently.

The project was coordinated by representatives from each of these organisations on a project team and steering group. These members later formed a Joint Governance group in the third year of the project.

2. Evaluation Purpose

An exploratory qualitative evaluation was most appropriate to gain an understanding of the impact the project had on participants and their communities as a result of the Our3021 project.

This evaluation focused primarily on the qualitative data collected from either organisational representatives or project participants. Responses to open-ended questions focused on assessing the two major areas of this project:

Objective 1 - the partnership model of Our3021.

Objective 2 and 3 - project participant's personal empowerment outcomes.



3. Evaluation Questions

Partnership Model

Objective 1. Identify and create innovative partnerships that support the engagement and development of strong communities by trialling a workforce model utilising Integrated Health Promotion resources.

From your experience working on Our3021, how have you found the partnership model in terms of opportunities and what worked well?

From your experience working on Our3021, how have you found the partnership model in terms of barriers and what didn't work well?

If this project was to run again, what can you suggest to improve the workforce partnership model?

Project Participant Outcomes

Objective 2. Empower and mobilise communities to act on their health and wellbeing.

Objective 3. Strengthen connections and partnerships between decision makers and mobilised/empowered communities.

What does empowerment mean to you?

What does health and wellbeing mean to you?

What are some of the barriers / enablers that affect your health and wellbeing?

Has Our3021 enabled you to act on/improve your health and wellbeing or make changes in your community?

Have you made any changes in your community?
How? To what extent? What were the results of that change?

Has Our3021 affected your health and wellbeing? How?

Do you think you can make positive changes to your community? How?

Have you made any positive changes to your community? How?

Has Our3021 helped you make any of these changes in your community? How?

Was it an incentive - providing a project at no cost to participants?

Was the project culturally appropriate, age-sensitive etc.?

Did the project encourage people to mobilise / engage in future projects, or even, lead projects themselves?

4. Evaluation Methodology

All current project workers and community project leaders (Our3021 participants from the 2015 cohort) completed either a questionnaire, an interview, and/or a focus group.

There was a predominately female representation, with only a few men contributing to interview data. There was also a major representation from Brimbank residents and those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. This was consistent with the target population of the Our3021 project and the aim to engage local participants.

5. Thematic Analysis

The following is a thematic analysis of all the transcribed information that was collated and analysed from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and the focus group.

PARTNERSHIP MODEL THEMES

Community Engagement

Engaging community participants in a project with the intent to improve health and wellbeing outcomes was identified by all representatives of the project consortium as a benefit. Specifically, the ability to engage with such a broad cross-section of a large and multicultural community. This was enabled by the multi-agency approach and the multiple points-of-entry in the community offered by the different organisations.

“The model enabled the project team to support a diverse range of community members to lead their own projects and to develop leadership skills. This was time consuming and required flexibility to adjust the level of support on a needs basis. I think this would have been difficult in a single organisation led project of this size.”
- Project staff

Pooled Resources and Shared Responsibility

A major benefit of the partnership model was identified as the pooling of resources (including staff, financial resources and expertise). The project was able to run for a four-year term, and have an impressive reach within the community, on a modest budget. Another identified benefit of the model was the shared responsibility of multiple project officers when engaging with the community, allowing for different skill sets, working days and levels of support.

Conflict Resolution and Decision Making

Across the life of the project conflict resolution and speed of decision making were highlighted as weaknesses due to the complexity of the multi-agency partnership model.

“Decision making, conflict resolution, and sharing workloads are some of the things that didn’t work well in the two tier model of working...”
- Project staff

Project staff expressed confusion around who had decision making power, who resolved misunderstandings and who monitored the fulfilment of roles and responsibilities. This was identified as an issue mid-way through the project and as a result the projects’ governance structure was changed to address these issues.

Additionally, while incorporating project participants into the decision making of the project was identified as a priority early on, it was never achieved.

Staff Turnover

The project experienced a number of staff turnovers from both management and project worker level. Turnover may have diminished the level of shared vision of the project over time. Loss of knowledge was also identified as a possible impact of staff turnover, due to inconsistencies with the handover of community projects and record keeping between organisations.

PROJECT PARTICIPANT OUTCOME THEMES

Health and Wellbeing

When asked what health and wellbeing meant to them, participants referred to three aspects: mental health, physical health and healthy eating habits.

"Mind, body and spirit and the rest of it-having all those things working together. I think you are able to make a positive contribution around you when you are healthy."

- Project lead

Empowerment

Empowerment was alluded to by project leads through increased feelings of confidence, achievement and leadership within their community or directly as part of their individual projects.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion describes the ability of individuals and groups to be able to participate fully in the general community. An overall increase in social inclusion was identified due to participants making and building new connections and networks between businesses, clubs, organisations, local government and service providers. The social networks formed because the various community projects helped increase community connectedness and inclusion of those involved in the project.

"I think we've helped to create a sense of community for sure, with our events, working together with local artists, trying to get as many people involved as possible."

- Project lead

Skills and Knowledge

Participants frequently referred to new skills gained from training, project experience and specific knowledge in their area of interest. Capacity building was considered a strong enabler by participants. An issue often mentioned in conjunction with up-skilling was around language, both in terms of a barrier to learning and an enabler for engagement. It was a disempowering factor if training was provided in English and the participants weren't fluent or didn't speak English as a first language or an enabler to engaging with their specific community if knowledge and group activities was offered in the preferred language of the group.



6. Overall Achievement of Outcomes

PARTNERSHIP MODEL OUTCOMES

Our3021 was successful in creating and trialling an innovative partnership model that supported project participants to take action to support the health and wellbeing of their community. The project has been successful in supporting the roll-out of numerous community led projects over the four years (listed on page 11), a collection of which will have an ongoing future.

The partnership model was seen as effective in its creation of opportunities to collaborate, share responsibilities and pool limited resources, in the form of funds and staffing. The ability of the partnership model to adapt and change in reaction to evaluation of the partnership is positive, however the final evaluation identified further improvements could be made. These learnings are an important outcome of the project and will inform the development of future partnership models.

PROJECT PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Empowerment was seen and experienced as a positive outcome gained from participating in Our3021. Empowerment was demonstrated through project participant's feelings of increased confidence to lead projects without the support of the Our3021 project team. A project lead stated "I think I am more interested in doing my own projects now because I've done one with the support of Our3021". This aligned with the mobilization aspect of the Our3021 project and the goal to empower participants for long term growth and contribution within their community.

"Because of language not every age could participate because they cannot speak English, so that was a barrier for them."

- Community participant

Sustainability

Sustainability was a recurring theme from participants, mentioned in a number of different ways including grants, funding and auspice organisations. Sustainability was often an issue that Our3021 community leaders struggled with, however where it was achieved, individuals felt a strong sense of empowerment and achievement.

Access

When asked about the accessibility and feasibility of participating in the project, individuals referred to the barriers and effort required to stay engaged. Ease of access was broken down into difficulty experienced with funding, training, transport or childcare issues. Most issues were individualised, highlighting the importance of support catering to different needs, in particular when engaging individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Community Engagement

Some projects targeted specific audiences while others were open to the general community. Cultural diversity and age appropriateness were two factors participants were initially encouraged to factor into their projects. This helped focus their approaches, respond to the community members engaged and ultimately drive a successful project.

"We are multicultural, we have different people from different countries, we have Arabic people, Ethiopian people..."

- Community participant

Many project leads believed that Our3021 increased social inclusion within the community, and was hence a positive outcome of the project. Participants felt that their projects connected people within the community, as one project lead states "When we come together we talk, we laugh, we share the ideas, we share the happiness." Our3021 also saw project participants make new connections, networking with other people and "bringing people together based on passion". Community members were able to connect with new people and form friendships.

Many participants acknowledged that the training provided by Our3021 helped in creating change in the community. Of those project leads interviewed, all commented on gaining skills of some variety from participating in Our3021. Gaining and developing skills enabled participants to feel empowered, as a project participant states:

"Our3021 helps the community to utilise their skills, to involve them, to encourage them to do their own program in the future."
- Project lead

Some project leads discussed that the skills learned and developed by participating in Our3021 were transferrable. Project leads felt that their project empowered community members by providing an opportunity to learn invaluable skills that could be used outside the project, "We're empowering them with skills that they're going to utilise, it's not just to say you can only use these skills for this project...they are skills that are transferrable, employability skills as well" (project lead).

One interviewed project lead recently received government funding to continue the project into the next year, while another project participant interviewed had successfully formed an auspice partnership with an organisation. These are examples of how some project leads were able to ensure project sustainability during the life of Our3021. The following example demonstrated sustainability achieved through networking:

"Being empowered by the connections we've made with people and the partnerships. I find that incredibly empowering because I feel like people are developing a bit of respect for what we do, so that's very empowering."
- Project lead.



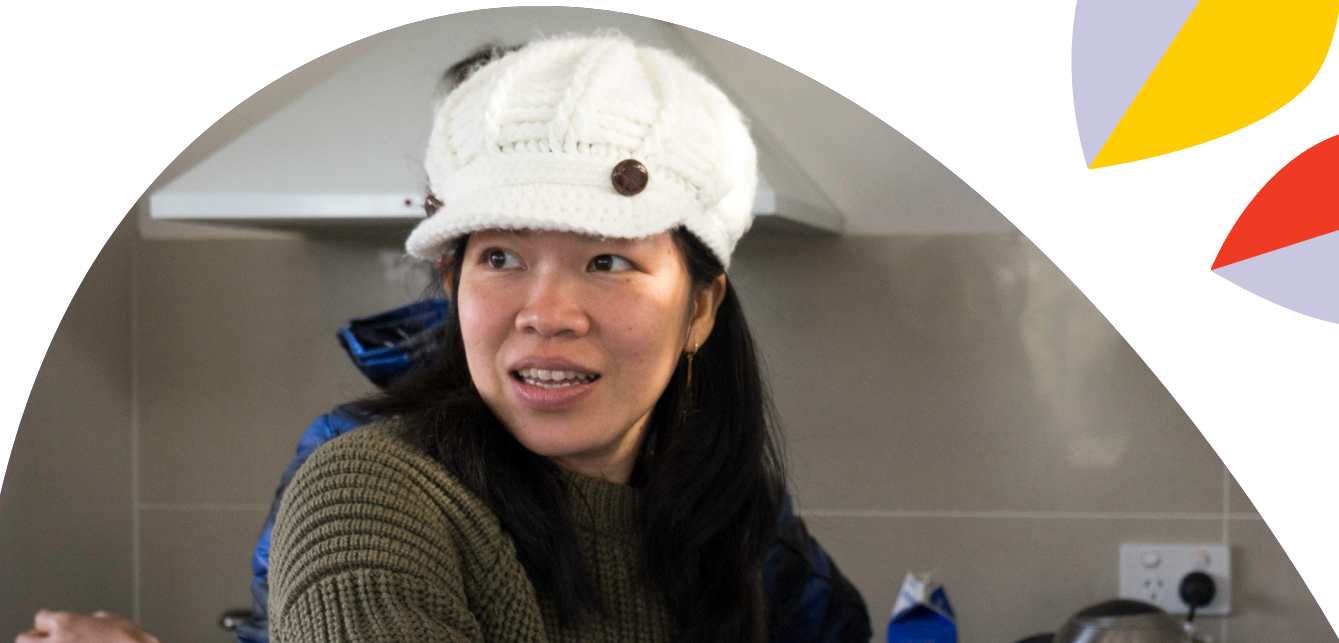
7. Recommendations

PARTNERSHIP

1. Create an authorising environment to assist a faster decision-making process and turnover of project actions.
2. Establish conflict-resolution and communication processes early and clearly in the project where there are multiple partners. This is about developing strong pathways to diffuse disagreements, resolve conflict and manage different points-of-view.
3. Setup a strong record keeping system to support the complexities of having multiple partnering organisation and staff-turnover across the life of the project.
4. Establish and maintain the joint ownership of the project among the project partners. Possible suggestions for this include a formal project induction system for new staff, a formal buddy system and jointly reviewing the project goals and vision.
5. Celebrate the small wins and positive outcomes in the community to remind project staff what the hard work they are doing is all about.
6. Incorporate project participants into the governance structure of the project early in order to increase ownership, ensure the project best meets the needs of the community and increases the likelihood of the project outcomes being sustained.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Define terms used for both project participants and project workers. Ideally from the beginning of the project, with input from the community, to reduce ambiguous use of project related terms. Use these defined terms consistently in the aims, objectives and when talking to project participants to increase measurability and understanding.
2. Collaborate closely with community participants to develop the evaluation plan and questions. Allow sufficient time to trial these co-designed semi-structured interviews.
3. Actively address the issues raised around accessibility. Including childcare, transport and translation services. Reassure participants that these barriers have been considered, planned for and should not be barriers to their participation.
4. Design a system to support the continuation of community led projects beyond the life of Our3021 (if this is the desired outcome for participants). Provide creative education and training around project funding opportunities, grants and the best ways to use funds to achieve sustainability.



Our3021 Projects

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| Arts and Social Inclusion | An arts project that promoted and supported social inclusion for marginalised communities. The "You-Me-We Arts Initiative" was specifically aimed at the aged and adults living with a disability. |
| Art Therapy | Art Therapy captured people's stories through photos and videos for mental wellbeing. |
| Beautiful Brimbank | Beautiful Brimbank aimed to create long-term cultural change in litter prevention through art, education and direct action clean-ups. The project collaborated with schools and businesses on litter and waterway clean-ups. |
| Cardio Tennis | Women and young children (mainly Vietnamese) participated in outdoor tennis with music to improve mobility and reduce disengagement. |
| Chin Dancing | A showcase of traditional dancing from the Chin community. |
| Cleaning Project | A social enterprise project to provide employment opportunities for the Congolese Community. Support was provided with the development of new skills, self-confidence and language proficiency. |
| Coffee Table Book | A coffee table book about the people of Brimbank, by the people of Brimbank, including images, drawings and stories of people's culture, background or journey. |
| Community Garden | Promoting healthy eating habits in parents and young children, and providing an opportunity to socialise and network in a friendly environment. |
| Computer Literacy Training | A project to help women from Chin backgrounds use computers. |
| Cooking Healthy Food | A project that brought together community members (mainly women from an Iraqi background) to cook, learn about healthy eating and build connections within their community. |
| Cooking Healthy Food | Cooking classes for African women, which provided a safe environment to socialise, learn about Australian foods and how to cook them. |
| Enjoy Zumba | Aerobic dance sessions held at a school for local women. Offering a safe and familiar setting for physical activity and social inclusion. |
| Giant Chessboard | This project sought to install a giant chess board at the shops in Cairnlea. |
| Humans of Brimbank | A photography project which captured pictures of local people to celebrate and support multiculturalism and reduce stigma. |
| Interfaith Dialogue | A project to support different faith groups in St Albans to come together. |
| Liberian Baseball | An opportunity for young Liberian girls in St Albans to socialise and share life experiences by playing a traditional baseball game. |
| New Change | A group of young African women explored issues of sexual and reproductive health, prevention of violence against women and respectful relationships. |
| Social Activity | A project to support social connection for isolated Kealba residents. |
| Somalian Sewing Program | A project for isolated Somali women to come together, learn new and valuable sewing skills and enjoy social connectedness. |
| My Time Cycling | A cycling group for females in the Brimbank area, which encouraged physical fitness and socialisation. |
| Breakfast Program | Provide children with a healthy and culturally appropriate breakfast, and at the same time developing skills of volunteers to deliver a breakfast program. |
| Vietnamese Elderly Group | A group of elderly people get together to discuss healthy eating, family violence management, adaptation to new culture and socialisation. |
| Women's Safety on Trains | Providing safe opportunities for women to travel on trains at night. |
| Youth Choir | This project sought to establish a youth choir in St Albans. |



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