

Relationships Matter: Community Development/Service Delivery Partnership in Connected Communities

The Connected Community Approach is predicated on the idea of communities as ecosystems in which dynamic cross-sector links contribute to community strength and resilience. A good relationship between community development practitioners and service providers in a community lays a solid foundation from which the connected community approach can be realized.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the different yet complementary roles of community development and service delivery approaches in building connected communities.

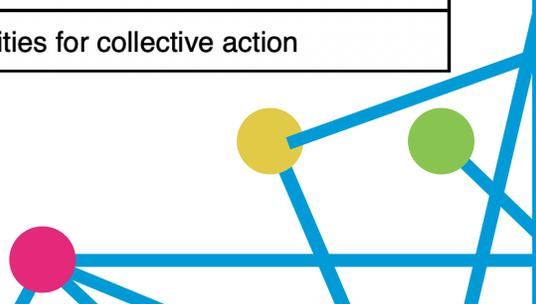
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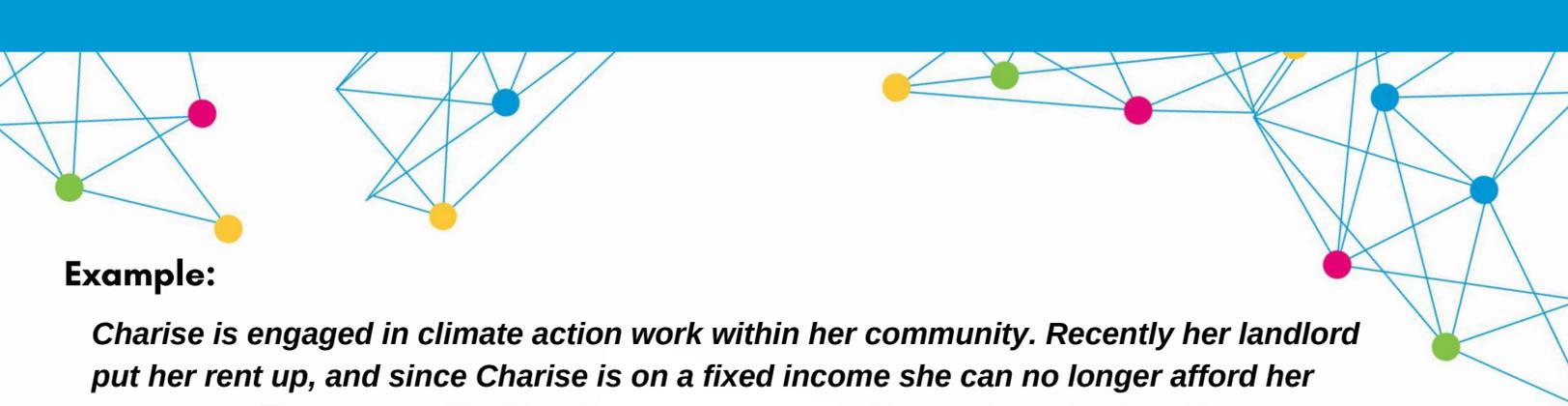
Service Delivery springs from a charitable model of care. Service delivery organizations play a critical role in meeting the immediate and individual needs of residents. The model is based on professionals helping to find solutions to meet individual needs.

Community Development centres on community strengths and collective grassroots aspiration to improve their community through small and large scale change efforts. Community development focuses on relationships, power sharing and mutual trust among residents and between residents and organizations. It fosters collaborative long term planning among diverse players.

Elements of Community Development and Service Delivery Approaches

Service Delivery	Community Development
Helps people to cope with society as it is	Helps people to work together to make society better
Focuses on problems in people's lives	Focuses on what is good and strong in the community
Addresses solutions to individual problems	Brings together people to collaborate on creative solutions to common problems.
Relationships between professionals and residents tend to be short term and issues specific	Relationships are usually long term and iterative in nature
Defines the role of residents as recipients of service, and professionals as deliverers of service	Defines participation broadly, offering lots of ways for lots of people to contribute
Is driven by formal and often bureaucratic processes and centres around systemic norms	Centres around grassroots aspirations and community norms and expectations
Houses knowledge within the professional sector	Creates opportunities for community-based knowledge exchange
Meets the needs of individual community members	Prepares communities for collective action





Example:

Charise is engaged in climate action work within her community. Recently her landlord put her rent up, and since Charise is on a fixed income she can no longer afford her apartment. The stress of looking for a new place, packing and moving is taking energy away from her climate action work.

As Charise faces these emerging challenges, **a social service approach can assist her** with her housing search, income support and budgeting to increase her financial stability, so that Charise moves through these challenges feeling supported rather than isolated, and emerges from them in a stronger position. The result will likely be that Charise will be well-equipped to re-engage in community development through her climate action work, coming from a position of strength because she was able to be supported through her emergent needs by service delivery practitioners. **A community development approach can help** Charise to connect with others, find resources, and design effective climate action in her community.

By connecting a community development strategy with strong service delivery mechanisms, we can foster conditions in which community members have access to support for emerging needs so that they are able to participate in community building efforts to the extent they choose. **Each approach brings different but complementary strengths**, and the combination of the two builds a foundation of strength for the community to build upon.



The distinction between social service and community development is critical to a connected community. One of the challenges that residents and organizations often bump up against is that funding and organizational culture is often focused on a service delivery model, while the outcomes sought are those associated with community development. If we want people to be able to cope with our current systems, we need social services; if we want **“by the community for the community solutions”** to complex problems, we need to invest our resources, time and attention to community development approaches, like the **Connected Community Approach**.

Community organizations benefit when they locate their objectives either in a community development or a service delivery model. While these complementary approaches are both critical to community wellbeing, they are relationally very different. Articulating clear objectives and strategies through the chosen lens will create clarity about the role of the organization, its purpose and the relationship it is seeking with the community.

