ITERATIVE PROCESS OF CO-GOVERNANCE

ANZSOG

Stage 1: Identifying When to Use Co-Governance

Co-governance is most appropriate when:

- The issue is complex and multi-stakeholder
- There is low public trust in government
- Solutions require deep community insight or buy-in

Key actions:

- Engage early with stakeholders
- Clarify whether the goal is better outcomes, empowerment, or both
- Ensure there is capacity and willingness on all sides to share power

Stage 2: Establishing a Co-Governance Arrangement

Co-design the governance structure and agreements:

- Who is involved, and how they are selected
- What decision-making authority the group holds
- What roles and responsibilities each actor plays

Key actions:

- Draft clear terms of reference
- Create formal agreements on structure, roles, and process
- Embed mechanisms for accountability and transparency
- Invest in capacity building and cultural competency

Stage 3: Implementing Co-Governance

Co-governance group actions:

- Hold regular meetings that support joint planning and decision-making
- Use facilitation, co-chairing, and inclusive methods to share power
- Monitor relationships and adapt to change

Implementation challenges:

- Staff turnover and shifting priorities
- Managing conflict and maintaining momentum

Enablers:

- Ongoing training, mentoring, and peer learning
- Dedicated coordination and secretariat support

Stage 4: Identifying and Reporting Outcomes

Tracking outcomes is essential to assess effectiveness and build legitimacy.

What to measure:

- Immediate outputs (plans, services, programs)
- Long-term outcomes (trust, equity, community wellbeing)
- Indirect impacts (new partnerships, community leadership, institutional learning)

Recommended practices:

- Co-develop indicators and evaluation frameworks
- Include both quantitative data and lived experience
- Share results publicly to build trust and for accountability

Cross-Cutting Considerations

Across all stages, several key themes recur:

- **Trust**: Needs constant attention and reinvestment
- **Power**: Must be actively shared and checked
- **Accountability**: Requires mutual obligations and transparency
- **Cultural competency**: Essential for legitimacy and inclusion
- **Time**: Real change takes patience and sustained effort