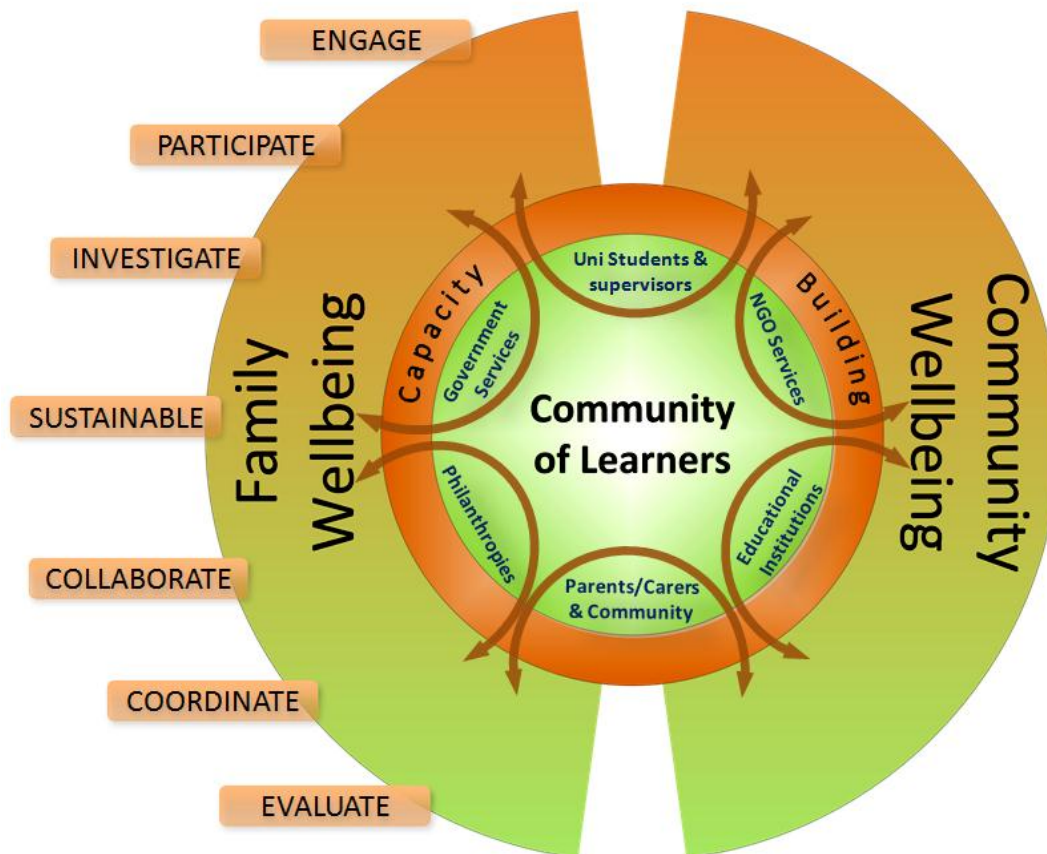


SpICE

Specialist Integrated Community Engagement



SpICE Guide



Australian Government
Department of Health

This project was possible due to funding through the Australian Department of Health.

THIS GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE

STATEWIDE LOCAL INNOVATION FUNDING PROJECT. INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND SUPERVISION MODEL. The SpICE Project

Lead Organisations:

Riverina ICTN,
Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Partner Organisations:

Charles Sturt University,
Department of Education and Communities,
Indigenous Affairs Group—Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet,
Organisations from local SpICE project communities.

With sponsorship from:



Acknowledgements

This guide was written by the Project Officers for the Statewide Local Innovation Funding Project: Interprofessional Learning and Supervision Model—SpICE Project:

Dr. Ruth Beecham

Lecturer
SpICE Project Officer
Charles Sturt University

Marijke Denton

Senior Speech Pathologist
SpICE Project Officer
Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Design by:

Sandra Maathuis-Smith

Education Designer
Charles Sturt University

Significant contributions to the content and co-ordination of SpICE were made by the SpICE Team:

Helen McConnell-Berndt

SpICE Project Officer
NSW Dpt. of Education and Communities

Sue Jolley

Engagement Officer
Indigenous Affairs Group
Dpt. of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

The project was overseen by the SpICE Statewide Innovation Funding Project Steering Committee:

Catherine Maloney

Allied Health Director
Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Associate Professor Megan Smith

Head of School, School of Community Health
Faculty of Science
Charles Sturt University

Melanie Mann

Riverina ICTN Coordinator
Interdisciplinary Clinical Training Network
Health Education and Training Institute

Julie Redway

Executive Director Primary Health Service Development
Murrumbidgee Medicare Local

Michael Ramalli

Regional Manager (Queanbeyan and Wagga)
Indigenous Affairs Group
Dpt.of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Brad Russell

Director (Every Student Every School)
NSW Dpt. of Education and Communities

Contributions, reviews and support were generously provided by many people, with particular thanks to:

Abi Meyer

Director
Henty Preschool

Rhian Hohnberg

Allied Health Assistant
Albury Wodonga Health

Mark Denton

Community Member and Parent
Albury-Wodonga

Amber Sharrock

Health Education Training Institute
Community Member and Parent
Albury-Wodonga

Abby Blair

Speech Pathologist
Aboriginal Medical Service
Griffith

Carla Brogden

Program Manager, Networks
Health Education and Training Institute.

Kendall Clarke

Adviser, Executive & Corporate Support & Strategic Projects
Indigenous Affairs Group
Dpt. of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Originators of the SpICE Model:

Kendall Clarke
Marijke Denton

Table of Contents

Section 1

Is SpICE for You?	1
--------------------------------	---

Section 2

How the SpICE Guide Works	6
Learning Sections of the SpICE Guide	8

Section 3

How to Start a SpICE Project	1
---	---

Chapter 1. How to Engage your Community	2
--	---

Topic 1: YOU	3
--------------------	---

Topic 2: Your Passion and Fire.....	5
-------------------------------------	---

Topic 3: Think about where you work.....	7
--	---

Topic 4: What's going on around you?	9
--	---

Topic 5: Looking at the existing opportunities	11
--	----

Topic 6: Going it alone.....	13
------------------------------	----

Topic 7: The FUD of connecting with others	15
--	----

Topic 8: Connecting with Others: Spreading the word.....	17
--	----

Topic 9: Gathering the support of your Organisation. Part 1	19
---	----

Topic 10: Gathering the support of your Organisation Part 2:	22
--	----

Topic 11: Obtaining the support of your Organisation Part 3:	25
--	----

Chapter 2. Making SpICE SpICE:	30
---	----

Topic 1: Consider SpICE Principles.....	31
---	----

Topic 2: SpICE and the Community of Learners	33
--	----

Topic 3: Growing the Community of Learners	35
--	----

Topic 4: Consider SpICE Principles: A Pause for Reflection.	39
--	----

Topic 5: Principles and Resources: How do you know SpICE is SpICE?	41
---	----

Chapter 3. Nuts and Bolts: Finding the Focus and Assigning Jobs	43
--	----

Topic 1: Finding the Focus	44
----------------------------------	----

Topic 2: Who's Interested in Doing What?.....	46
---	----

Topic 3: Learning Hooks	48
-------------------------------	----

Chapter 4. Proving the Benefit of SpICE: The SpICE-Rack	51
--	----

Topic 1: SpICE Rack: What is the 'Evidence of Benefit' for SpICE?	52
---	----

Topic 2: SpICE-Rack: Collecting 'Evidence of benefit' for SpICE.....	58
--	----

Topic 3: SpICE-Rack: Presenting the 'Evidence of benefit' for SpICE	62
---	----

Section 4:

SpICE - Student Support Guide	1
--	---

Chapter 1: Overview of SpICE Student Support.....	3
---	---

Chapter 2: The Benefits of SpICE Placements for Communities.....	6
--	---

Chapter 3: Planning – Practical Considerations	8
--	---

Chapter 4: How to Support Students Once They Arrive	17
---	----

Chapter 5: Maintaining the Support of Your Organisation.....	29
--	----

Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	32
----------------------------	----

Section 5: **The Brindalong SpICE Story**

Is SpICE for You?

SPICE (Specialist Integrated Community Engagement) is a principled way of using university and other tertiary level students to build specialist knowledge and skills in communities around focus-points identified by that community.

This section, 'Is SpICE for You?' broadly explains what SpICE is, and why you might be interested in 'doing' a SpICE project. It will take around **10 minutes to read**.

So what might a SpICE project look like?

Accompanying this document, there is a story that gives you some idea of what starting a SpICE project might 'look like' from a community perspective.

What is SpICE?

SpICE uses university students from courses that aim to benefit society (like teachers, health workers of various types, social workers, and environmental workers) and asks them to apply their skills and knowledge around topics (whether problems, projects or issues) identified by specific communities. The students then work in partnership with community-based Mentors to develop resources, educate others, and generally stimulate community action around particular community identified need. This means the students raise awareness, build knowledge, and create impact.

The organisation, development and evaluation of SpICE placements is shared by people and organisations within, or who serve, that community. Everyone who participates in SpICE becomes part of a Community of Learners through a shared commitment to increase the level of specialist knowledge, skills and services.

Members of the Community of Learners are also directly involved in educating and supporting the students while they work in their community. This adds an additional layer of community skill development for all participants through the shared exchange of knowledge and experience.

All resources, education packages, knowledge and skills development facilitated by the students remain in the community for continued use and sharing with others.

Communities may have students working with them once or twice a year for set blocks of time. It is a community decision as to how many years students continue to visit.

What is meant by a 'Principled approach' to SpICE?

Globally, there are many 'partnership projects' involving education providers, communities and community organisations. What makes SpICE different to many of these, however, is the underlying core principles which guide the 'doing' of SpICE. The Community of Learners applies these principles that are known to be significant in developing social, economic and cultural benefit within communities. In other words, all these principles are known to help people feel better about their lives and their communities.

In a SpICE partnership project, the principles are used for ongoing reflection, assessment and adjustment of the project. This ensures the Community of Learners driving a project remains on track and engaged throughout a project.

The SpICE principles can also function as Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). The reason for this is explained in the SpICE Guide, Section 3, Chapter 4: Proving the Benefit of SpICE: The SpICE-Rack.

Individually and collectively SpICE participants are able to plan, implement and evaluate their actions against the SpICE principles/KPIs. They are used to reflect on past actions, to guide current activities, and importantly, to plan for the future. They are framed as questions rather than statements, so as to encourage ongoing reflection on what is being done, and how the *doing* is being done.

The principles of SpICE:

1. Are our activities sustainable over the long-term?
2. Are we providing people with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their ability to shape their own future?
3. Are we actively seeking to include people in our activities (but recognising that inclusion and participation happen differently for people and communities)?
4. Are we striving for joint decision-making and agreement where it is critical?
5. Are we collaborating - as opposed to competing - within projects and processes?
6. Are the contributions and opinions of community members taking precedence over the contributions and opinions of organisations participating in SpICE?

Why is SpICE needed?

Access to, and recruitment and retention of specialist personnel (for example teachers and health professionals) in rural and remote areas is a long-standing challenge for many countries. Also, demand for specialist services will always be greater than what is available, particularly in rural and remote regions.

Specialist services in Australia tend to be concentrated in larger inland cities and metropolitan areas. This often means that the people requiring specialist services need to travel considerable distances at additional cost, or the specialist service personnel pay short visits to distant communities.

As a result, in many rural parts of the country there are inevitably long waiting-lists, limited access to services, and absent or intermittent services. Much too often, there is also a lack of understanding and communication between a specialist and client about the unique personal circumstances that influence the outcomes of service. The geographic arena of specialist service provision is decidedly *not* equal.

A further complicating factor is the preparation and training of specialist students. Graduates leave university filled with up-to-date theoretical knowledge and ways of practicing that have been developed in large regional and/or metropolitan areas. Many new graduates don't feel prepared to work in ways and in places for which they have not specifically been trained, and are reluctant to accept rural or remote jobs. This feeds directly into the problems mentioned above.

Notions of what specialists do and the perceived preciousness of specialist knowledge also creates barriers. For many years, the knowledge and skills held by specialist service personnel – be they dentists, environmental scientists, teachers, speech-language therapists or social workers (to name a few) – have been viewed as 'special' and thus highly prized. And while some of this knowledge is, undoubtedly, in the specialist category, much more of it could be shared with a broad range of people to build their own knowledge base. In other words, much of this knowledge can be given to people to help them solve problems for themselves. For example, judging the extent of child's speech and language problem and drawing up a therapy plan is surely specialist work – yet teaching the local school teachers how to screen every child for speech and language issues, how to prioritise the difficulties of children, and then how to integrate therapy programs into the classroom can be learnt by others, and could help generations of children in that community.

Therefore, we need to think and do things differently if we are to increase the level of specialist services and specialist knowledge in rural and remote areas.

By using university and other tertiary level students as educators and workers, SpICE provides a way for communities to gain some specialist services and increase their specialist knowledge. One effect is that communities are provided

with tools and knowledge to be able to solve some problems for themselves. Another is that they can build upon whatever specialist resources do exist. Just as importantly, however, is that when individuals, groups, organisations and services within a community work together as a SpICE Community of Learners, the results are integrated, more resilient, communities.

What is meant by 'Specialist services'?

For many of us, when we hear the term 'specialist services' we think 'brain surgeon' or something similar. However, SpICE uses the term more broadly. Specialist services are skills and knowledge that your family needs, yet are outside the scope of the routine services offered in many communities. For example, teachers are routinely part of communities, but the provision of literacy or numeracy specialists are not necessarily routine. This role is considered a 'specialist'. Dependent on where you live, and how big your community is, access to a dentist or doctor might be routine – or it might also fall into the category of 'specialist'.

Importantly for SpICE, harnessing 'specialist services' means unlocking the skills and knowledge contained in a specific specialist service role so that many people can benefit - irrespective of where they live or whether they can pay. This is in keeping with the ethics specialists hold of treating everyone with respect, regardless of their circumstances.

The kinds of jobs falling into the SpICE definition of specialist services include all kinds of health professionals (e.g. speech-language therapists), all kinds of human service and welfare workers (e.g. social workers), all kinds of education providers (e.g. early childhood educators, classroom teachers and learning support specialists), and all kinds of animal and environmental workers (e.g. vets and land management specialists etc.). Even though all these people gain a living from serving society, communities also expect them to be positive contributors of wellbeing as well.

Why would students be interested in participating in a SpICE placement?

The kinds of workers or professionals we have described are often trained at universities. Even though students are taught in their lectures that they need to be of benefit to society, throughout their training they also need to have practical 'real-life' experiences of being helpful, of benefit, and of service to others. These experiences need to also allow them to practise developing skills and knowledge in their chosen field of study across a range of geographic and demographic contexts. All students want to have practical experience. All universities and other training providers include practical experiences as part of their courses. SpICE placements can be slotted into existing practical learning experiences at universities. The academics and administrators who run the practical learning components of each degree would be happy to talk with you about SpICE placements.

What is the duration of a SpICE project?

Because relationships and capacity develop over time, there is no intention that SpICE students visit a community once, and then never again. SpICE communities can have multiple groups of students visiting their community over time. SpICE utilises relationships between multiple partners who are part of the Community of Learners. It is up to the partners to negotiate how long SpICE placements go on for – often they can be for 3-5 years, with different students visiting once or twice a year. The Community of Learners will decide the duration of their involvement in SpICE.

SUMMARY: IS SpICE FOR YOU?

In very broad terms, this section has described what SpICE ‘is’, and why it might be of benefit to you. It has not, however, explained what starting a SpICE project might look like in practice.

A SpICE project can be initiated by anyone – for example a parent or interested community member, an employee from a government or non-government organisation such as a health or education professional, a librarian, a manager, an academic or even the vice-chancellor of a university.

To help you understand how to go about starting a SpICE project, we have included a story about how a fictitious community, Brindalong, initiates a SpICE project. Segments of this story are included throughout the SpICE Guide to illustrate aspects of the Learning Activities.

The entire story is included in Section 5.

The Brindalong SpICE story is from the perspective of concerned community members who want more specialist knowledge and skills in their town. It has been written from this perspective as it is most often concerned community members who take the first steps in starting a SpICE project.

Section**2****How the SpICE Guide Works**

This section explains the key areas of knowledge and skills needed for a SpICE project and briefly summarises the learning sections of the SpICE Guide.

Because a SpICE project can be initiated by anyone; for example, a parent or interested community member, an employee from a government or non-government organisation such as a health or education professional, a librarian, a manager, an academic or even the vice-chancellor of a university, everyone will come with different understandings and knowledge.

For example, a community development worker already knows how to bring people together to collaborate upon a common goal. However, a dentist might not have this knowledge. If they are both working together to start a SpICE project, the dentist needs to understand and be able to apply knowledge of collaboration. Because of the differences in knowledge and skills held by various people, this means the SpICE Guide needs to cater for a wide variety of need. On the one side we don't want to bore people, but the detail needs to be available for those who want it.

At the same time, the Guide needs to account for the different ways people like to learn. For example, some people prefer to learn alone, or be guided in what they need to 'do'. Others like to learn by talking and discussion. Then there are those people who learn best when the material is playful, engaging and activity based¹.

The material in the Guide tries to cater for these different learning styles. However, in such a collaborative process as SpICE, people who like to learn alone, or be directed, may experience a sharper learning curve than others!

¹ SpICE will be available in 3 formats. There is this Guide, further developments include the SpICE Connect Game for people who prefer learning interactively, and the SpICE Guide Podcast for people who enjoy learning from listening.

Tips for Working through the SpICE Guide

Many parts of the SpICE Guide need to be worked through by talking and discussing with others.

Sections of the Brindalong story are incorporated throughout the workbook to help illustrate ideas and approaches.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Brindalong is a town of about 1500 people, about four hours from the nearest big regional centre....

This Icon indicates that there is an activity to complete for this topic.



Activity

Because the format of the Guide does not force interaction, it is very useful to assign roles to assist this interaction:



Ask someone to read aloud the Information and Activity sections.



Ask someone to keep time so as help the group move at a good pace through the sections



Ask someone to take notes on behalf of the group.

Learning Sections of the SpICE Guide

How to start a SpICE Project

Chapter 1: How to Engage your Community

Why is Chapter 1 important for SpICE ?

For SpICE to be effective, it needs people and the organisations they represent, to come together and to work together. For many government and large non-government organisations, this is not easily achieved, nor has it been standard practice. More generally, many of us have become accustomed to working independently of other organisations. At times, there can even be some rivalry between organisations or sectors about who does what ‘best’.

SpICE, via the Community of Learners, seeks to promote collaboration because more can be achieved when a range of people work together on a shared community-driven goal. The reason SpICE seeks to get organisations and people working together is not because a bad job is being done by organisations working alone, but that a **better** job can be done if we do things together.

This Chapter breaks down into discrete steps, the Community of Learner’s process of ‘learning to work together’ and provides collaborative learning activities to develop your skills.

In addition, there are strategies for embedding SpICE activities within your organisation. On the one hand, this is to make sure individuals engaged in SpICE do not become exhausted; and on the other to make sure that the idea of ‘working together’ becomes a sustainable reality for your community and the organisations that serve it.

Who should complete Chapter 1?

SpICE rests on collaboration. Collaboration is what cements the relationships in the Community of Learners. These relationships are essential for innovative approaches to university student placements and specialist service delivery.

Many people, because of their busy work lives, will be tempted to skip this Chapter. You are strongly encouraged to complete it, as it lays the foundation for *a successful SpICE project*.

What is the best way to work through this chapter?

Because the topic is ‘working together’, this Chapter needs 2 or more people to sit down at the same time to work through the material. A

facilitator is not necessary, as the learning is about yourselves, your organisations, and each other. It will take around **2 hours to complete**.

Chapter 2: Making SpICE SpICE: Applying SpICE Principles and the Community of Learners

Why is Chapter 2 important for SpICE?

SpICE is a principled approach. These principles are known to be important in advancing social, economic and cultural benefit within communities because they contribute to improving people's wellbeing and their community's. At the same time, SpICE is a collaborative approach, and its key mechanism supporting all collaborative activity is the 'Community of Learners'.

Chapter 2 explains the Community of Learners and breaks down the process of applying SpICE principles to plan, implement and evaluate SpICE activities. As part of this, information is included about how to engage a range of people in your Community of Learners.

Who should complete Chapter 2?

Globally, there are many partnership projects around the world. What makes SpICE *SpICE* is its principled and collaborative approach. Because there are so many organisations and individuals involved in any SpICE project, it is very important that individual agendas do not compete. Following the principles which underpin a Community of Learners ensures everyone acts as true partners, rather than following their own agendas. **Everyone** is strongly encouraged to work through this chapter.

What is the best way to work through this Chapter?

This chapter is relevant to *everyone* in a SpICE project, and since it builds upon, and extends the 'working together' of Chapter 1, this chapter also needs 2 or more people to work through the material together (hopefully the same people who completed the activities in Chapter 1). A facilitator is not necessary as, once again, the learning is about yourselves, your organisations, and each other. Chapter 2 will take around **1.5 hours to complete**.

Chapter 3: Nuts and Bolts: Finding the Focus and Assigning the Jobs for SpICE

Why is Chapter 3 important for SpICE ?

This section provides the 'This is what I need to do, and this is how I do it' information for setting up a SpICE project in your community. For many learners, it may be tempting to concentrate on this section because it is largely about 'doing', as opposed to the previous Chapters that have been largely concerned

with ‘thinking about the how the doing is *done*’. It is very important, however, that insights from the previous sections inform your learning as you progress through this Chapter. Basically, without collaborative relationships guiding a principled doing of SpICE, the work itself is likely to be driven by personal or organisational agendas. Lack of collaboration increases the risk of SpICE ending up as a project using students as an unpaid workforce for a couple of organisations in your community. This is not SpICE!

Who should complete Chapter 3?

Everyone in your SpICE Community of Learners needs to go through the learning activities in this chapter.

What is the best way to work through this chapter?

Chapter 3 can be completed on your own, or it can be done as a group activity. If participants chose to work through the material on their own, there still needs to be a collaborative discussion at the end of the chapter to identify what roles people feel motivated to undertake as part of SpICE. Chapter 3 will take around **an hour to complete** as a group, and rather less if you work through it by yourself.

How to start a
SpICE Project

Chapter 4: Proving the Benefit of SpICE: The SpICE-Rack

Why is Chapter 4 important for SpICE?

It does not matter what your role; someone, somewhere, sometime, is going to ask: ‘*How do you know SpICE is benefiting your community?*’ If, as an employee you have managed to embed your SpICE activities into your work, this question will be asked sooner rather than later. To answer this question, you need ‘evidence of benefit’. Chapter 4 takes participants through how evidence of benefit is provided for SpICE, how to gather this evidence, and how to present it.

Who should complete Chapter 4?

Everyone in your Community of Learners needs to know the *why* and *how* to gather evidence of the benefits of SpICE, although not everyone needs to learn how to present it.

What is the best way to work through this chapter?

In theory, this Chapter can be worked through individually. It should take **30 minutes** or so. However in practice, people often feel the need to discuss the ins and outs of evidence in a small group. In this case, Chapter 4 can take around **an hour to complete**.

SpICE Student
Support Guide

SpICE Student Support Guide

Why is this Guide important for SpICE?

This section is all about how community members set up and support students on a SpICE placement. It explains the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of setting up a *beneficial* SpICE student placement. The benefit will be that the students’ efforts will help your community solve problems for themselves; use specialist resources more effectively; and discover more ways of working together for a more resilient and engaged community. The students will benefit from having an opportunity to understand about *people* in communities and the many and varied ways to build relationships with people from *all* sectors of the community. The experience they gain from working collaboratively will complement the technical skills they have already gained in their specialist training.

There are 6 chapters in the Student Support Guide:

1. An overview of SpICE Student Support.
2. The Benefits of SpICE Placements for Communities.
3. Planning - Practical considerations.
4. How to Support Students Once They Arrive
5. Maintaining the Support of Your Organisation
6. Conclusion.

Who should use this Guide?

Everyone in the Community of Learners should read Chapters 1 and 2. The remaining Chapters are for Learning Mentors, Debriefing Mentors and Discipline Specific Mentors.

How should you use this Guide?

The information in this section can be read on your own or in a group, and does not require a facilitator. However, as for the other learning sections of SpICE, working through the material with a group can help in both gaining a better understanding and in establishing working relationships within your Community of Learners. *Planning - Practical Considerations* and *How to Support Students Once they Arrive* are designed for quick reference or can be used for group workshops or individual learning.

Section

3

How to Start a SpICE Project

Your Workbook

For SpICE to be effective, it needs people and the organisations they represent, to come together and to work together. For many government and large non-government organisations, this is not easily achieved, nor has it been standard practice. More generally, many of us have become accustomed to working independently of other organisations. At times, there can even be some rivalry between organisations or sectors about who does what ‘best’.

SpICE, via the Community of Learners, seeks to promote collaboration because more can be achieved when a range of people work together on a shared community-driven goal. The reason SpICE seeks to get organisations and people working together is not because a bad job is being done by organisations working alone, but that a ***better*** job can be done if we do things together.

Chapter 1. How to Engage your Community

This Chapter breaks down into discrete steps, the Community of Learner's process of 'learning to work together' and provides collaborative learning activities to develop your skills.

In addition, there are strategies for embedding SpICE activities within your organisation. On the one hand, this is to make sure individuals engaged in SpICE do not become exhausted; and on the other to make sure that the idea of 'working together' becomes a sustainable reality for your community and the organisations that serve it.

Who should complete Chapter 1?

SpICE rests on collaboration. Collaboration is what cements the relationships in the Community of Learners. These relationships are essential for innovative approaches to university student placements and specialist service delivery.

Many people, because of their busy work lives, will be tempted to skip this Chapter. You are strongly encouraged to complete it, as it lays the foundation for a successful SpICE project.

What is the best way to work through this chapter?

Because the topic is 'working together', this Chapter needs 2 or more people to sit down at the same time to work through the material. A facilitator is not necessary, as the learning is

about yourselves, your organisations, and each other.



It will take around **2 hours** to complete.

Chapter 1. How
to engage your
community

Topic 1: YOU!

Who ever you are, whether you are a parent or interested community member, an employee from a government or non-government organisation such as a health or education professional, a librarian, a manager, an academic or even the vice-chancellor of a university, the first step in beginning SpICE is to consider yourself, where you are situated, and what *you* know. This is the starting point for SpICE.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Brindalong is a town of about 1500 people, about four hours from the nearest big regional centre. There's a teacher (Jenny) at the local primary school, and the community nurse (Sue) who is employed to do health promotion and primary prevention for an area covering 130 kilometers in any one direction. Sue visits the school once a term as part of her job. Sue's husband (Robert) runs the local rubbish tip and re-cycling centre for the Council, and then there's Tiffany who, as the pre-school director, knows both Jenny and Sue.

None of them have ever thought of themselves as brave – but what they are about to do is the bravest thing anyone in Brindalong has ever seen. The four of them are going to take an enormous leap of faith; but they'll do it together, and because of that, they hope the fear won't be as strong.



Activity

Introduce yourself to your partners if you don't already know each other.

1. **Think about** who might be the bravest person at the table.
2. As individuals, write down things you could do to improve your bravery - even if it's just 'having a go'!
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
3. Imagine each of the statements in the bottom row of the table (below). Using the 'thermometer' statements in the first column, record your feeling-'temperature' against each of the statements, like in the example provided. When you shade in each 'thermometer', please describe how you are feeling **right now**.

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

YES! This is how I'm feeling right now!						
I'm feeling a BIT like this						
I don't feel much either way.						
NO! This is NOT how I'm feeling!						
	<i>Example: I feel it's too hot in this room.</i>	I'm feeling confident about what I've got myself into by agreeing to be part of a SpICE project.	I enjoy talking things over with people, so I'm feeling comfortable	I'm looking forward to working with this Community of Learners.	I don't think I'll get frustrated easily.	I feel comfortable as I like these 'touchy-feely' activities.

Topic 2: Your Passion and Fire

The only way to get SpICE going in your community is if you have a fire in your belly about a particular need or issue. The fire is an on-going smolder that ‘things are not right’ in some area of specialist service provision in your community (or in your organisation). For example, you might feel that ‘lots of children could benefit from increased specialist support’ or wonder why ‘a particular specialist service isn’t available.’ You have a real sense that there is a gap, a systemic ‘missing out’ on services, or a lack of community knowledge about specialist services. It seems inequitable and you don’t think it’s something that can be solved by yourself, or by any one organisation. That’s why it remains smoldering away in your belly..... BUT THE FIRE IS THERE!

You then need to check that the passion you have about a particular issue is actually shared by others, and not just your personal opinion, or linked to a personal experience you may have had. For example, just because *you* had problems getting to see a physiotherapist does not mean your entire community has the same problem!

To check whether your passion about this issue is shared by your community, *investigate* the reasons, the history, the things that have been tried (and what happened to them). Ask other people for their opinions. Ask questions to help guide you to understand if what you think is going on in is actually the case.

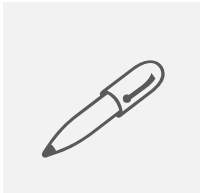
Having identified and investigated your own fire, and the reality of the community need for specialist service knowledge, you then need to find others who have an equal passion (often different, yet somehow complementary). These people may be from other organisations, community groups, NGOs or training institutions (for example universities) who are located within, or close to, your community. These people will become your Community of Learners for SpICE. The engagement you have with them is crucial if SpICE is to achieve relevant and sustainable solutions.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Sue, Tiffany, Robert and Jenny all have different fires in their bellies. Robert is sickened by the waste produced by their town and how nobody seems to care about the effect on the environment. Jenny and Tiffany are both really worried about the educational outcomes for children in Brindalong; how some children don’t attend pre-school, and how the children - and many of their parents - don’t seem to have much hope for the future. Sue, the nurse, feels overwhelmed by the demands of her job, and feels she is accomplishing very little.

In one way or another, all four are connected to each other. All four wish to do something to improve things. They all feel in some way that a 'fair-go' for all is in fact very unequal. But they haven't actually talked together about these things.

Over time, Robert has talked to a few mates in other rubbish dumps round the region about the environmental impact of what is going on. On the basis of these chats, he approached his boss and told him he was interested about finding out what other Councils were doing. His boss talked to him at length, and then because Robert was interested, he put him onto many organisations on the Web that were talking about what should be done with waste management and sustainability. Robert's boss said they'd love to do more in their community, but there just wasn't the money or the community interest to invest in trying new ways of doing things. Robert went home and looked up the websites Michael gave him. Much of this information was way above Robert's head, and he became disheartened. He left it there for a while.



Activity

Do you feel passion and fire about the inequity of specialist services in your community?

If you answer 'Yes!' go to Option A. If you answer 'No!' go to Option B.

Option A

You answered 'Yes!' to feeling passion and fire about issues in specialist service provision in your community. With your team, discuss your individual passion and fire. What strikes you as inequitable about specialist services in your community? How have you investigated if these are real inequities, and not just something you *think* is happening?

You may want to brainstorm and capture your conclusions on a large piece of paper.

Option B

- 1) Why don't you feel passion and fire about specialist services in your community? Write down your reason(s) here:

- 2) How will you continue to support the people here today?

Chapter 1. How
to engage your
community

Topic 3: Think about where you work

When we take on a role (whether it is paid or not), we tend to accept a lot about the organisations we work for. Some of what we accept is because of loyalty. Some of what we accept is because we're grateful for the work. Some might be because we hope to change the way things happen from inside the organisation, and some of what we accept is because it's just easier not to rock the boat!

SpICE offers a new way for organisations to collaborate to help solve complex problems. The basic premise is NOT that your organisation is failing to do its best, but that by working together with others, your organisation could achieve more than what they may currently be achieving and in different ways. The first step of this is to think very carefully about how your organisation operates, and how you work within it.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Robert meets up with Mitch (the owner of the second-hand shop) and buys him a beer at the Brindalong Hotel. Robert is feeling a little anxious about this meeting. He's not really met any 'dreamers' who give the stock from their shop away if someone needs something. On the one side he admires Mitch for doing this, but there's a niggle in him that sort of disapproves as well.

When they've settled down with their beer, Mitch asks Robert where he works and how long he's worked there.

"I run the tip now. I started at the Council straight from school."

"That's a long time in one place."

Robert shrugged, "They look after us, and then you get used to working there, so you don't even think of leaving."

"You get stuck in your ways, don't you?" Mitch agreed, "I was like that for years. Just got up, went to work and came home, and life piled up before you knew it."

"Where did you work?" asked Robert.

"One of the mines. Year in and year out, just doing my job, then I started to wake up and see things differently."

Robert asked what happened, and Mitch said, "Nothing much. It was just something I read in the paper — it was nothing important; some journo going on about how the mines were wrecking the environment. But it was like a leaking tap. I'd heard it over and over from so many places that it suddenly sank in that it was important. It was like a glass getting full up to the brim and then spilling over."

"So what did you do?"

"Nothing much for a while, to be honest. But I had my eyes wide open and my ears pinned back at work. It was like I needed to find the proof of it for myself that the papers were right, see? I needed the proof to make my own mind up. And the more I listened, the more I got convinced, and then the more I got convinced, the more I wanted to change things to make the mine better."

"So what happened?"

Mitch grinned at Robert, "What do you think happened? I went at it like a bloody bull in a china shop, that's what happened! I nagged so hard at my managers about how we could do things better they said I was a trouble-maker. I couldn't handle it after a while and resigned."

"Then how do we ever get to change things?" asked Robert.

"Not too sure, mate. But I know for certain the starting point is waking up to yourself and really looking and listening to what's going on round you. That's a big change in YOU. That's the starting point: you and what's going on around you!"



Activity

As individuals, answer the following questions:

1. Are there things your organisation could do more effectively?

2. What's your role (or opportunity!) in helping your organisation do things more effectively?

Now that you have thought about this share your ideas with others in your group. See if anyone else has similar ideas or sees their role as similar to your own.

Chapter 1. How
to engage your
community

Topic 4: What's going on around you?

For most of us, our work and our family take up the bulk of our focus, time and energy. Many of us might also be involved in one or two community activities. There may also be many other activities, groups and organisations that serve as the glue holding your community together.

In every community, there are layers of activity, and there are all kinds of invisible bonds linking some activities to others. Because SpICE is about people, organisations and groups collaborating, you need to explore ways of finding out what is going on in your community.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Sue, the community nurse, phones up Lily, who is the current president of the Brindalong Country Women's Association (CWA) and is also a retired nurse.

Sue says, "Lily, there's Tiffany from the pre-school and Jenny from the primary school who are wanting to improve their School Readiness information, and they want to reach all the parents of kids coming up to school age. But the problem is they don't know how to go about it. I'm under the pump at work and can't give them a hand – so I thought of you?"

"As if I haven't got enough going on!" says Lily, pleased to be asked, but not wanting anyone to take advantage.

"I know, but it's not like you'd have to do too much – they'd do the contacting. They just don't know how to start. They're not sure how to start looking for everything going on that might involve parents."

"Well it wouldn't be just the parents, would it? You'd have to think about all the places where the babies and toddlers might have been as well. So there'd be the playgroups, the infant services, the family carers, Community Health and their hearing screening program – and that's just for starters. And for the parents, there're all the sports clubs, the Council, let alone the pubs – they could put notices up there, couldn't they?"

"You see why I thought of you, Lily!"



Activity

Imagine your team has a short amount of time to work out how to find out about organisations, groups, services and activities in your community. This is because the Council have given money to start a men's diving club at the local pool and you are worried there may not be much demand for such a club where you live.

1. What kinds of organisations and activities are you going to find out about, and why?

Topic 5: Looking at the existing opportunities

SpICE is not a ‘problem’ or ‘deficit’ driven model. While its focus is to build the knowledge and skills of people in a variety of specialist areas, SpICE can’t ‘fix’ specific specialist services. For example, SpICE students *can* educate parents, carers, teachers and anyone else who is interested about how to do speech and language activities for children in the community. SpICE students can even educate the same people about how to meaningfully improve the outcomes for these children. Along the way, the speech therapy SpICE students will also have learnt how to deliver services in a fairer way. However, SpICE *can’t* provide the community with a speech therapist!

Because its focus is building knowledge and skills, you need to search and build upon existing projects, opportunities or initiatives *already* in the community. Using the ‘men’s diving club’ example from the previous Activity, perhaps SpICE students could link in with the other sporting clubs, develop the skills and knowledge of diving to maximise health outcomes with everyone, link with other nearby communities that may benefit from this knowledge, train everyone so that the knowledge remains in the community forever. At the same time, they could perhaps also work with the teachers to develop their skills and knowledge around diving, which would mean the school children would also benefit.

Building on the existing opportunities in your community is economical and sustainable. More importantly, it builds stronger partnerships and links between different community groups who may not otherwise have connected. This results in stronger and more resilient communities.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Sue and Lily continue their phone conversation:

Lily says, “But you know what’s worrying me about how Tiffany and Sue are wanting to go about contacting all the parents of kids going to school? It’s that most kiddies up to four years have health checks. Almost every parent takes their kids for them. So why don’t Tiffany and Sue link up with the infant services and put their School Readiness stuff with that? Kill two birds with one stone.”

Sue says, “Good thinking! We could put some health promotion messages in the School Readiness program, couldn’t we?”

“That we is sounding dangerous, Sue!” said Lily, laughing.



Activity

Return to the men's diving-club example from the previous Activity.

As a team, and using your **own** community knowledge to guide you, in the left hand column below list three existing community programs or activities that could have a direct or indirect link to a proposed men's diving club. In the right hand column, explain how each of these three programs or activities could, when linked to the men's diving club, benefit a lot more people in the community than the men alone.

Existing Community programs/ activities that have a link to the proposed diving club:	How would linking this activity to the diving club benefit a lot more people?

Chapter 1.

How to Engage
Your Community

Topic 6: Going it alone

It doesn't matter if you are from a university, a large public health service, a school or a club: You cannot do SpICE alone. Even if you have the passion and fire of a volcano, going it alone will not work. This is because your passion and fire represents YOUR (or your organisation's) interests – not necessarily the interests of the community. People respond poorly to being told what they need by particular organisations, and no advice is welcomed if people haven't asked for it. You will also exhaust yourself if you try to improve the situation of your community or organisation alone.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Tiffany is talking to Ally, one of her teachers in the pre-school. Ally has heard about Tiffany, Jenny and Sue's conversations about SpICE. Ally says to Tiffany, "It sounds like everybody's doing lots of talking, and yet you know as well as I do that at

least five of our kids here need proper sensory assessments. Tiffany, we need an occupational therapist – we don't need all this talk! And if we can't have an OT, then let's just phone the Uni and get a bunch of OT students to do the assessments for us."

Tiffany thinks carefully before she answers. On the one hand, she shares Ally's frustrations and is deeply tempted to get the help she needs now by phoning around and encouraging someone to come and help. But on the other hand, she realises that the problem will continue if a new approach for getting specialist service, skills and knowledge is not identified.

Slowly she says, "Ally, we've got five kids now we think need assessment and help. Next year, there will be more – and the year after that, and after that. If we phone the Uni, that means you'll have to organise it each and every year. And then what about the kids who aren't speaking properly? We've got plenty of those as well. And young Billy with his pigeon toes – and most of the whole lot of them coming to school without having seen a toothbrush in the morning! If you phone the Uni for all those different students, you'll never be teaching here - you'll be too busy organising uni students, and you'd have to do the same every year. It won't solve anything.

"No Ally, this SpICE idea might take a lot of talking, and it might take a whole lot of thinking differently, but there's the chance here that we end up knowing an awful lot more about how to go about helping the kids and the community. That's important. And on top of that, I'll not let Jenny down. The primary school has got as many kids with problems as here. We can't go it alone and phone the Uni – or anyone else. We have to work together on this."



Activity

Working together to go through the learning activities of Chapter 1 might have challenged some of you.

Place a tick in the box below that best describes how you are feeling about working together on these activities:

	YES! This is ME.	Well, Sort of....	Not really....
I've been really honest with myself and my team-mates			
I've done my best to handle my emotion			
I've really tried to work as part of the team.			
I've enjoyed talking things over with people.			
I've really tried to connect with the others			
I'm able to live with the uncertainty of where doing all this might take me.			

Topic 7: The FUD of connecting with others

FUD stands for Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt. There is a lot of FUD in learning to think differently about doing things, so understanding FUD is very important for SpICE!

A great starting point is to have conversations about SpICE in and around your community or organisation. These are not necessarily formal meetings, but they are important for not only spreading the word about SpICE, but gaining support. Some of these conversations will result in people wanting to join in SpICE. Others will not. It doesn't matter what the outcome is, the real result is that people feel included.

Often though, this is easier said than done! Many people feel FUDdy about talking to people they barely know, let alone about something which is new to them and something they are still getting to understand. This is where having a structure can help you start having conversations about SpICE.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

We have unpacked a specific section of the Brindalong story below, to show you the structure Sue (the community nurse) uses when she speaks to Jim (the owner of the supermarket).

When you start to have conversations about SpICE in your community, using this structure can really help you overcome your FUD.

The conversation occurs on the pavement outside the shop, as Sue comes to do her shopping.



In your team, it might be useful to read this aloud, with different people taking on different roles:

The Hidden Structure:	The Conversation between Sue and Jim:
Highlight the natural link between the people having the conversation	<p><i>Sue says: "You and I, Jim, we've always been so interested in Brindalong getting stronger and not dying like half the towns round here."</i></p> <p><i>Jim: "And a full-time job it's turned into!"</i></p>

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

Explaining that this natural link is shared by many concerned people in the community	<p><i>Sue: "You know there's something new a few people are starting to talk about that's aimed at getting uni students in town to do the heavy lifting of helping us get stronger – it's called SpICE. They'd be doing the work."</i></p> <p><i>Jim: (laughing) "All Spice or Old Spice? I could always do with extra shelf-packers!"</i></p>
Explaining there is a broad community benefit	<p><i>Sue: "Not quite that sort of heavy lifting! More like doing specialist projects in the town and teaching us new skills in the process."</i></p> <p><i>Jim: "Not shelf-packing?"</i></p>
Explaining there is a principled purpose to this broad community benefit	<p><i>Sue: "No. Things that we all need – like doing a project to teach us how not to make so much rubbish. Something like that. Everyone's still talking about it and nothing's decided – would you like to come along when there's the next SpICE get-together?"</i></p> <p><i>Jim: "If it'll help the town, I'll come along"</i></p>



Activity

Write down your particular Fears, Uncertainties and Doubts (FUDs) in regard to speaking to people you barely know about something you don't feel you know enough about!

Then as a group, talk about your FUDs and answer the question: 'What would you need to help that FUD go away?'

Topic 8: Connecting with Others: Spreading the word

You have probably met, or are even friends with, people in your community who have a similar sense of ‘wanting to make a difference’. Then again, you may just have heard of such people. They are often (although not exclusively) ‘on-the-ground’ workers. They are often known as ‘someone who knows a lot about how things work’, or ‘someone who really cares about what happens in a particular place’. They might be involved in charity or volunteer groups, or be active and committed teachers, health workers or members of the local council. Useful places to find such passionate people are through mechanisms that already exist, such as inter-agency forums, community groups or other collaborative activities.

The common link between these people is a passionate desire to contribute in a community and/or in the organisations that provide services to the community. You will find people with fire in surprising places! And anyone who cares about their community doesn’t mind an approach by somebody else who shares this care. This is a given. Whoever the person is, whatever their job or position in a community, if they care, they will be delighted to speak with you.

Because SpICE starts with community members who *care*, it relies on identifying other people who care, rather than organisations *per se*, to shape a solution to a particular idea, need or service gap. Sharing a common focus and being committed to the same outcome provides the fuel to maintain the fire. Participating in a SpICE project also requires people to try new approaches. If the solution which is developed is not innovative, then there is little chance of change and things will continue in the same manner.

Consequently, connecting through SpICE is not simply about bringing organisations who are already serving a community together; it is about identifying people who are prepared to strive for change in addressing the area of focus. This obviously will include organisations, businesses and groups who provide services to a community but their participation is about contributing to change not maintaining the status quo. As a result, people participate not because it’s their job to be involved, but rather, because they are willing contributors to achieving change and sharing knowledge. These people will make up the Community of Learners and become the vital links in their organisations in guiding their involvement. This will be more fully explored in the next topic.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Sue and Robert host a barbeque at their place one Saturday night and invite Tiffany (pre-school director), Lily (head of CWA and a recently retired nurse), Sue (who even though is overwhelmed with work still wants to be involved), Mitch (who started the

second-hand shop) and Jim, the owner of the supermarket.

Jim says, "I was glad Sue stopped and talked to me the other week. I don't know what we might be getting into, but almost anything is worth a go, isn't it?"

"Do you know how nervous I was talking to you?" answered Sue. "Up till then, it had just been us talking pie-in-the-sky. Talking to you made this SpICE thing real. It felt really big. You know what I mean?"

Lily glances at everyone in turn and says, "But there's plenty more who we' could speak to. I know Robert's working for the Council, but we could have a chat with Bob Mackey the Mayor. And then there's my brother-in-law Bill at Rotary. And what about Centre Ways – there's that social worker who works there – she was your bridesmaid wasn't she, Tiffany - what's her name? But it's Jenny that answers, "You mean Rhonda? She's the social worker. I know her through childcare."

'Yes, that's it! Rhonda. We could go and talk to all of them.'

There was silence for a while. Then Robert says, "I'm up for it, but I'd feel happier if there was someone with me in case I start explaining it wrong!"

Everybody laughs. "Figure we're all in the same boat there. With any luck they'll come along for the ride because they know us. That's not a bad place to start if you think about it."



Activity

1. Write down the names of two people you know, or have heard about, who might be up to the challenge of joining in a SpICE project in your community. As a group, describe what these people would bring to SpICE. Do this for every name on every person's list.

2. Now, as a group, compare that list to each of **you**. Have a discussion about the great qualities you bring to a SpICE project.
3. Finally, consider this: Do you feel confident that **you** have what it takes to be a core part of SpICE project in your community?

Topic 9: Gathering the support of your Organisation. Part 1: Key Documents

When people first start thinking and talking about starting SpICE in their community, they usually either shave time off their job, or confine their SpICE activities to after-hours. However, the aim is for each participant in the Community of Learners to LEGITIMATELY embed SpICE into their regular activities so that planning and operationalizing becomes part of their work.

This then builds sustainability into SpICE projects. SpICE needs to be embedded into the core activities of organisations for it to be sustainable over the long term. The longer SpICE remains ‘outside’ core work activities, the more exhausted people will become, and the less traction SpICE will be able to gain in the community. So very early on in the process, people need to pay attention to gaining the support of their organisations.

As you talk about SpICE during the course of your work, you will probably find that you gain support from workers on the ground. You will also have the support of many community members. Gaining the support of the organisations that have specialist service delivery responsibility in a particular community is usually the challenging part!

A very useful document is the Mission Statement/ Value Statement/Strategic Plan of your organisation. In many publically-funded organisations, there are often similar words and phrases shared between them, such as: ‘collaboration; teamwork; engagement; inclusiveness; working in partnership; cultural competence/preparedness; and equity and access to services.’ When organisations base their actions on the concepts in these words and phrases, they become strong and resilient organisations that deliver effective services.

As SpICE principles are also important for building strong and resilient communities, there are obvious connections between the visions of the organisations and the vision for SpICE. This means one of your initial activities is to look at your organisations Mission Statement and Strategic Plan to identify the similarities between it and the proposed SpICE project. You will then be able to use these similarities to explain the relevance of SpICE to your managers and organisational leaders.

Your job/role statement is equally important. Even if the reality of your job has you desk-bound, many written job descriptions have statements about *community engagement* or the need to actively demonstrate your focus on the *customer, client,*

patient, student, community, partnerships, etc. Similar to the point above, you may need to highlight these as further support for your involvement in a SpICE project.

When you start having these conversations with your Manager about SpICE, it is useful to keep a structure in your head (discussed in Topic 7). The Brindalong story below is used again to demonstrate how this structure works in practice. The conversation here is between Jenny (teacher from the Primary School) and Shirley, the Principal of Brindalong Primary School. It occurs in the Principal's office.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Jenny is trying to have her SpICE activities considered as a legitimate part of her work as a teacher at the primary school. In preparation for her meeting with Shirley, the Principal, she has studied her job description, as well as several key policies of the Department of Education. As soon as Jenny enters the Principal's office, Shirley says, "What's all this I hear about you running round town talking about this SpICE thing?"

Jenny takes a deep breath and answers, "I'm really interested in the new Rural and Remote Partnership Policies published by the Department of Education. Because of it, I've been looking round for projects that could demonstrate the 'community partnership' part of my job description, and I would love to be involved in furthering these policies in Brindalong, especially clauses..." She pulls the document from her pocket and reads out all the statements that mention 'collaboration', 'partnerships with communities' and 'capacity building'. Without pausing she then goes on, "A group of us in Brindalong, from the Health Service, the Council, business and the Pre-school, would like to directly implement these clauses by doing a SpICE project. Here are the principles of SpICE. They call them KPIs, but I'm not sure why." She unfolds a photocopy of the SpICE principles and lays both documents side by side on Shirley's desk. "See how similar the principles of SpICE are to the Rural and Remote Partnership policy?"

Below the hidden structure is compared with the story in a table. This may help you to have conversations with your managers that use organisational documents to embed SpICE into your work.

<i>The Hidden Structure:</i>	<i>The Conversation between Jenny and Shirley</i>
<i>Highlight the natural link between the principles of SpICE and your organisation's Mission Statement, Policies and Job Statements. Explain that the natural links are shared by many community members and services.</i>	<p><i>Shirley:</i> <i>What's all this I hear about you running round town talking about this SpICE thing?</i></p> <p><i>Jenny:</i> <i>I'm really interested in the new Rural and Remote Partnership Policies published by the Department of Education. Because of it, I've been looking round for projects that could prove the 'community partnership' part of my job description, and I would love to be involved in furthering these policies in Brindalong, especially clauses ... (she reads them all out). A group of us in Brindalong, from the Health Service, the Council, business and the Pre-school, would like to directly implement these clauses by doing a SpICE project. Here are the principles of SpICE. They call them KPIs, but I'm not sure why. See how similar the principles of SpICE are to the Rural and Remote Partnership document?</i></p>



Activity

This activity asks you to pick out the common words, phrases and meanings from several documents, and then see how similar they are to the SpICE principles. The exercise will prepare you for having conversations with your manager about the ‘natural links’ between SpICE and your organisation:

1. Underline all the common words across the 3 columns of the following table.
2. As a group, discuss all the common meanings.

SpICE Principles (KPIs):	Selection Criteria for a teaching job:	Vision Statement from a health service:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Are our activities sustainable over the long-term? 2 Are we providing people with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their ability to shape their own future? 3 Are we actively seeking to include people in our activities (but recognising that inclusion and participation happen differently for people and communities)? 4 Are we striving for joint decision-making and agreement? 5 Are we collaborating - as opposed to competing - within projects and processes? 6 Are the contributions and opinions of community members taking precedence over the contributions and opinions of organisations participating in SpICE? 	<p>Selection Criteria for Teacher:</p> <p>The applicant needs to demonstrate s/he is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand students’ welfare and be able to cater for the individual needs of all students in a just and equitable manner • Establish and maintain a purposeful, safe, challenging and respectful learning environment for all students • Apply critical reflection and feedback in relation to individual and team-based teacher performance • Engage in life-long professional development in order to embrace educational innovation and change. • Work collaboratively with families, colleagues and communities • Apply leadership skills in the teaching profession , and within the wider school community, by engaging with groups such as students’ representative councils, social organisations, sporting associations and the community. 	<p>Our Vision: Leading and working in partnership to reduce health inequalities in the Whitehorse Community.</p> <p>Our Mission: We will promote and enhance the health and well-being of the Whitehorse Community in collaboration with the community in the context of the broader environment.</p> <p>Our Values:</p> <p>EQUITY: We proactively work to reduce health inequalities and promote access to services in our community.</p> <p>INNOVATION: We provide quality services that are innovative and responsive to the needs of our community.</p> <p>INCLUSIVENESS: We embrace and respect the background, diversity and contributions of each other and all in our community. We provide a safe and supportive environment for staff, service users and visitors.</p> <p>COLLABORATION: We foster partnerships and collaborative activities to achieve the best outcomes for our community.</p> <p>INTEGRITY: We operate within a trustworthy, ethical culture and are accountable to our community. .</p>

Topic 10: Gathering the support of your Organisation

Part 2: Connecting Management

Once you have sought acceptance that your role statement and organisational Mission and Policy Statements align (in some way) with SpICE principles, you then need to extend the connection between your organisation and SpICE.

In some organisations, managers might understand what SpICE is trying to achieve and will actively encourage and support you being involved in SpICE. They may even become champions along the way smoothing the road within the organisation. This is the ideal!

However, there may be some organisations where managers are focused on specific organisational ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’. Even though the purpose of SpICE clearly fits the Strategic Direction, Policy and Mission Statement of the organisation, they might not see a SpICE project as part of *your* role. In this case, it is better if you step back for a while and ask the Community of Learners to keep you informed about SpICE activities. If the SpICE project does indeed tick your organisation’s goals, it will soon become apparent that your involvement will be positive for the organisation. Particularly once the momentum of the SpICE project increases and community members or other agencies approach your organisation about participating in SpICE.

In other organisations, you may be encouraged to participate in the SpICE project because there is external pressure being placed upon your organisation by others. (For example, the pre-school committee informs the school principal that they are participants in a SpICE project, and then ask if the school has considered participating.)

If senior managers don’t really understand SpICE, they may try to change SpICE to make its activities ‘fit’ their own organisational agenda. Governance is often initially raised by managers in order to monitor activities and progress; however there is a risk of the project being entangled in red tape and unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. SpICE has its own, natural, governance structure in its Community of Learners. This group serves as an accountability mechanism in its own right. An in depth explanation of the Community of Learners follows in Chapter 2 of this Guidebook.

To help explain how to connect your manager to SpICE, we continue the story of teacher, Jenny, asking for permission to do SpICE as part of her legitimate activities. Again, there is a ‘hidden structure’ that may help you to have similar conversations with your own manager.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

“But you’re already up to your eyes in face-to-face teaching! You haven’t got time for anything else!” answers Shirley sharply.

“But I need to meet the ‘community partnership’ requirements of my job description; otherwise I’ll never get promotion!” Jenny hears herself getting emotional, so takes another deep breath before continuing more slowly, “See, I’ve prepared a timetable of my teaching and other duties.” She passes it to Shirley, “My proposal is that I continue with all my teaching, but that the additional duties, such as play-ground duty etc., be the time I spend on SpICE. It would work out to 7 hours a week. I know it increases my workload, but it’s what the policy says we should be doing, and there’s a real chance with SpICE that we could improve the outcomes for our school students.”

Jenny stops speaking abruptly and forces herself to stay quiet.

Shirley takes her time before saying thoughtfully, “They were saying at the regional meeting how schools need to be involved in partnerships...” Then she blinks, frowns and looks up at Jenny, “But YOU! What makes you think you can do something like this? They were talking about us principals taking the lead on this – not the teachers!”

Jenny does not allow herself to get offended. Instead she asks, “Perhaps you’d like to join me with SpICE, then?” But Shirley answers quickly, “Me? I’m much too busy.”

“Well then, could I?”

But Shirley is not convinced. “I’m not sure about this – not sure about this at all. I’ll speak to my Director and get back to you.”



To increase understanding about how this structure works in practice, it might be useful for your group to take on a character and read the following out loud:

The Hidden Structure:	The Conversation between Shirley and Jenny:
Note the emphasis on core ‘outputs’ and hear the emotion (See Topic 11)	Shirley: But you’re already up to your eyes in face-to-face teaching! You haven’t got time for anything else!
Do not respond to emotion. Respond with a solution . Stress the connection of SpICE with organisational documents. Stress the broad community benefits .	Jenny: I need to meet the ‘community partnership’ requirements of my job description; otherwise I’ll never get promotion. I’ve prepared a timetable of my teaching and other duties (hands it over). My proposal is that I continue with all my teaching, but that the additional duties, such as play-ground duty etc., be the time I spend on SpICE. It would work out to 7 hours a week. The inconvenience of this would be outweighed by the School directly fulfilling government policy, at the same time as providing broad community benefit in terms of maximising outcomes for our school students.

<p>Hear the emotion (uncertainty). Do not respond to the emotion. Respond with a solution. Offer your solution by applying SpICE principles (see Chapter 2 of this Guide): inclusion, cooperation, participation</p>	<p>Shirley (thinking): They were saying at the regional meeting how schools need to be involved in partnerships...</p> <p>...Shirley blinks, looks at Jenny: But <i>YOU!</i> What makes you think you can do something like this? They were talking about us principals taking the lead on this – not the teachers.</p> <p>Jenny: Perhaps you'd like to join me with SpICE, then?</p>
<p>Hear the emotion (fear, uncertainty AND doubt). Do not respond to emotion. Respond with a solution.</p>	<p>Shirley: Me? I'm much too busy.</p> <p>Jenny: Well then, could I?</p> <p>Shirley: I'm not sure about this – not sure about this at all. I'll speak to my Director and get back to you.</p>



Activity



As a team, brainstorm all the common threads you discovered from examining the organisational documents and SpICE principles in the last Activity (Topic 9) and compose FOUR sentences that Jenny could use (without emotion!) to help persuade Shirley to allow her be part of SpICE.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Chapter 1. How
to engage your
community

Topic 11: Obtaining the support of your Organisation

Part 3: Minimising the likelihood of a ‘NO!’ response.

As you negotiate your involvement in SpICE as part of your job, it is best if you can minimise the likelihood of a ‘NO!’ response from your supervisors and fellow workers.

In these days of tight budgets and systematic approach to organising work, managers feel under increasing pressure to curb anything ‘new’ that could distract from the core activities of the organisation. At various points in the growth of SpICE you are likely to sail very close to the wind of a ‘No’ response.

While it is the exception rather than the rule, there will still be managers that are averse to innovations like SpICE because they weren’t the originators of it. In these situations it is best to down play your involvement. At some point there will be a higher level influence which will drive participation and your involvement in SpICE. It may be a matter of time though.

In most other cases it will be Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt (FUD) which influences a manager saying ‘No.’ The underlying reason for a FUD response from managers (or anyone else) is often a negative emotion. You **MUST NOT** respond to the negative emotion. Instead, listen carefully to the *reason* which is given and respond to that – always including a solution in your response. If you respond to someone’s emotion, you will most likely get a highly defensive response. This is because people do not like to be caught out making decisions based on their emotions!

Again below, we use the Brindalong story to explain how keeping a structure in your mind as you talk can help in having conversations with managers that focus on facts and don’t get caught up in emotion.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

A week later, Jenny is asked to return to the Principal’s office. Shirley introduces Mr Worthington, Director of Rural and Remote Partnerships for the Department of Education.

Mr. Worthington smiles at Jenny, “Shirley has been telling me you want to involve the school in a SpICE project in town?”

Jenny has spent a lot of time preparing for this interview and says calmly, “I’ve been looking round for projects that could assist the School to implement the Rural and Remote Partnerships policy. I would love to be involved in furthering these policies in Brindalong, especially clauses ...”

She repeats the same statements as last week, but now she knows them off by heart. “A group of us in town from the Health Service, the Council, business and the Pre-school, would like to do a SpICE project and want the School to also partner in it. Have you heard about SpICE?”

“I have indeed, yes.” He answers, “And I need to tell you we’d be very happy to be involved, as there are a number of links between the goals of SpICE and our own policies. Shirley, I’m confident I could find funds to double Jenny’s involvement in this SpICE project, and the Department would be happy to take the management of it off your shoulders and provide governance.”

Jenny is relieved on the one hand, but worried as well. It sounds like Mr Worthington wants the school to run SpICE in Brindalong. “Thank you so much for your support but additional governance won’t be necessary!” says Jenny. “If you look at the SpICE Model, you’ll see right in the middle: ‘Community of Learners’ that’s the inbuilt governance mechanism for SpICE. But I’d welcome your offer of day-to-day input, regular feed-back and advice. As for doubling my involvement, we want to take this slowly to ensure it is properly set up. Besides, all the other organisations are involved for a day a week at this stage, so at the moment I think one day a week will do. Also, I’m really mindful of my responsibilities to the school, and want to make sure that my teaching isn’t affected.”

All the way through the interview, Shirley has looked uncomfortable. Now she says, “It’s all very well, but there will be all kinds of hurdles in letting her do this. And Mr Worthington, you know Jenny’s only been teaching for five years. What happens if she makes a mistake in this SpICE thing? It’ll look terrible for the school.”

Jenny surprises herself by answering smoothly, “I was worried about that, too. So I spoke to my colleagues and a couple of the parents. They thought the principles and aims of SpICE would help us with our Closing the Gap targets, as well as build knowledge and skills all over town, so they are happy to help. This is the proposed roster that would cover me.” She unfolds her plan, and as she hands it to Shirley, catches a smile on the face of Mr Worthington.

More confident now, Jenny continues, “All the teachers are supportive of the school being seen as a contributing community partner in SpICE. And in terms of hurdles, the SpICE principles are like a set of building blocks which guide and support. Everyone in town who is involved in the project is new to SpICE, and we know there’ll be challenges. But that’s OK – we’ve got the principles to go by and we will be doing it together.”

Breaking down the conversation above into a table highlights the structure which Jenny has used to frame her discussion with Education managers.



In your team, it might be useful to read this aloud, with different people taking on different roles:

The Hidden Structure:	The Conversation between Jenny, Mr. Worthington and Shirley:
Highlight the natural link between SpICE and key policies of your organisation. Explain that this natural link is shared by many community members and services.	<p>Mr. Worthington: Shirley has been telling me you want to involve the school in a SpICE project in town?</p> <p>Jenny: I've been looking round for projects that could assist the School to implement the Rural and Remote Partnerships policy. I would love to be involved in furthering these policies in Brindalong, especially clauses ... (she repeats the same statements as last week, but now she knows them off by heart). A group of us in town from the Health Service, the Council, business and the Pre-school, would like to do a SpICE project and want the School to also partner in it. Have you heard about SpICE?</p>
Be aware of the individual and organisational agendas .	<p>Mr. Worthington: I have indeed, yes. And I need to tell you we'd be very happy to be involved, as there are a number of links between the goals of SpICE and our own policies. Shirley, I'm confident I could find funds to double Jenny's involvement in this SpICE project, and the Department would be happy to take the management of it off your shoulders and provide governance.</p>
<p>Highlighting that the Community of Learners functions like a Governance/ Project management committee</p> <p>Responding from strong emotions of Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt</p>	<p>Jenny: Thank you so much for your support but additional governance won't be necessary! If you look at the SpICE Model, you'll see right in the middle: 'Community of Learners.' That's the inbuilt governance mechanism for SpICE. But I'd welcome your offer of day-to-day input, regular feed-back and advice. As for doubling my involvement, we want to take this slowly to ensure it is properly set up. Besides, all the other organisations are involved for a day a week at this stage, so at the moment I think one day a week will do. Also, I'm really mindful of my responsibilities to the school, and want to make sure that my teaching isn't affected.</p> <p>Shirley (clearly unhappy): It's all very well, but there will be all kinds of hurdles in letting her do this. And Mr Worthington, you know Jenny's only been teaching for five years. What happens if she makes a mistake in this SpICE thing? It'll look terrible for the school.</p>

<p>Focus on facts and solutions but not on the emotion. Explain the benefits of collaborating through the Community of Learners for broad community benefit</p>	<p>Jenny: I was worried about that, too. So I spoke to my colleagues and a couple of the parents. They thought the principles and aims of SpICE would help us with our Closing the Gap targets, as well as build knowledge and skills all over town, so they are happy to help. This is the proposed roster that would cover me (she hands it over). All the teachers are supportive of the school being seen as a contributing community partner in SpICE. And in terms of hurdles, the SpICE principles are like a set of building blocks which guide and support. Everyone in town who is involved in the project is new to SpICE, and we know there'll be challenges. But that's OK – we've got the principles to go by and we will be doing it together.</p>
--	--



Activity



Each member of the group takes a turn reading out a 'Manager' comment. The other members of the team examine the two sentences beside each manager sentence and try to determine which of these would be the better response, and why.

Manager Comments	Minimising the likelihood of a 'NO' response.
<p>Manager: 'We can't allow you to participate in a SpICE project as your existing job is demanding enough and we doubt that you can do it all.'</p>	<p>'I can hear it's difficult for you to believe that by changing the way we do things we can actually work smarter!'</p> <p>'Thanks for your concern. I've prepared a list of how the pressures of my existing job will be significantly lessened by participating in a SpICE project to build the capacity of people to solve complex problems for themselves. Here it is.'</p>
<p>Manager: 'We're not funding you to do SpICE, as that would mean you'll be meeting the KPIs of the other organisations, not ours.'</p>	<p>'I can hear you're worried about making mistakes in meeting your KPIs by allowing SPICE to flourish here, but honestly, you won't be scared once you see the results!'</p> <p>'I've prepared a list of the common KPIs between our organisation and SpICE, and cross-referenced these with the relevant clauses in our organisational policy statements. Here they are. It's amazing how similar they are!'</p>

SpICE - HOW TO START A SpICE PROJECT

<p>Manager: ‘I won’t be told by some other organisation how to run mine! Show me the evidence this SpICE thing adds value.’</p>	<p>‘I don’t think they were saying you’re doing a bad job of managing this organisation. And sure, we’ll get you some evidence.’</p> <p>‘There’s a comprehensive way to evaluate SpICE and I’d be happy to run you through it. Could we make an appointment?’</p>
<p>Manager: ‘I haven’t got the authority to let you do SpICE, and I don’t think the timing is right to approach senior management.’</p>	<p>‘I can hear you’re scared to approach management, why don’t I do it for you?’</p> <p>‘Could we talk about the issues that are making the timing wrong for a discussion with senior management?’</p>
<p>Manager: ‘We’re about to be re-structured, this will just have to wait.’</p>	<p>‘Yeah, you must be concerned about your job like everybody else, but honestly, this would make the department look really good.’</p> <p>‘A ‘good news’ story at the moment would be well received. I’ve prepared a draft media release.’</p>
<p>Manager: We don’t have the money to let you go running all over doing this SpICE thing!</p>	<p>‘I don’t need your money; I just need your support!’</p> <p>‘I’ve prepared a list of potential savings that direct service delivery with students doing the health promotion aspect of this campaign will achieve.’</p>

Chapter 2. Making SpICE *SpICE*: Applying SpICE Principles, and Growing the Community of Learners

SpICE is a principled approach. These principles are known to be important in advancing social, economic and cultural benefit within communities because they contribute to improving people's wellbeing and their community's. At the same time, SpICE is a collaborative approach, and its key mechanism supporting all collaborative activity is the 'Community of Learners'.

This chapter explains the Community of Learners and breaks down the process of applying SpICE principles to plan, implement and evaluate SpICE activities. As part of this, information is included about how to engage a range of people in your Community of Learners.

Globally, there are many partnership projects around the world. What makes SpICE *SpICE* is its principled and collaborative approach. Because there are so many organisations and individuals involved in any SpICE project, it is very important that individual agendas do not compete. Following the principles which underpin a Community of Learners ensures everyone acts as true partners, rather than following their own agendas.

Who should complete this Chapter?

Everyone is strongly encouraged to work through this chapter as it is relevant to everybody in a SpICE project. It also builds upon and extends the collaborative theme of Chapter 1.

What is the best way to work through this Chapter?

This chapter requires 2 or more people to work through the material together (hopefully the same people who completed the activities in Chapter 1). A facilitator is not necessary as, once again, the learning is about yourselves, your organisations, and each other.



Chapter 2 will take around **1.5 hours** to complete.

Chapter 2. Making
SpICE SpICE:
Applying SpICE
Principles and the
Community of
Learners

Topic 1: Consider SpICE Principles

SpICE principles underpin all projects which are developed in a particular place. The Community of Learners apply these well-known community development principles to advance social, economic and cultural benefits within communities. In other words, the Community of Learners, through the use of these principles, aim to improve people's wellbeing and be beneficial to their communities.

In the application of the SpICE principles to a particular project, the Community of Learners uses ongoing reflection, assessment and adjustment in the delivery of a project to achieve improvement. This ensures the Community of Learners driving a project remains on track and engaged throughout a particular project.

Appropriately the SpICE principles can also function as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and, the reason for this is explained in Chapter 4 of the SpICE Guide: Proving the Benefit of SpICE: The SpICE-Rack.

Individually and collectively project contributors are able to plan, implement and evaluate their actions against the SpICE principles/KPIs. They are used to reflect on past actions, to guide current planning and delivery, and importantly, shape future plans and delivery. They are framed as questions rather than statements, so as to encourage ongoing reflection on what is being done and how the *doing* is being done.

SpICE Principles (KPIs):

- 1 Are our activities sustainable over the long-term?
- 2 Are we providing people with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their ability to shape their own future?
- 3 Are we actively seeking to include people in our activities (but recognising that inclusion and participation happen differently for people and communities)?
- 4 Are we striving for joint decision-making and agreement where it is critical?
- 5 Are we collaborating - as opposed to competing - within projects and processes?
- 6 Are the contributions and opinions of community members taking precedence over the contributions and opinions of organisations participating in SpICE?

The Brindalong Community of Learners

The story continues to illustrate how Robert is gathering information from many sources so that he will be better informed to apply the SpICE principles to his community activities...

One day Robert is on the way to the supermarket and passes the local second-hand shop. On impulse, he goes in and starts talking to the ladies who run it about what he's worried about, and how he's read on the internet that there are better ways to think about rubbish disposal. They have a long conversation, and the ladies agree with him completely, and say how no-one's interested in re-using and re-cycling, they just want to buy new stuff, and if there was less rubbish to get rid of, then that would be one part of the rubbish disposal problem fixed. They tell Robert to have a word with Mitch, their boss, as he started, and continues to organise, the second-hand shop. They go on to say Mitch gives stuff away if people say they need it. They tell Robert he's a bit of a dreamer about a better world for everyone. Robert smiles and says, "It's not all about money, is it?"

While the ladies shake their heads and mutter about it 'Being no way to run a business', Robert leaves feeling confused – but somehow more hopeful. He knows he ought to speak to Mitch, but somehow he's scared as well. Mitch sounds too different to him. Yet in spite of feeling muddled, Robert also thinks there might be something that could be done – but has no idea what!

Meanwhile, Jenny and Tiffany have, as part of their work, been meeting to talk about developing a better Readiness for School program for the parents and children of Brindalong. Talk soon turns to the children not attending pre-school, and the difficulties of reaching parents who will be sending their children to primary school next year, but who have no access to School Readiness information. Tiffany decides to speak with Sue, the nurse, because she thinks all children and parents will have had something to do with the health system, thus Sue might have some ideas about how to reach these parents. Without a doctor who lives in the town, Sue is the community link with health services.

Sue says she'd give a lot to be able to work with Tiffany and Jenny, because the School Readiness program might be a good way to get health promotion and primary prevention messages across. But she says the community nurse in the next district is on maternity leave, so she has to cover both areas, and she won't have time to help. However, she knows of Lily, a retired nurse, who is the head of the local Country Woman's Association, and also a really passionate community member who is always up for helping out for the benefit of everyone.



Activity

Talk about the stories you've heard, or activities / projects you have been part of, where some part of your community, (or organisation in your community), has not followed one or more of the SpICE principles.

For this activity, it can be any example and doesn't have to be about specialist service provision.

Discuss what happened, and the effects on some (or all) community members.



This activity should take **10 minutes** to complete.

**Chapter 2. Making
SpICE SpICE:
Applying SpICE
Principles and the
Community of
Learners**

Topic 2: SpICE and the Community of Learners

By now, you will have realised that the people with whom you are working through this section are passionate people who share your broad commitment to improving community outcomes around specialist service provision. You will also have realised you are building a relationship of trust and respect. This broad commitment of people working in respectful relationship represents the beginning of a Community of Learners (CoL) which is the heart of the SpICE Model. The CoL is the key mechanism supporting and guiding all innovative activity for a SpICE project.

Importantly, the CoL is a flexible grouping of people. Individuals will join, fade-out and re-join depending on the phase of the project. The CoL is also a ‘flat’ grouping – it is not an association and there are no office-bearers. Any tasks to do are shared by the group, determined by individual skills, capacity, availability, time and preparedness to perform them. It is really important to understand that a SpICE CoL thrives when participants are committed to its principles and achieving a ‘shared’ community outcome. People who join a SpICE project to further their own, or their organisational, agendas won’t last.

Because a SpICE CoL is built on trust and respect, it requires (depending on the number of people who already have established relationships) an initial amount of time spent in engagement; time to build trust and respect and time to build a thorough understanding of what is required. This is often done through conversations and more formal meetings. This engagement is critical to keep participants on track and exploration and investigation will further strengthen these relationships.

Even though it might feel as if what started out as ‘certain’ has now dissolved into fog, in fact you are all learning an enormous amount about each other, your community, what drives it, its strengths, and identifying where there are opportunities. All this engagement clarifies links between people and organisations, and cements relationships. As part of this, you are exploring multiple possibilities about the detail of what development is required around specialist services.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

The story continues with everyone at Sue and Robert’s place for a BBQ to progress as a Community of Learners their idea for a SpICE project in Brindalong...

When everyone was at Sue and Robert’s barbeque, they each agreed to do some more talking with their organisations, as well as engaging others in Brindalong, to confirm (or otherwise) that there might be the interest and opportunity to improve things in their community by initiating a SpICE

project. They also considered the SpICE principles, and simultaneously came to a realisation. They all laughed and then raised their glasses in a toast, acknowledging themselves as the first, albeit fledgling, SpICE Community of Learners for Brindalong!

When talk resumed, they went back to the SpICE principles and started a wide-ranging conversation about who lives in the town, what organisations serve the town, and who else they know who might be passionate about improvement in the town. Each person took responsibility for contacting people they knew, and for finding out more about their community, its strengths, and where, perhaps, capacity could be developed.



Activity

Communication and engagement is critical for the SpICE Community of Learners and is vital in the development of trusting and respectful relationships. Without trust, people will not be as prepared to move outside their comfort zone to achieve innovative solutions as part of a SpICE project.

1. On your own, think about how you go about engaging new people and the number of conversations that are required. Think about how you could engage people in a Community of Learners. What techniques would you use? Write these down.

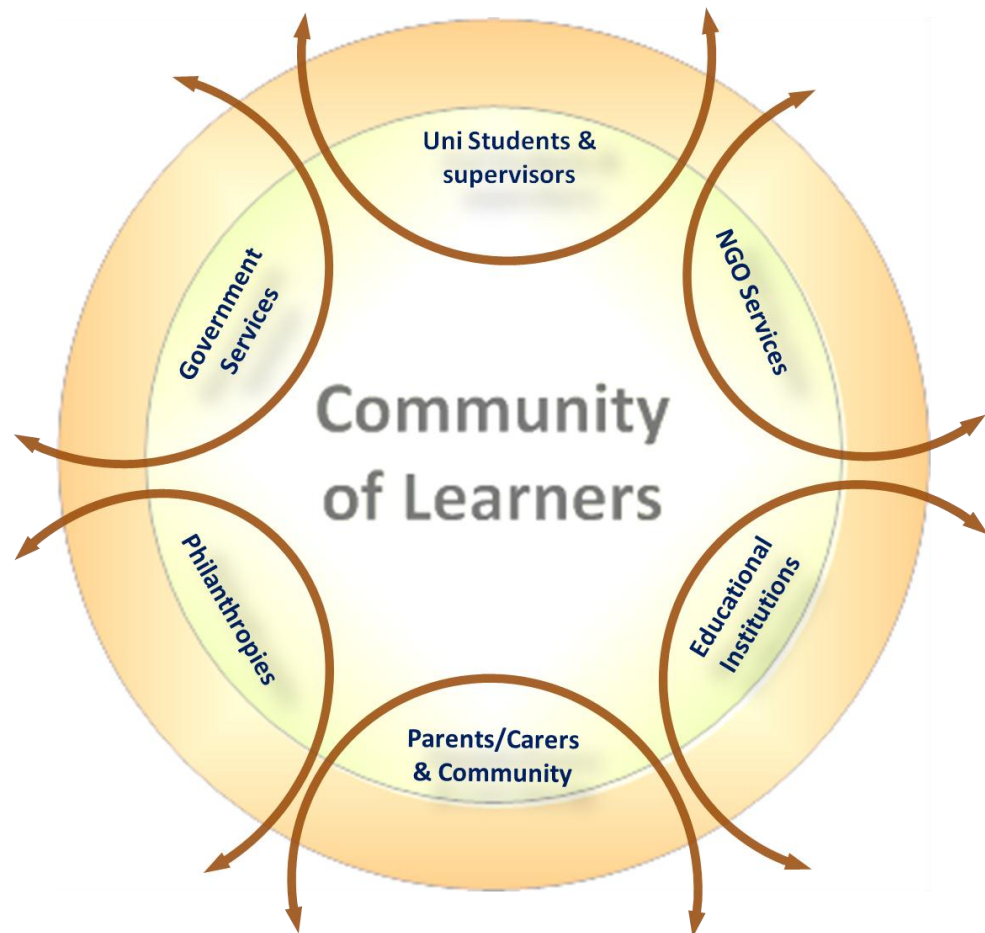
2. On your own, think about how you respond when people talk about ideas. Are you invigorated or do you switch off? How have others in this group responded to discussions? Write down your reactions and your observations.

3. SpICE projects are underpinned by communication – ‘integrated community engagement’. As a group, share your feedback from questions 1 and 2 and discuss risks and gaps. Try to develop some solutions to these

Chapter 2. Making
SpICE SpICE:
Applying SpICE
Principles and the
Community of
Learners

Topic 3: Growing the Community of Learners

The members of a particular Community of Learners (CoL) will be different, depending on your community, and who delivers services to it. For an effective SpICE project, it is very important to invite a range of the people (see the diagram below) to participate in your fledgling CoL.



Having a broad group of stakeholders maximizes the knowledge and experience that is shared and builds towards a successful project. Even if some of them do not have active roles in SpICE, it is good to keep them informed about the activities being undertaken in your community's SpICE project.

Why members of your community will consider an invitation to participate in SpICE

Universities, schools and health services receive a great deal of taxpayer money. The reason they receive this is to improve the quality of life of communities across the nation and contribute to the **public good**. SpICE will be of interest to many

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

organisations that have an interest in improving education and health services and programs. It will be particularly relevant to organisations that recognise that more can be achieved by working with others. Having said this, however, you still need to reach the *right* people, and they also need to be *primed* to listen.

All organisations have policies, aims, objectives and strategic plans. This means they are already busy doing what they have identified as being important. So your task with SpICE is to demonstrate how adding SpICE to their activities will add value to what they currently deliver. For example:

- If your CoL needs a university, you would demonstrate the *educational benefit* for students.
- If your CoL needs a health service, you would show how *community health and wellness will be increased* by doing SpICE.
- If your CoL needs schools, you would show how building the specialist skills and knowledge of teachers and school students will *improve learning outcomes* for children.

While these benefits are fairly easy to demonstrate, these organisations are very busy attending to their ‘core’ business. So benefit is not enough: you also need to gain and hold their attention.

Gaining and Holding Attention

You are aiming to have target organisations join the CoL so you can really start planning what the particular SpICE project will look like in your community. Because your goal is to establish a relationship, this means you don’t need a big plan, or to have all the answers as to what the actual SpICE project will ‘look like’. Neither are you looking for solutions at this stage; you are looking to build relationships and engage key organisations. Everything is still fluid. You are looking for someone in the organisation (or maybe more than one person) who is passionate about what they do. Every organisation has these people; your task is to find them!

Have you heard, through any of your networks, of someone who works for the organisation who is an active community member? This might be someone who is involved in a local sporting club, or maybe does a regular community radio broadcast, or is a local Councilor. Even though this person might not work in the particular organisation you are targeting, it does not matter. This person will have extensive community networks. You need to start a conversation with this person, preferably face-to-face or by phone. The email scripts below could be adapted and used to confirm information from your initial conversations.

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

If you do not know someone who works for the target organisation, nor someone who could introduce you to a contact, you first need to get on to the organisation's website and identify some potential contacts. Once you have a name and a number, contact the person and either discuss their participation in a SpICE project over the phone or arrange a meeting. Again, an email would be used after the initial conversation to confirm what was discussed and the next steps.

Some of the people you may wish to target are:

State managers (of health, education and other federal departments) and the Vice-Chancellor of any target university.

Area managers of the local health/education district, and Deans of the Faculties in any target university.

Local managers of specific facilities (e.g. school principals, heads of community health centres etc.), and the course coordinators / course directors of any specific courses at the university you are targeting (e.g. speech therapy, dentistry, environmental science, teaching)

An example for the content of a follow-up email:

Dear (fill in blank),

The community of Brindalong is in your geographic footprint. A, B and C people / organisations are committed to increasing our knowledge and skills about specialist service delivery. As a result, many organisations in the town have agreed to participate in the establishment of a SpICE (Specialist Integrated Community Engagement) project. We refer to this group of people as a Community of Learners.

From our conversation/meeting I gather that you would also be interested in participating. We would like to invite your organisation to become a partner in a Community of Learners meeting which is being held... (fill in the details)

Then include any further details. So referring back to the Brindalong Story, for example, their email to their local university might say:

*As a starting point, we have developed a broad project focus on increasing the knowledge and skills of pre-school children, primary school, their parents and the broader Brindalong community around sustainability, nutrition, and waste disposal. We realise this project focus will be refined over time. However, as a starting point for the SpICE project in our community, we would like to host, mentor and support university students that could contribute to extending our skills and knowledge in these identified areas. We would like you to join with us in supporting this exciting new venture for Brindalong. Looking forward to hearing from you in the near future.
Kindest wishes*

If you have received a NO response:

If the contact you have identified is not interested or available, explore other options with them – obtain names of others in the organisation or ask them to identify other organisations who they consider might be interested.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

This part of the story illustrates how the Brindalong Community of Learners realised they needed to engage more help...

...Then all of a sudden: everyone goes quiet. Everyone realises, almost at the very same time, that they haven't the time, and certainly the knowledge, to pull all this together without help.

Robert pulls out the picture of the SpICE Model and looks at the Community of Learners circle in the middle. Into the silence he says, "Does everyone realise we haven't got a university in our Community of Learners?"

Sue asked which university was closest to town. Jenny says: "I did my teaching degree with them." A silence falls. Eventually Robert asks, "Don't suppose anyone knows someone who works there?"

Jim, the owner of the supermarket, says "My daughter's studying there. Can she help?"

"She could maybe help us explain how the University works, but we could find that out just as well." Robert says thoughtfully. "Maybe we should properly decide what we want to do here in the town – you know, for sure, so we can draw up a proposal or something?"

They all realise they have more talking to do, so settle down to work out what happens next, and who is going to do what.



Activity

Using your personal experience as a guide, discuss with the group which organisation you think will be most difficult to approach and why?

Topic 4: Consider SpICE Principles: A Pause for Reflection.

Up till now, you will have seen that a fair amount of investigation and thinking around yourself, your community and your individual organisation goes into a SpICE project. The more thorough the thinking and investigation, the easier, more natural, and more sustainable SpICE will be in your community. In other words, the broader this preparation, the better the project outcomes and the more benefit will be achieved around specialist service knowledge and skills. The risks of poor preparation are that you don't have enough support within the community or within your organisations or sufficient diversity in the Community of Learners to sustain a SpICE project.

This section briefly re-caps *your* journey to this point. Now, instead of 'you' referring to an individual, we now mean 'you' as the Community of Learners working through this section:

- You have a fire in your belly to improve specialist knowledge and skills in your geographic area. Your Community of Learners is made up of others who have an equal (often different, yet somehow complementary!) fire in their belly who work in other organisations / community groups / NGOs and training institutions within, or serving, your community.
- You all believe in the principles of SpICE and you understand that checking decisions and actions against these principles will stop individual personal (or organisational) agendas taking over.
- You've investigated the reality of the community need for specialist services
- You understand each other and have a thorough understanding of the policies and plans of all the organisations you represent. You understand your organisational scope, how others work, and the strengths and limitations of your immediate managers / supervisors. You have a clear sense of what is possible – and also what is not at this stage - which will likely change over the duration of the project.
- You have developed your strategic abilities to allow you 'room to move' in your organisation to be able to participate in implementing a SpICE project.

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

- You have negotiated how much time you can realistically spend on SpICE.



Activity

As a group, you have been given \$50,000 grant from the Federal government to make a TV advertisement. This advertisement aims to influence community members *against* participating in a SpICE project, by justifying the great job being done by taxpayer-funded organisations in providing specialist skills, knowledge and services to rural, remote and Indigenous Australians. Present this advertisement in any way you choose.



Ask someone to take notes for the group



This activity should take **10 minutes** to complete.

Topic 5: Principles and the Resources students create: How do you know SpICE is SpICE?

Because organisations in your community see the ‘projects’ students will do for them as valuable for the organisation, there is a danger that the benefits of having SpICE in your community can be steered towards serving particular organisational agendas. For example, if the Brindalong Council asked students to ‘develop educational resources around rubbish disposal’, then SpICE could be viewed as an opportunity for the Council to get a pamphlet made for them at no cost to themselves. However, while the Council may well achieve this benefit, the development of the pamphlet is *not the end point for SpICE*. It is for the students with the community to work out how ‘educational resources around rubbish disposal’ can be shared around the community to benefit the greatest number of people within it. So it *could be* that a pamphlet may be developed, and this would benefit those people in the community that read pamphlets, but a SpICE outcome would be adapting the information from the pamphlets for use in a variety of activities with, for example, the pre-school, primary school and Rotary Club. That way, a much wider audience could be found for educating people around rubbish disposal.

The way you check that SpICE students (and the products/resources they create) are not too narrow in their focus, is to apply the SpICE Principles to their activities:

- 1 Are our activities sustainable over the long-term?
- 2 Are we providing people with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their ability to shape their own future?
- 3 Are we actively seeking to include people in our activities (but recognising that inclusion and participation happen differently for people and communities)?
- 4 Are we striving for joint decision-making and agreement?
- 5 Are we collaborating - as opposed to competing - within projects and processes?
- 6 Are the contributions and opinions of community members taking precedence over the contributions and opinions of organisations participating in SpICE?



Activity

Using the 'pamphlet' example above, apply the SpICE principles to the development of the pamphlet.

1. In what ways is the pamphlet *not* SpICE?

2. In what ways is the pamphlet a useful SpICE activity?

3. To achieve a better SpICE outcome, what would you do?

Chapter 3. Nuts and Bolts: Finding the Focus and Assigning the Jobs for SpICE

This section provides the ‘This is what I need to do, and this is how I do it’ information for setting up a SpICE project in your community. For many learners, it may be tempting to concentrate on this section because it is largely about ‘doing’, as opposed to the previous Chapters that have been largely concerned with ‘thinking about the how the doing is *done*’. It is very important, however, that insights from the previous sections inform your learning as you progress through this Chapter. Basically, without collaborative relationships guiding a principled doing of SpICE, the work itself is likely to be driven by personal or organisational agendas. Lack of collaboration increases the risk of SpICE ending up as a project using students as an unpaid workforce for a couple of organisations in your community. This is not SpICE!

Who should complete this Chapter?

Everyone in your SpICE Community of Learners needs to go through the learning activities in this chapter.

What is the best way to work through this Chapter?

Chapter 3 can be completed on your own, or it can be done as a group activity. If participants chose to work through the material on their own, there still needs to be a collaborative discussion at the end of the chapter to identify what roles people feel motivated to

undertake as part of SpICE.



Chapter 3 will take around **an hour** to complete in a group, and rather less if you work through it by yourself.

**Chapter 3. Nuts
and Bolts: Finding
the Focus and
Assigning the Jobs
for SpICE**

Topic 1: Finding the Focus

Talking backwards and forwards is essential for SpICE. The reason is because if developing community knowledge and skills around specialist services was easy to solve, then it would have been solved a long time ago! The fuel driving SpICE is ‘thinking differently about things’, so the more slowly your group gets to a well-rounded focus for SpICE, (i.e. a ‘topic’ or ‘project’ for the Uni students to do), the more useful it is likely to be to the most amount of people in your community.

At some point in the talking phase of SpICE, (often later than sooner!) people start to ask questions like ‘So where is all this leading us?’ or ‘We’ve been talking like this for ages, when are we going to *do* something?’ It is at this point that, as a group, you begin to decide on a focus for your SpICE project.

To state it again: the broader the discussion, the broader the focus for SpICE. The broader the focus, the more skills and knowledge will be developed in your community. The more skills and knowledge that are developed, the stronger your entire community becomes.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

A couple of weeks later, the fledgling SpICE Community of Learners for Brindalong gets together over a meal at the local pub. Their number has increased by two: Bill, the Secretary of the local Rotary Club, and Rhonda, a social worker employed by Centre

Ways, a local well-being organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Since that evening at Sue and Robert’s barbeque, there’s been a lot of talking to people in town, and many of them are feeling that ‘they’ve lost their way’. While everyone still has their individual ‘Fires-in-their-belly’, they feel that talking to other people in the town only distracted them. Jenny from the primary school says everyone she spoke to added another problem to be ‘fixed’ by somebody else.

Tiffany from the pre-school said, “But it’s not only problems. I spoke to a lot of parents about school attendance, and wanting to improve our School Readiness program. But most of them said it wasn’t any of our business to worry about who wasn’t coming to school. They said we’ve got a really good school system here, and why worry about those who don’t want to take advantage of it? Then I’ve got half my teachers thinking I’m running mad with SpICE. They’re in my ear saying what we actually need are some assessments done, and what we need to do is to just nag at someone to come and do them! I’m really confused.”

Robert said, “Have you noticed that everyone talks about ‘need’? Everyone says, ‘We need this or that’, like the whole town is a big bag of problems that need fixing by the Government. But we know that’s not true. Look at what we’ve got here – it’s a great place to live, isn’t it? Maybe people are just used to talking about what everyone else should be doing to help them, but there’ll never be an end to that, will there?”

Rhonda the social worker says, “But there are a lot of people who really do have need for more and better services.”

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

“But we can’t solve that!” said Robert, and everyone heard the frustration in his voice. “All we can do with SpICE is build up the town. You make something stronger, and that’ll help some of those big problems.”

Everybody nods, feeling a bit more focussed. “We just have to make a start, don’t we?” said Sue. “From all the talking round town, what were people saying?”

Generally feeling a bit better, the Community of Learners compare notes. In the end, there are 2 clear opinions about what the focus of the first SpICE should be:

- *Children, school readiness, early literacy, and health messages*
- *Rubbish and the sustainability of the environment*

When asked later, nobody remembers who actually said, “Well, why can’t we put them together somehow, since the sustainability and environment idea is surely part of kids being prepared to have a healthy future?”

Then someone else said, “And if the children are motivated, that’ll mean the adults will get shamed into being more thoughtful about the environment.” Then someone else added, “That was what they did with No Smoking, wasn’t it? Got the kids disapproving, then all us parents changed our tune!”

Everyone becomes excited, and starts thinking about the idea from their own perspective. “We could have a sustainability theme for our School Readiness program!” said Jenny. “Maybe we could have a focus on Bush Tucker?” added Rhonda, “we could maybe start a bush tucker garden at the pre-school and primary school....”

“....And get them built with rubbish from the tip!” added Robert.

“You can count on me to round up the shopkeepers!” said Jim.

“And the CWA!” added Lily.

.... and the ideas kept coming for quite a while.



Activity

Knowing what you know about the people you have been learning with, discuss what opportunities for SpICE you see in your own community.

**Chapter 3. Nuts
and Bolts: Finding
the Focus and
Assigning the
Jobs for SpICE**

Topic 2: Who's Interested in Doing What?

When the university students come to your community, your Community of Learners will have some responsibilities in supporting them. People in the Community of Learners need to talk about what they feel able to do, what they are skilled at doing, and what they would like to do (these may not be the same!) In SpICE, it is very important that everyone plays not only to their strengths, but also feels free to explore and develop their own abilities.

For example, just because you are a fast and efficient typist does not mean you have to be the secretarial support for SpICE. Such a 'skills-based' approach denies new opportunities for learning. Walking-the-walk of SpICE means consciously attending to your own growth as well as that of the wider community.

SpICE is also a 'flat' grouping – it is not an association, there are no office-bearers, and any jobs to do are shared by the group, purely on the basis of individual skills, energies, time and interest in performing them.

In any SpICE project, the main roles and responsibilities will evolve as you discover skills, enthusiastically develop them, and shed roles that you find boring or irritating, or are not making the most of your own capacities. Many roles can be adopted by one person – but beware of burn-out!

The roles that are important for any SpICE project are:

1. People who have an interest in teaching and learning, and would like to develop mentoring / supervisory skills: these people would help the students with their learning within organisations and be called SpICE Learning Mentors.
2. People who have discipline-specific knowledge in certain areas could act as Discipline-Specific Mentors for students (e.g. teachers, nurses, social workers)
3. People who have an interest in helping people develop to their full emotional and intellectual potential: these people would help students place their learning in the 'bigger picture' of why doing SpICE is important to the community as a whole. These would become SpICE De-Briefing Mentors.
4. People who enjoy being organised, and are happy to chivvy others along with timetables and administrative organisation. These become the organisational backbone of SpICE.

5. People who have a passion for including people, and while they enjoy conveying ideas, they can also listen intently to the ideas of others. These people have an interest in pulling people together, introducing people, and facilitating the sharing of ideas (these people don't necessarily talk a lot themselves!) These become the SpICE Community Engagers.
6. People who have an interest in SpICE, want to be involved in the Community of Learners, but really don't want to get involved in any specific role or responsibility at this stage (this may change over time). These people become the sounding boards or 'consultants' for principled progress on SpICE. They have the SpICE KPIs at the front of their minds.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Jim from the supermarket, and Sue, the community nurse, say they feel comfortable about approaching their local university to invite them to participate in a SpICE project in Brindalong. "In fact," Sue adds, "We'd be happy to do a lot of the talking and getting people joining in SpICE."

Then Jenny says, "I've got so much going on at the moment, I'll stick with what I know as a teacher and be a Learning Mentor if that's all right with everyone?"

Lily, who is also the president of the Country Women's Association says, "You all know I'm struggling with the messiness of all this talking and talking – can I please take charge of getting some structure into what we're up to?" And before she's even stopped talking, Bill from Rotary says, "I'll help you there, Lily!"

Mitch, the ex-miner owner of the second-hand shop, says, "Well, I fancy having a go at being that De-Briefing Mentor thing. I don't know what the students will get from me, but I promise I'll look after them."

"You'll teach them about good old fashioned human charity, Mitch!" said Lily, stoutly.

"I'll help you Mitch," said Rhonda, "I'd like to do some Discipline-Specific Mentoring as well if we had a few social work students in town."



Activity

Refer to the six roles described in the Information section above.

1. As a group, talk about what roles each of you could, or would, like to take so as to contribute to SpICE?
2. Talk about your skills, and what you might like to learn from being part of a SpICE project in your community.

**Chapter 3. Nuts
and Bolts: Finding
the Focus and
Assigning the
Jobs for SpICE**

Topic 3: Learning Hooks

When your Community of Learners has negotiated (over tea, cake, wine or whatever!) around their different passions to find a common purpose and focus to SpICE activities, it is time to move forward. At this point, there would have been compromise for all, but also a firm commitment to make the compromise work, because this common purpose and focus still benefits ALL of your organisations.

In other words, you have a starting point for action – a very rough idea of what you will be doing: ‘a project’ or ‘a focus’.

Now imagine you are a student, and you have a teacher. Imagine also that you have never been fishing and know nothing about fish. Your teacher comes to you and says: “You are going to go and catch a fish.” You might feel a little overwhelmed. This is how a SpICE student would feel if they were told to work on the ‘community focus’ of your SpICE project!

All the organisations hosting students in your community will have a different idea about how they could address the community focus.

In Brindalong, for example, Council might interpret the community focus as having students develop education resources about rubbish disposal. The primary school, on the other hand, might want their School Readiness materials to have a sustainability or environmental theme. Then again, Centre Ways might want community education around bush tucker as an environmentally sustainable resource. All these organisations are addressing the community focus, but they are doing so from their own perspectives. These different perspectives we call ‘Learning Hooks.’ They are the real and specific beginning points for learning that students can grab hold of in any hosting organisation.

Like the example of fishing above, SpICE Learning Hooks are the starting point to explore the act of ‘catching a fish’. In the case of SpICE, ‘catching a fish’ means thinking and doing specialist services differently. Because it’s impossible to *practise* something you don’t know how to do, SpICE students need these Learning Hooks. As they gain confidence with thinking about things differently, the Learning Hooks become linked to other Hooks in other organisations in the same community. At the end of a SpICE placement, there are tangible benefits that still resemble the original Learning Hooks of individual organisations, but they are broader. We will return to Learning Hooks in Section 4.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

It is a full month later, and yet another SpICE Community of Learners meeting is being held. In the intervening month, there have been some changes in the Community of Learners, and a lot of the talking has resulted in the following:

- *The Shire Council: Happy to help, host students, and to support Robert's involvement in SpICE, as long as his work does not suffer, and as long as there is no direct cost to the Council.*
- *Brindalong Primary and Pre-Schools: Commitment to be a core part of SpICE, host students, and will volunteer school premises for meetings etc. However, both Jenny and Tiffany have been warned not to upset the community, and to ensure they do nothing that brings their organisations into disrepute.*
- *The CWA and Rotary Club: Happy to be fully involved in SpICE.*
- *Centre Ways Aboriginal Well-Being: In principle support, but will take things very, very slowly as the organisation wants to directly experience the cultural safety (or otherwise) of the students.*
- *The Supermarket and second-hand shop: Happy to help in anything that strengthens the community.*
- *Public Health Service: Would like to be involved, as it sounds interesting. However, there are strict guidelines the health service has to meet, as well as service delivery outputs. Given the current financial situation and budgetary constraints, they can give 'in principle' support. If specialist health students come to the community, the health service is unlikely to have the capacity to help with their supervision. However Sue, the community nurse says, "Look, I can still be involved. I'll just have to blend it in to my other work."*
- *The University: We'll go slowly, because we have to guarantee educational outcomes for students, but we'll give it a go.*
- *The Community Focus is: children, school readiness, early literacy, health promotion and sustainability and the environment.*

The specific organisations who want to host students are: the Primary School, the Pre-school, the Council (Waste Management and Parks Departments), the Public Library, and a number of early childhood support groups run by Centre Ways.

A fortnight later, Robert is at Lily's house...

"Finally!" exclaims Lily as she puts the finishing touches on the list of SpICE Learning Hooks. "I was beginning to think we'd never decide on what these students could do in the different organisations!"

Robert leant over her shoulder to read the Learning Hook he had come up with for the Council. He says slowly, "It's all very well us telling the students what we want them to do, but I wouldn't know where to start 'developing education resources around rubbish disposal.' How do I teach them how to do it, if I don't know?"

Lily turned to face him. She was frowning. "Unless I'm very much mistaken, isn't that the point of SpICE? If we knew how to do all this, and had the knowledge that backs it up, we wouldn't be needing all these specialist services, or the students, would we? We'd be able to solve all the things we're fired up about all by ourselves."

Robert rubbed the flat of his hand hard over his forehead. "As soon as I think I am understanding SpICE, off it floats again."

"Well just at the moment, I think I've got it straight" answered Lily. "These Learning Hooks are things the students have to concentrate on, and then they work out how to turn these things

into jobs to do to that will benefit us. Along the way of learning to do that, they'll link up other Hooks. And all that linking will give Brindalong a big bang for its buck. And in the process, the students will have learnt to think differently. See?"

Robert shakes his head slowly. "You're a marvel, Lily. You're a living treasure."

"Thank you, Robert" Answered Lily with dignity. "I'm tending to agree with you there."



Activity

As a reminder, here are the topics / focus of the first Brindalong SpICE project (see the story segment in Chapter 3, Topic 1.):

- Children, school readiness, early literacy, and health messages
- Rubbish and the sustainability of the environment

In the Brindalong story that goes with this Topic, one Learning Hook has been mentioned. It has been entered in the table below.

Now as a team, decide on Learning Hooks for the other organisations who are hosting students in Brindalong. After that, and in the right hand column, have a go at translating the Learning Hooks into concrete 'Things the students could **do**'.

Organisation	Learning Hook	What could students actually DO?
Council	Educational resources around rubbish disposal	
Pre-School		
Primary School		
Centre Ways		
Rotary Club		
Country Women's Association		

Chapter 4. Proving the Benefit of SpICE: The SpICE-Rack

It does not matter what your role; someone, somewhere, sometime, is going to ask: ‘*How do you know SpICE is benefiting your community?*’ If, as an employee you have managed to embed your SpICE activities into your work, this question will be asked sooner rather than later.

To answer this question, you need ‘evidence of benefit’. Chapter 4 takes participants through how evidence of benefit is provided for SpICE, how to gather this evidence, and how to present it.

Who should complete this Chapter?

Everyone in your Community of Learners needs to know the *why* and *how* to gather evidence of the benefits of SpICE, although not everyone needs to learn how to present it.

What is the best way to work through this Chapter?

In theory, this Chapter can be worked through individually. It should take **30 minutes** or so. However in practice, people often feel the need to discuss the ins and outs of evidence in a small group. In this case, Chapter 4 can take around **an hour** to complete.



Chapter 4 can take around **an hour** to complete.

Chapter 4. Proving
the Benefit of
SpICE: The SpICE-
Rack

Topic 1: SpICE Rack: What is the ‘Evidence of Benefit’ for SpICE?

Naturally enough, every organisation involved in a SpICE project wants evidence of ‘value’ - that SpICE is ‘working’. If you are an employee, this evidence directly affects whether you can continue working on SpICE!

When organisations measure the value of some activity or other, they most usually want to see ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’; tangible ‘things’ that have happened that would not have occurred if not for the activity.

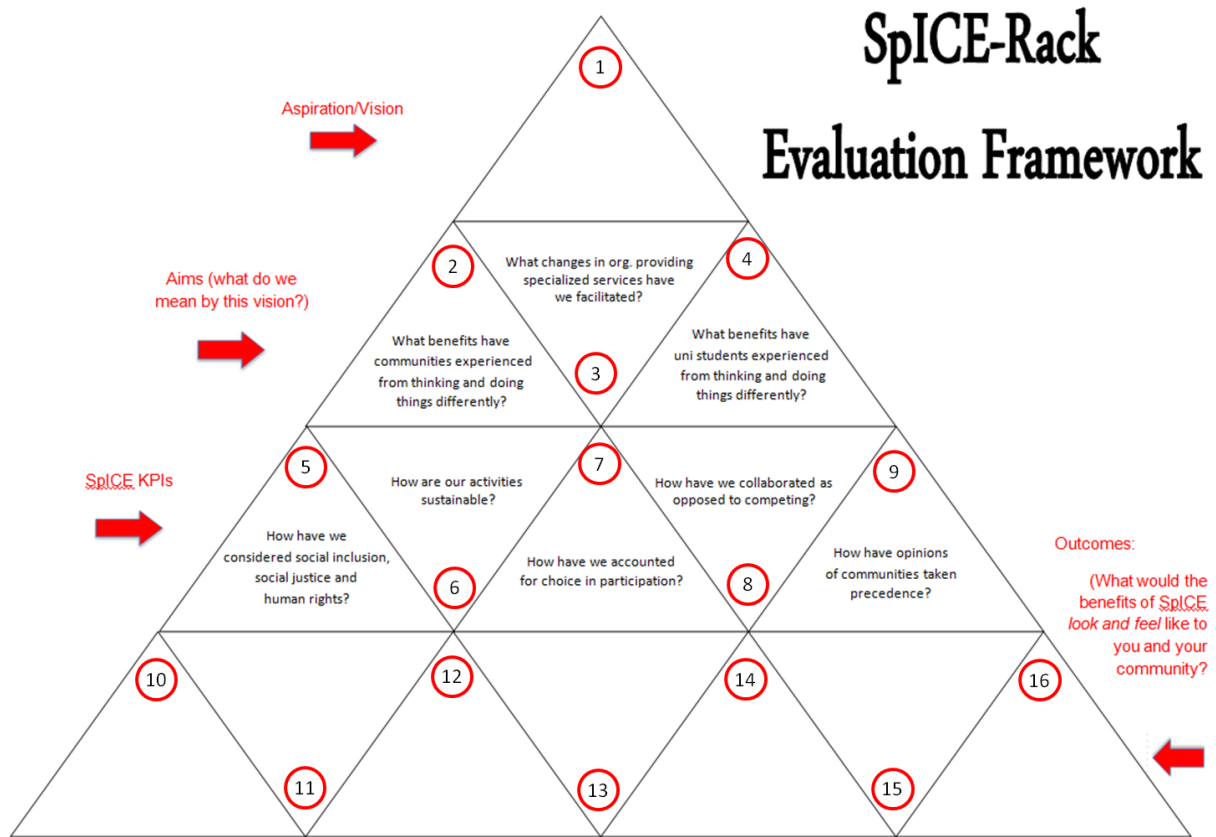
But with SpICE, it isn’t the ‘things’ that are produced that are the most important, but what people have learnt about thinking and doing things differently that is the long-lasting benefit. This means that the intended *outcomes* of SpICE are not, for example, the number of new student placements that were created, or how many pamphlets were distributed by students, or how many children were assessed on some test etc. (even though these are ‘good’ and ‘beneficial’). Rather, the *outcomes* we want to measure are the social impacts on communities, organisations and students. So it is the *effects* of (for example) student placements, the distribution of pamphlets, and of assessing children on a certain test we want to collect, as this is the evidence of the benefit of SpICE.

If we can collect and show this evidence, then we are contributing to a sustainable and equitable future for all Australians - wherever they chose to live.

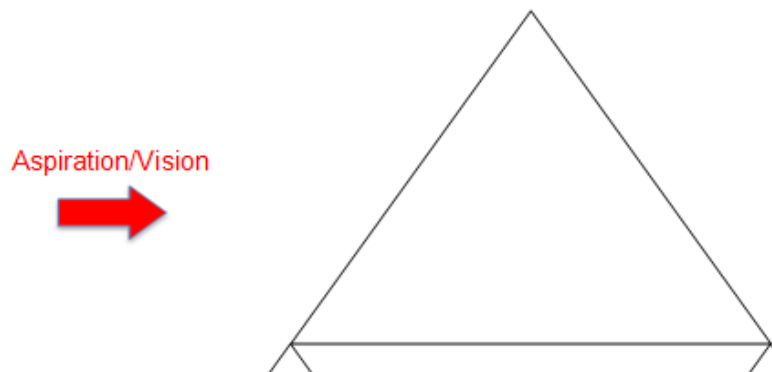
The SpICE Rack Framework

The SpICE-Rack is an ‘evaluation framework’. In a nutshell, this means that you collect evidence that slots into as many triangular parts of the Rack as possible.

The more triangles that have evidence linked to them, the more complete a picture is provided of how SpICE is adding social value to your community or your organisation.



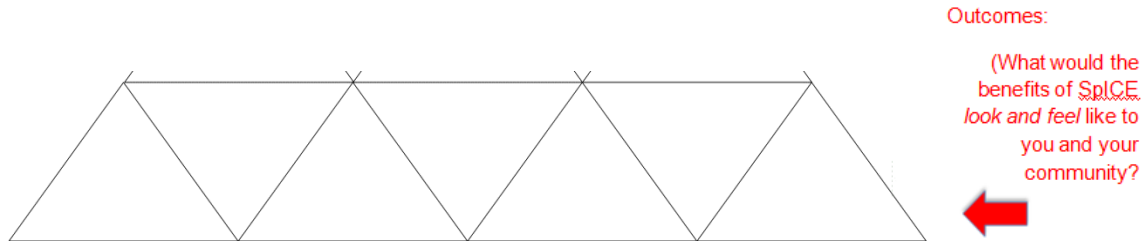
Importantly, the top (1) and bottom layers (10-16) of the SpICE-Rack are filled in from the perspective of an organisation, or the Community of Learners, or even an individual contributing to SpICE in your community. Who fills in the top and bottom layers depends on *who* needs to prove evidence of benefit. For example, this could be an organisation like a school, or the Council. Alternatively, it could be your Community of Learners as a whole. The top triangle (1) is about the particular ‘Vision’ or ‘Aspiration’ your community (or organisation) has for SpICE.



You need to fill it in for yourself because every community *aspires* to slightly different ambitions. Similarly, and if the SpICE-Rack is being used to prove to your employers that *their* involvement

in SpICE is of benefit to *them*, then the ‘Vision/Aspiration’ triangle might have a key point or two from that organisation’s Mission Statement; maybe for example, ‘Serving, through collaboration, the needs of our rural communities’.

Equally, the bottom layer (outcomes - triangles 10-16) needs to be completed by the person, organisation or Community of Learners who needs to prove benefit. The bottom layer represents the feelings and qualities of outcome that are important consequences of SpICE activities. This means the tangible ‘what the benefits of SpICE *look* and *feel* like’ outcomes - the benefits you value above all others - need to be identified by your community.



If you are filling in the SpICE-Rack to prove benefit to your community as a whole, the bottom row of ‘looking and feeling like’ triangles can be small and specific, but also really powerful in increasing the strength and resilience of your community.

It is useful to frame these as questions to help you focus on what ‘evidence’ you need to collect so as to prove this outcome has been met. For example, ‘People feeling more connected to others in the community’, or even, ‘School children learning from - and with - senior citizens’ are all small and specific ‘looking and feeling’ outcomes, but phrasing these as questions in the bottom layer of triangles helps you concentrate on what proof you have to find e.g. ‘*How* are people feeling connected to others in the community?’ or ‘*How* are our school children learning from – and with – senior citizens?’

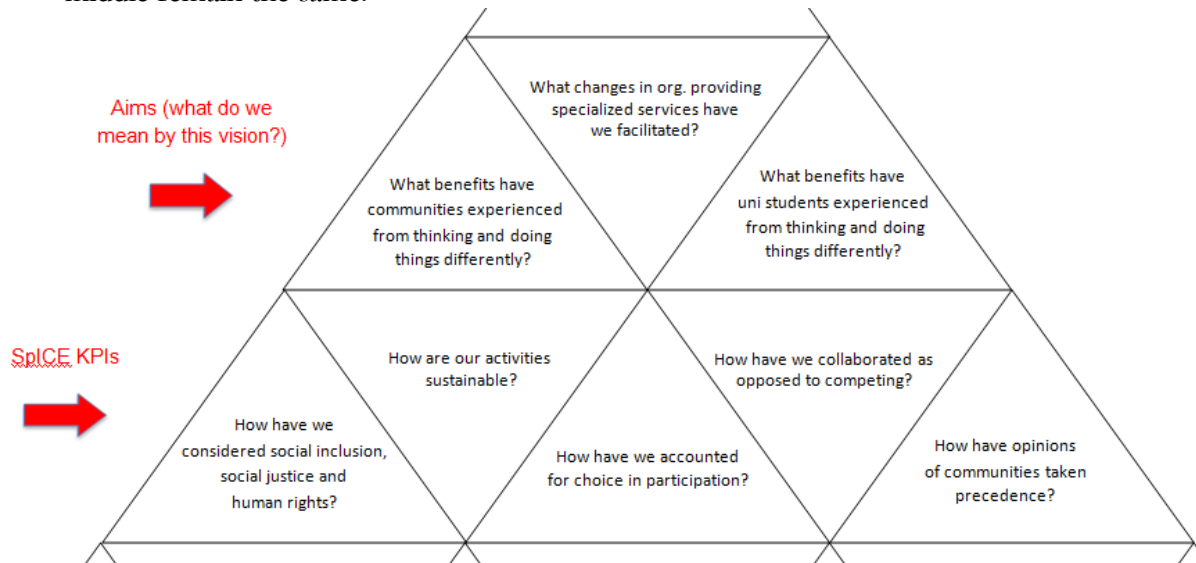
If, however, you are using the SpICE-Rack to prove to your employers that *their* involvement in SpICE is of benefit to *them*, then the bottom row of ‘looking and feeling’ outcomes might be much broader. So if the top ‘Vision’ triangle has a key point or two from the organisation’s Mission Statement like, ‘Serving, through collaboration, the needs of our rural communities’, then the bottom row of outcomes triangles might also use statements from the same type of document, answering the ‘How?’ of this big aspiration.

So for this example, the bottom row triangles might have statements like, ‘Responding to the needs of Brindalong’ or ‘Collaboration with other organisations in Brindalong’ as two of the ‘What does this look and feel like?’ outcomes.

Again, by turning these into questions you find greater focus in gathering the proof you need, eg ‘*How have* we collaborated with other organisations in Brindalong?’ Note, however, that the question is not, ‘How many times have we collaborated with other organisations in Brindalong?’ Answering this type of question does not measure social impact. Instead, it measures how many times you had meetings – which misses the point of what benefit these meetings actually created for Brindalong!

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

While you need to complete the top and bottom layers of the SpICE-Rack, the two layers in the middle remain the same.



The top one of these states the 3 main aims of any SpICE project: Benefit to community, Benefit to student learning, and Benefit in achieving organisational change around specialist service knowledge and skills.

The layer underneath asks you to gather evidence that SpICE principles have been followed. This is because, and as has been said before, these principles are known to create benefit and well-being to all communities, everywhere in the world.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

The Brindalong Community of Learners is at Sue's house one evening. The SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework is sitting on the dining room table, and everyone is staring at it.

'It looks like another great big opportunity for more talking.' Sniffs Liby.

'I thought you evaluated things with graphs and percentages?' says Robert.

Jenny says, 'I don't think this triangle-thing is what the schools want. They need numbers and percentages to prove SpICE is working.'

'And the Health Service,' adds Sue ruefully, 'what on earth are we going to do?'

Mitch from the second-hand shop grins, 'I love it! It's turning the whole thing on its head - just like the rest of SpICE. Come on, we can do it!'

What's our vision – that's easy. We talked about it months ago. For the children of Brindalong, we want to improve literacy, school readiness, health, sustainability and the environment!' There – put that in the 'Vision' triangle Sue and see if it fits!

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

*‘It’s not a crossword, Mitch!’ says Lily, but everyone is smiling.
‘So far so good,’ says Sue, ‘Now what about this bottom row.
It says ‘What would the benefit of SpICE look and feel like to you and your community?’*

Everyone starts talking all at once, and Lily struggles to keep writing down what they say.

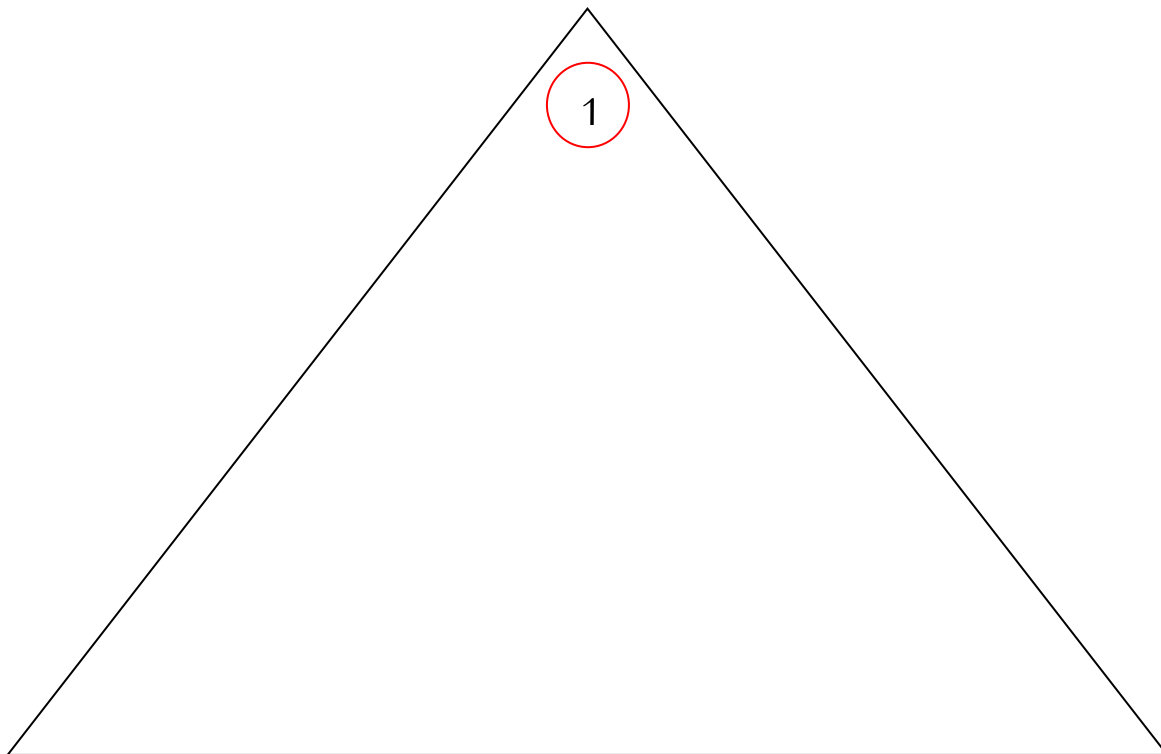
‘...People would stop on the street and ask what’s the latest with SpICE?’ ‘People would be excited about something happening.’ ‘They’d be feeling like they were part of something important.’ ‘They’d feel connected to things.’ ‘I’d just feel useful.’ ‘And happier about living here.’ ‘I feel like I’d be doing something new.’ ‘Wouldn’t it be lovely for people to feel all that attention from the students?’

Eventually there is quiet. Then Mitch says, ‘Let’s sort out which are different, and which are the same, then we’ll write them in the triangles along the bottom row.’



Activity

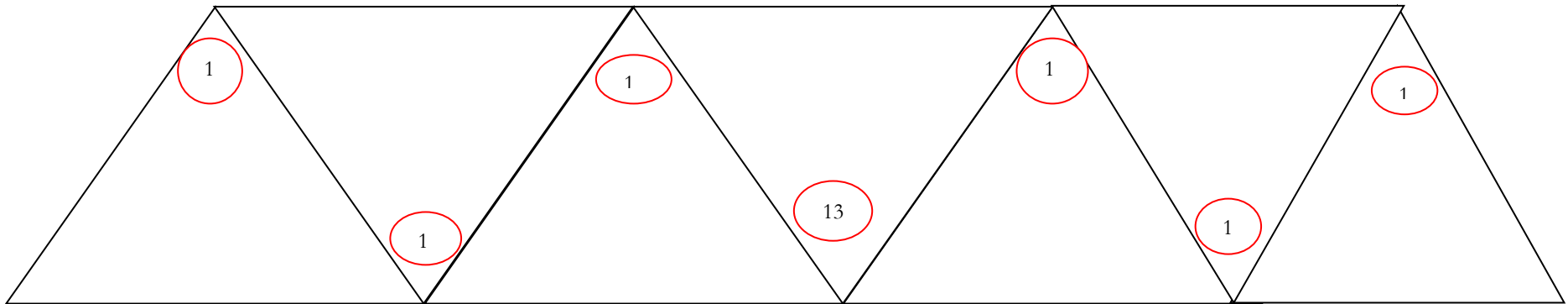
1. As individuals, use the knowledge you have gained from this training to write a Vision/Aspiration for making change in your community (or organisation). Write this Vision in the triangle below (this will be the top Triangle).



SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

2. As individuals, what would the benefits of this Vision *look* and *feel* like to your community (or your organisation)?

Write these benefits as questions in these triangles (outcomes).



3. Discuss what you have written with your group.

Chapter 4. Proving
the Benefit of
SpICE: The SpICE-
Rack

Topic 2: SpICE-Rack: Collecting ‘Evidence of benefit’ for SpICE

Evidence of benefit for SpICE often comes from surprising places. You need to learn to start noticing the surprise, and yet also be quick enough to turn the surprise into evidence!

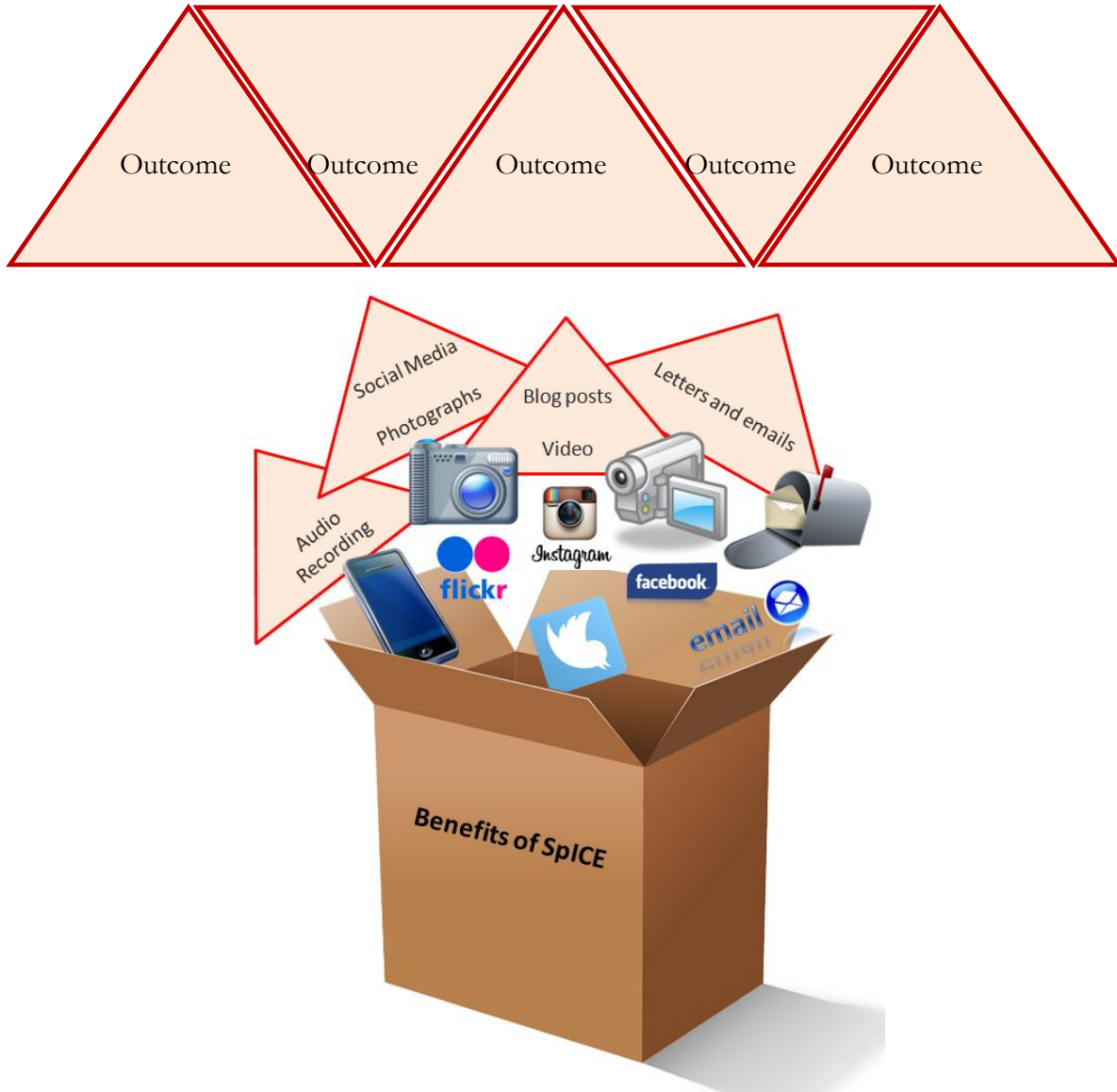
Evidence is something tangible. For example, a letter, an email, a photograph or video. It is something that can be looked at over and over, and something that is accessible to many people who do not know you or your community. Evidence is something that *convince*s people.

So for example, if someone stops you on the street and says, ‘I was just told what a great difference SpICE is making to the Early Childhood Centre!’ you need to ask the person precisely what she heard, what the reported benefits are to the Early Childhood Centre, and the benefits to her as the person who heard this news. Either, ask this person to put this difference in writing, then sign, date it, and send it to you. Alternatively, *you* do the writing then ask her to sign and date it! This is because just claiming that ‘so-and-so’ told you about a benefit does not mean it is evidence. Evidence has to be tangible. And organisations want *tangible* evidence of benefit!

Because the aim of evaluating SpICE is to prove social benefit, one piece of evidence can ‘prove benefit’ in a number of the triangles on the SpICE-Rack. However, some evidence is ‘stronger’ than others. For example, a teacher writing an email to you saying she has been able to make 6 appropriate referrals to a podiatrist on the basis of Uni students training her how to screen for foot and posture problems in children is fairly strong evidence of benefit on a number of the SpICE-Rack triangles. However, the teacher writing an email saying she then delivered this same training to 22 teachers in her geographic area, and there were 15 more children now receiving treatment for similar problems, is much stronger evidence of benefit, because you can tick off more triangles on the SpICE-Rack.

To start with, you need to collect any and all evidence of benefit. Take a cardboard box (or an electronic folder on a computer) and label it ‘Benefits of SpICE’ and place within it every kind of benefit that has anything to do with any of the triangles (1-16) on the SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework. You will notice that the triangles are numbered – this is to allow for evidence to be used for more than one triangle (outcome). Do not be tempted to leave gathering of evidence to half-way through, or to the end of a SpICE placement! Gather it as you go, remembering to date the evidence before you put it in the box or folder. Use the numbers on the triangles as shorthand linking your evidence to different triangles. Your aim is to have strong evidence of benefit for most, if not all, triangles of the SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework.

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT



The Brindalong Community of Learners

All members of the Brindalong Community of Learners have a copy of the SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework taped to their fridges at home. This helps remind them of what they are listening and looking for when going about their business in the town.

The Evidence Box sits at Sue and Robert's house, but not before Lily and several CWA members covered the cardboard with a bright new wool crotched cover!

Mitch is standing in front of his fridge, gently waving an email in front of it. He reads it again, and then looks at the triangles of the SpICE-Rack.

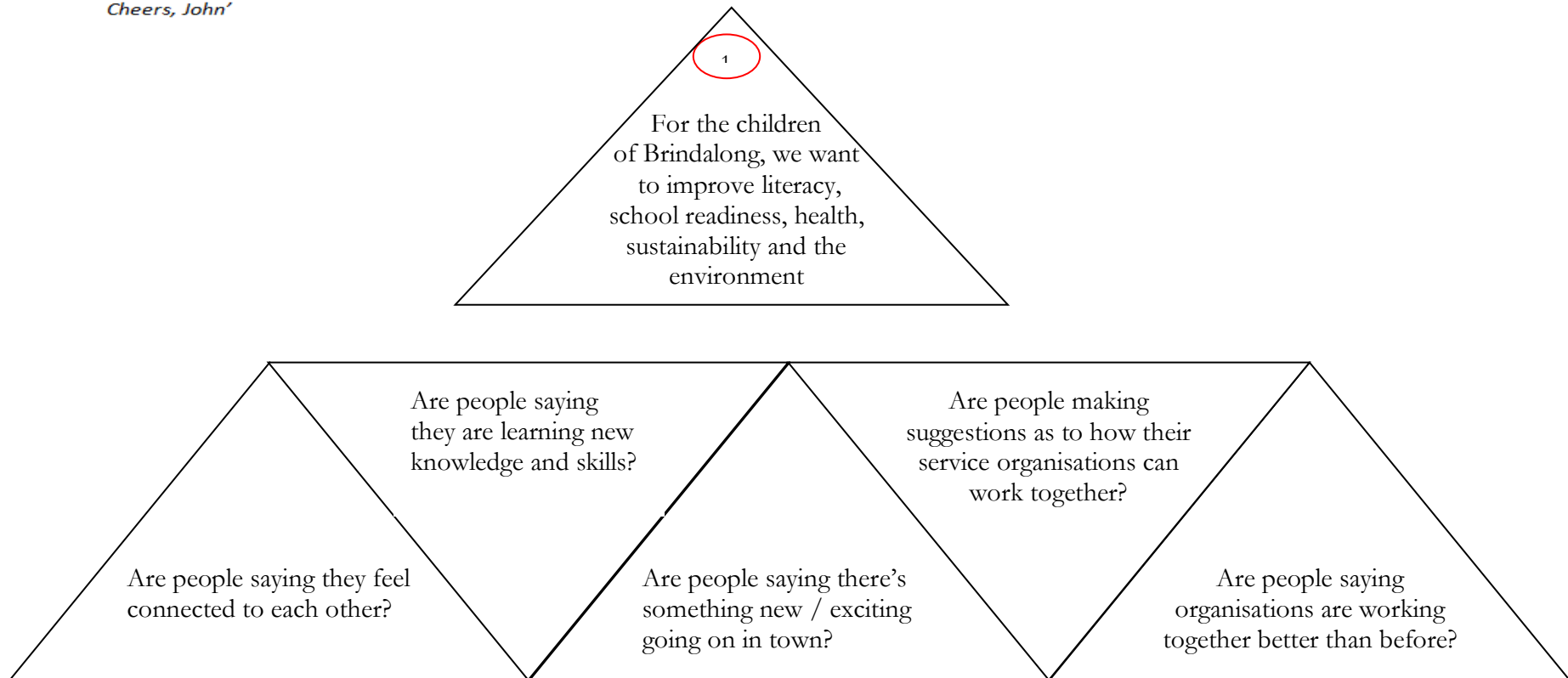
SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT

From: BrinwidgeCommunity@BrinwidgeTownCouncil.com
Sent: Saturday, 11 October 2014 2:59 PM
To: 'Mitch@Brindalong.secondhand.com'
Subject: SpICE

'Dear Mitch,

I was chatting to Mel Burke last evening, and he was telling me there's this SpICE thing going on, and how you had organised getting uni students to come and train everyone in Brindalong on different things. Good for you, Mitch! Then I was wondering how our town could get some of the action? I'm pretty sure I could speak for the Council in saying let's go ahead and start talking!

Cheers, John'





Activity

This activity uses the example from the Brindalong story.

Mitch phones John and asks him precisely what Mel Bourke said to him. Mitch takes notes. After he has put down the phone, Mitch turns what John has told him into three 'statements of benefit about having SpICE in their town'.

1. As a group, imagine what these statements of benefit could be. Write them down.

2. Look at all the triangles of the SpICE-Rack. Which statement applies to which triangle? Do some of the statements 'fit' more than one triangle? If so, which ones?

3. As a group, discuss how you could improve the quality of this evidence from John?

Chapter 4.

Proving the
Benefit of
SpICE: The
SpICE-Rack

Topic 3: SpICE-Rack: Presenting the ‘Evidence of benefit’ for SpICE

The collection of ‘evidence of benefit’ starts from the moment your Community of Learners forms. This is because, and at various times of the SpICE process in your community, one or more of your organisations are going to want ‘evidence of benefit/value’. Very often, they want evidence that your time is not being wasted on doing SpICE. These are the points when you empty your Evidence Box and present it!

To prepare for this, buy a box file, photocopy your community’s SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework, and also every piece of evidence you have - removing all personal information (who it came from, addresses, etc.) Spread all this out on a table.

Presenting the evidence of benefit of SpICE is, in effect, a cross-referencing task. Start with a piece of evidence that superficially appears to ‘tick-off’ many of the SpICE-Rack triangles (‘strong’ evidence). Write a number on this piece of evidence that represents each triangle of the SpICE-Rack that it applies to.

For example, using the podiatry example from the previous Chapter

A teacher writing an email to you saying she has been able to make 6 appropriate referrals to a podiatrist on the basis of Uni students training her how to screen for foot and posture problems in children is fairly strong evidence of benefit on a number of the SpICE-Rack triangles.

Numbers from the triangles on the SpICE Rack
1, 2, 9,

The same teacher writing an email saying she then delivered this same training to 22 teachers in her geographic area, and there were 15 more children now receiving treatment for similar problems, is much stronger evidence of benefit, because you can tick off more triangles on the SpICE-Rack.

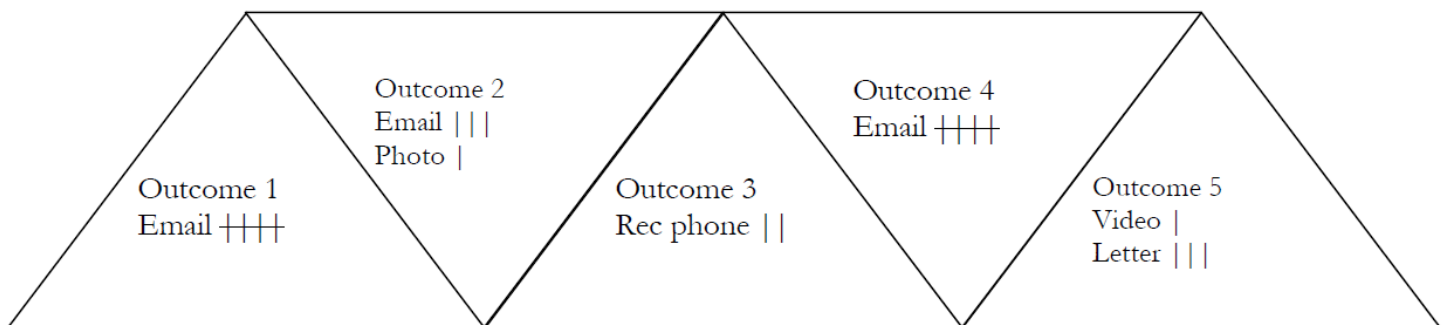
SpICE - HOW TO START A SpICE PROJECT

... delivered this same training to 22 teachers in her geographic area, and there were 15 more children now receiving treatment for similar problems.

Numbers from the triangles on the SpICE Rack
1, 2, 9, 10, 12, 15.

So it could be that this single piece of evidence had 6 or 7 triangles referenced.

To keep track that all the triangles have some piece of evidence you could use tally marks in the triangles to represent each type of evidence, or if you are recording digital files you can use hyper-linking to link the different pieces of evidence.



Continue by selecting another piece of evidence. Repeat the numbering process. Continue until all (or most!) triangles are filled, and hopefully with more than one piece of evidence for each triangle.

Place all your pieces of evidence in a box or in an electronic file on your computer. Include the completed SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework with your evidence. You can then use the SpICE-Rack as your reference to find specific pieces of evidence when needed.

Often, your organisations will ask you to report on specific outcomes or KPIs, in addition to those from the SpICE-Rack. This means you will need to look through your SpICE-Rack evidence and choose relevant parts of it to include in a report. For instance, your organisation might want you to report on: 'Number of meetings you have had with community members'. These pieces of evidence can be used to help you decide what topics to discuss and highlight in a report to comply with your organisation's report style.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Even before the students had arrived in Brindalong, Mr Worthington, Director of Rural and Remote Partnerships for the Department of Education and Communities, was wanting a report of where Jenny 'was up to' with the Brindalong SpICE project. Jenny called Lily immediately.

Please help me, Lily – I'm just not confident the SpICE-Rack is what he's expecting! What happens if it's wrong?

You just leave it to me, dear! And I'll get Bill to help me. This cross-referencing and making things nice and tight is right up my alley. And right up Bill's as well. Is that all your Mr. Worthington is wanting?

He's wanting a breakdown of how I'm spending my time, who I'm talking to – that sort of thing. I can do that, it's easy'.

'Then you do that, and you leave the SpICE-Rack to me and Bill. What colour file do you like?'

'You think pink would be all right?'

'Pink it is, Jenny!'



Activity

Use the completed Brindalong SpICE-Rack (see below) for this activity.

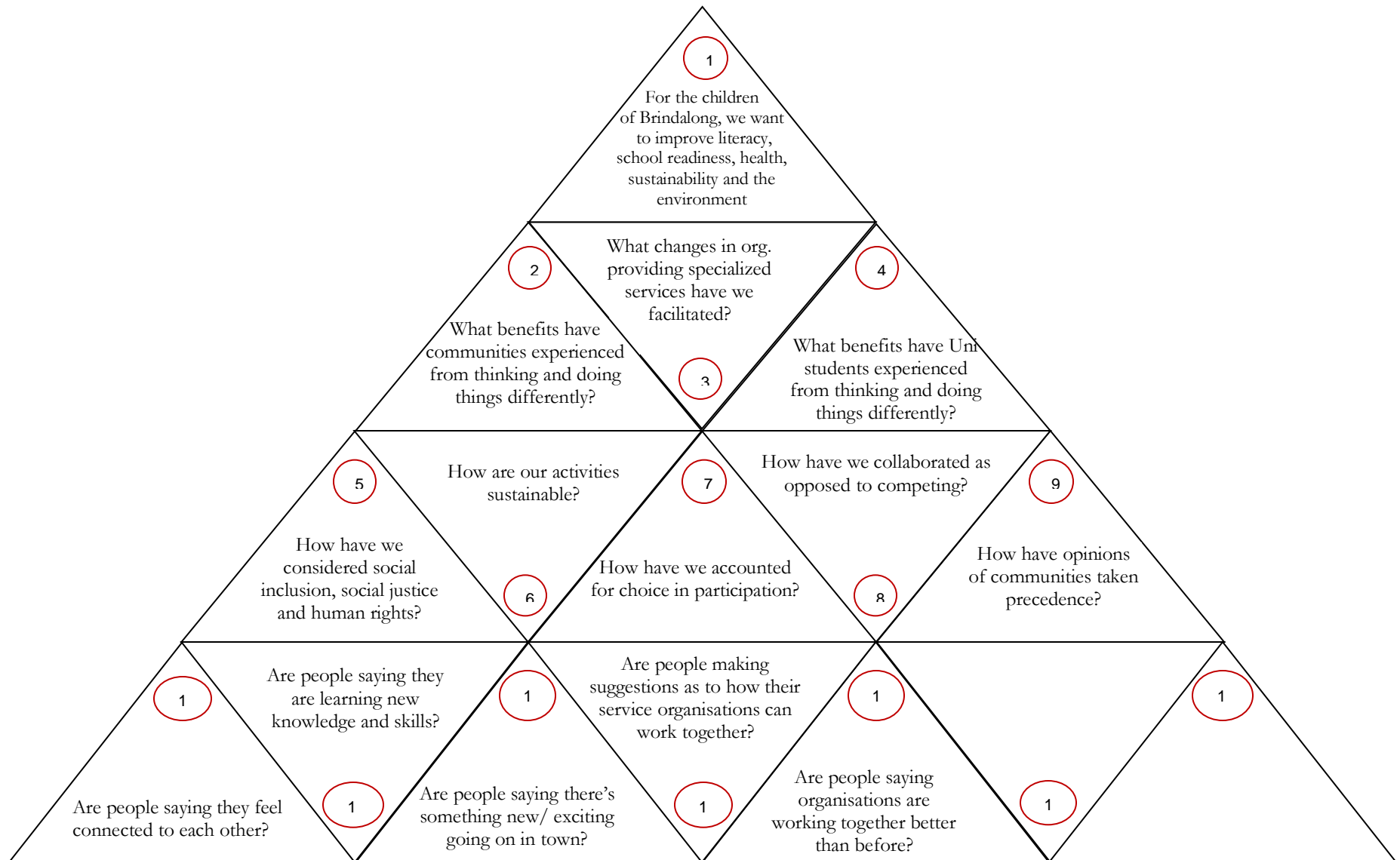
Mr. Worthington has asked Jenny to provide evidence that SpICE is being of benefit. Jenny reminds him that students have not even come to the town yet, but Mr. Worthington shakes his head and says, "I want to know what the benefits are of you spending all this time on SpICE activities in the town."

"You mean it's not direct evidence of benefit to the school or the Department of Education you're wanting?"

Again, Mr. Worthington shakes his head.

As a group, think creatively and invent 2 piece of 'evidence of benefit' that would help Jenny. Cross-reference it with as many of the triangles as possible on the Brindalong SpICE-Rack.

SPICE - HOW TO START A SPICE PROJECT



SpICE - Student Support Guide

Your Guidebook

This guide is all about how community members set up and support students on a SpICE placement. It explains the 'how' and 'why' of setting up a *beneficial* SpICE student placement. The benefit will be that the students' efforts will help your community solve problems for themselves; use specialist resources more effectively; and discover more ways of working together for a more resilient and engaged community. The students will benefit from having an opportunity to understand about *people* in communities and the many and varied ways to build relationships with people from *all* sectors of the community. The experience they gain from working collaboratively will complement the technical skills they have already gained in their specialist training.

There are 6 chapters in this Guide:

1. An overview of SpICE Student Support.
2. The Benefits of SpICE Placements for Communities.
3. Planning - Practical considerations.
4. How to Support Students Once They Arrive
5. Maintaining the Support of Your Organisation
6. Conclusion.

Who should use this Guide?

Everyone in the Community of Learners should read Chapters 1 and 2. The remaining Chapters are for Learning Mentors, Debriefing Mentors and Discipline Specific Mentors.

How should you use this Guide?

The information in this section can be read on your own or in a group, and does not require a facilitator. However, as for the other learning sections of SpICE, working through the material with a group can help in both gaining a better understanding and in establishing working relationships within your Community of Learners. *Planning - Practical Considerations* and *How to Support Students Once they Arrive* are designed for quick reference or can be used for group workshops or individual learning.



It will take around **3 hours** to complete as a group.

Continuing the Brindalong SpICE Story...

From the first part of the Brindalong Story:

Brindalong is a town of about 1500 people, about four hours from the nearest big regional centre. There's a teacher Jenny, at the local primary school. The community nurse Sue, who is employed to do health promotion and primary prevention for an area covering 130 kilometres in any one direction. Sue visits the school once a term as part of her job. Sue's husband Robert runs the local rubbish tip and re-cycling centre for the Council. Robert approached Mitch, an ex-miner and owner of the second-hand shop. Mitch has a reputation for giving away more than he sells from his shop. Then there's Tiffany who, as the Pre-school Director, knows both Jenny and Sue. Sue has asked Lily to join the SpICE effort. Lily is a retired nurse, who is the head of the local Country Woman's Association, and also a really passionate community member always up for helping out for the benefit of everyone. Lily's brother-in-law Bill is a member of Rotary. Finally, there is Jim the owner of the local supermarket who has a daughter that is a university student.

The previous section of the story followed this group, the Brindalong Community of Learners, as they explored using a SpICE approach to working together for the benefit of their community. After many discussions, they have connected with people in their community and decided on a Community Focus that combines:

- Children, school readiness, early literacy, and health messages.
- Rubbish and the sustainability of the environment.

Their vision is "For the children of Brindalong, we want to improve literacy, school readiness, health, sustainability and the environment." Each of them has also thought of what they want the SpICE students to do to help their organisation contribute to the Community Focus. This starting point for the students is called a Learning Hook.

The story continues as they plan for the University students who will help them make their vision a reality.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

At the Brindalong Shire Council a SpICE meeting with two lecturers from the University gets started. Peta teaches physiotherapy and Ann teaches environmental science. After everyone introduces themselves, it takes a few moments before anyone speaks as no-one is

sure who should take the lead. Mitch decides to jump right in, "Welcome to Brindalong. It's great to have you here. Nothing like putting faces to names!"

Peta, who is much better at remembering faces than names, smiles and replies, "We'd willingly get out and about more if there were more invitations like this. It sounds like you've got something pretty exciting happening here."

"We're really hoping you're going to help us make it happen," says Robert. "There's a lot we don't know how to do."

Tiffany jumps in a little abruptly, "That last email you sent us, well that just sent me into a bit of a spin. I didn't realise the students were from different courses. I thought you were going to send us some teaching students. I'd know what to do with them. Or even some occupational therapy students. We've got lots they could do. I guess I was a bit shocked. And worried." she finishes more quietly.

Peta and Ann are a little taken aback. It had been no small task to organise SpICE at the Uni, and also to find some students who were willing AND available to try something new. But Peta could hear the fear in Tiffany's outburst and realised she needed to explain about student placements.

"Has anyone had students before?" asks Peta. Jenny replied that her school had hosted some prac teachers over the last three years and Sue said that there was a constant stream of nursing students through the Health Service. Jim, thinking of his daughter, jokes that he knows "all about how uni students need the latest Smartphone and large data top-ups to stay connected!" But he's never seen a student 'on placement' or 'do' anything apart from their nails and hair.

Peta pushes on after a supportive look from Ann, "I guess the thought of having students is a bit daunting if you've never done it before. It's probably not surprising that you're concerned."

With some murmuring, the group nod in agreement. With the air cleared, they settle back to hear more about student placements, student support and what it might feel like to share the students around. They all agree that they are going to create a great SpICE placement, an experience that's never been seen in Brindalong before.

**Chapter 1:
Overview of
SpICE Student
Support**

Mentor Roles

Students need help as they face the challenges of a SpICE placement. SpICE Student Support is like the safety net built around students while they learn. And like everything else in SpICE, this support is a joint effort. Some support is provided by the university or other interested people.

But there are also some formal support roles within communities hosting SpICE projects, and these are called Learning Mentors, Discipline-Specific Mentors and Debriefing Mentors.

Each host organisation nominates a **Learning Mentor** who is like an ‘on-site’ mentor, to support students while they are working with the organisation. The Learning Mentors give the day-to-day support to the students. They are also the key people in guiding students through the various learning activities. Learning Mentors need face-to-face time with students, as tasks like orientation, demonstration, guidance and discussion are part of this role.

Discipline-Specific Mentors are of the same discipline or profession as the students they support. They help the students *safely* apply their specialist knowledge to the tasks they do. This includes making sure students give accurate information and guiding them on correct techniques. Unlike traditional ‘supervision’ of students, Discipline-Specific Mentors are not regularly with the students as they do their SpICE placement. Rather, they provide guidance as needed by the students or when other members of the Mentoring team think advice is required from a ‘qualified’ professional. This support may be provided by phone, email or occasionally in a meeting. If your Community of Learners doesn’t have a person of the same discipline as the students, review Section 3, Chapter 2, Topic 3 ‘Inviting the Missing Members of the Community of Learners’.

Debriefing Mentors provide the emotional and ‘big picture’ support to students. They help the students make sense of what they are seeing and doing. They guide the students to apply the SpICE principles. Debriefing Mentors are often recognised as being active and connected to many sectors of their community. This means they can help the students to get to know, and hopefully to feel welcome in the community. Students may seek support from the Debriefing Mentors if they feel uncomfortable about raising an issue with other members of the support team. Most of this Debriefing Mentor support happens outside the daily student activities.

Importantly, none of the SpICE Student Support roles take a great deal of time or effort to perform. The Learning Mentors are ‘available’ when the students are in their own host organisation. The Discipline-Specific Mentors are at the end of a phone or

for a meeting when needed, and the De-Briefing Mentors often meet the students after hours once a week (or as needed).

Over the course of a SpICE placement these roles may change. For example, someone who started out as a Learning Mentor may become more of a Debriefing Mentor if they have established a closer relationship with the students. The strength of the SpICE support network is in the different levels of teaching and learning support offered to students.

Learning about Communities

One of the reasons for SpICE students coming to your community is to help them understand that it takes the combined efforts of many people to enable beneficial change to occur. They need to hear from community members what they hope for and imagine could be better in their community. They need to understand what makes your community unique.

Explaining some of the things that are important to you isn't for the purpose of getting students to adopt the same passions. It is to help them to identify their personal motivations as they go about their life and work. SpICE students are enrolled in a university course about 'serving' the community. Understandably though, some students may be at a stage that they are more focused on 'passing' and 'finishing' their studies than providing service.

So how will you share who YOU are with the SpICE students? You will need to take the lead on this as the SpICE students may know very little about you, your organisation or your community but they're not likely to admit it! They will also need you to explain how what you do relates to the Community Focus.

Sharing the Students between Organisations

In a SpICE placement, some organisations in town put their hand up to host students. Depending on the Community Focus, the Community of Learners decides how to share the students around these organisations. Each organisation that hosts students will have the students for set times over their placement. This might be for a few hours scattered over a week or for a block of time. Sharing the students around means that they get to see all kinds of different situations and meet many different people. At the same time, this sharing means more people in your town get to see what these students do.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

After Peta and Ann leave, the others stay on to talk things over. Tiffany is confused. "I still don't really understand how I can be a 'Learning' Mentor when I don't even know what these students should know. I might teach them the wrong things and confuse them.

That's not likely to help their 'learning' is it?"

Mitch seems to have things clearer. He explains that the different Mentor roles just provide different types of support. "I guess it's called a Learning Mentor because you're supporting them as they go through learning activities. I don't think these Learning Mentors need to have all the answers, they just need to set them on the right track, to make sure it's going okay, and get extra help if it's not - that sort of thing."

"Well, from what I've heard," says Jenny, "I'm convinced I can be a Learning Mentor, and despite your doubts, Tiff, I think you'll be pretty good at it too. I mean, how hard can it be? It sounds like they shadow us, kind of 'a walk-in-my-shoes for a day' thing. And I'm already getting some ideas about some of the learning jobs I can give them when they've got blisters from my shoes and need to put their own back on! Mitch, are you still thinking about being a Debriefing Mentor? I'm a bit nervous you'll just gossip about us when you meet with the students!"

Mitch laughs, "I fancy being a Debriefing Mentor so I can learn about all the good stuff that goes on in town. And with all I'm learning about you lot, hopefully I can keep the students' efforts true to our focus!"

Robert says, "I'm thinking I might know someone who could be a Discipline-Specific Mentor for the physio students. I've had a few appointments with him at his private practice. He told me about some of the work he did in a remote community. I reckon he might be up for something a bit different if it gets him out of his clinic."

"Well I guess that's a starting point," says Sue. "I might ask around at work to see if anyone else is interested in helping us. And Peta and Ann did say they can link us in with people at the Uni if we needed."



Activity

1. Which type of Mentor role would be most suitable for you?

2. Brainstorm with your group the challenges of these roles?

3. What benefits would there be?

4. Can you think of other people in your community who would be suited to the various Mentor roles?

Chapter 2:
The Benefits of
SpICE
Placements for
Communities

Collaborative Learning

The aim of a SpICE placement is for you, your community and students to explore ways to use specialists better for the wellbeing of your community. *Collaborative learning* is where we all learn with and about other people with different occupations and life experiences. There are many reasons for connecting, learning and sharing knowledge with others. For some, it will be that you get to meet new people. For others, it will be finding or using skills that were hiding within you. Or it might be that you find ways to pool your resources so that you can do more than you could ever have done on your own.

The benefit for students in learning collaboratively, is that the input from many different people shows them skills and attitudes that will complement the skills they are learning in their formal education. This will help them to develop a well-rounded approach to being of benefit to the communities they work in in the future.

Looking for Opportunities not Problems

Specialist training is often designed to teach students to observe what's wrong with a client or environment and then devise solutions. It also encourages specialists to work alone as 'experts.' SpICE gives students a chance to adapt this thinking and to look for what others are already doing, what is working well and make it even better. However, looking at opportunities, not problems, takes practise.

Early in their visit, encourage the students to have a good look at your town. Afterwards, they may well be able to tell you about opportunities that you haven't noticed. They may also think of new ways to build on those opportunities. Refer them back to the SpICE principles as they go through this process of *growing* an opportunity. For example, applying the principle of 'including more people,' they could rally school students to do a promotional letter drop in their neighbourhoods, rather than delivering them all themselves. Or by applying the principle of 'providing people with resources to shape their own future' they could facilitate a parents' group to swap teeth cleaning tricks to use with toddlers. The aim is for the students to take things that are already being done, like newsletters, brochures and projects and find ways to extend, deepen, progress or do them in ways that mean they will keep going once the initial effort is over.

Local Solutions

One of the strengths of SpICE is that it creates a way for communities to develop wellbeing activities that have a *local* flavour. Students will need to be linked in with activities that help them learn about your community. Perhaps send them to a children's services fair; maybe a visit to a local historian; or link them up with some Aboriginal Elders? Perhaps just introduce them to some cheeky kids who really know who's who in town!

The Brindalong Community of Learners

While Tiffany is getting the last of the supplies for the welcome barbeque, she has Ally nagging her on the phone.

"You tell them Tiffany," says Ally angrily. "I'm not going to go and 'welcome' these SpICE students. As far as I'm concerned they should send them back to the Uni and give us what we wanted. Occupational Therapy students!"

As Tiffany tries to compose her response, Ally continues her tirade. "And while you're at it, I think you should have a long hard think about all the time you've spent on organising things. I think you should get the lion's share of the students' time. It would be a complete waste to send them out to Robert at the tip. How could he possibly need them?"

Tiffany, finally fed-up with Ally's point of view, interrupts, "Look Ally, I know you're not on board with this and that's your choice. But I'm really looking forward to it and having a chance to stretch myself. Please don't spoil it for me. Anyway, I have to get going. It's a pity you're going to miss out on a piece of Lily's sponge cake at the barbie. Do you want me to save you some?"

"Oh go on then, as long as she hasn't laced it with Spice for the occasion."



Activity

Choose one of the options below and think about how you could guide the students to 'grow' the opportunity. Discuss your answer with the group.

Option 1:

Your community has a website about local children's services. You want the students to apply the SpICE principle of inclusive participation to *grow* the audience for this website. List two things you would ask the students to do.

Option 2:

Your community has a website about local health and fitness facilities and venues. You want the students to apply the SpICE principle of collaborating not competing to encourage *more people* to use these facilities. List two things you would ask the students to do.

Option 3:

You want to build a community website. The students need to apply the SpICE principle of contributions/opinions of community members taking precedence over contributions of organisations in the development of the website. List two things you would ask the students to do.

Practical Arrangements

There are a number of practical arrangements that have to be sorted out for students to come on placement in your town. Keeping in mind that students are usually based in a region near a university, it is quite an upheaval for them to do a placement in another town. They often have to take leave from work, they still need to pay rent and they have to fund the costs of travel. The more your community can do towards meeting the practical needs, the easier it is for students to settle in to their learning. Some students can get scholarships to attend placements but the lead time on applying for these means they're not always a practical option. While it's not your community's responsibility to fund the costs of students, by digging around you might find ways to offset some of the costs and make it easier for students to participate in SpICE.

Accommodation

By working with the Community of Learners, you may find that your community has cheap or subsidised accommodation options. Look for options that have cooking facilities and that are secure. Some communities have hospital accommodation, vacant teacher housing, cabins at a caravan park or even an old convent! Billeting is an option but it can be a strain on both the students and billets as everyone goes through the emotional highs and lows of a placement.

Workspace

Related to accommodation is the need to find the students some work space. While many organisations have a spare room for students to work in, consider aspects like access to photocopiers, printers and internet. Also keep in mind that students need space to work as a group or to hold meetings. If they are making resources, they are likely to need a space where they can be messy without disrupting other workers.

Paying for Materials

Some SpICE projects will require students to make or acquire resources for a community. These might be things like brochures, posters, books or games. The cost of these resources needs to be met by the local organisations that benefit from the resources. Decide with your Community of Learners how costs will be met. For instance, some organisations may be able to contribute the use of their photocopier and printer while others may pay for commercial printing or binding. The Community of Learners may also decide that as part of the project they would like the students to explore fundraising options or donations. Explain to the students how costs will be covered before they start their projects.

Transport and Travel

Some students won't have their own transport and will need to pool with other students to get to and from your community and around the various workplaces. All the students should be given some help in understanding about how to drive safely in your area. Advise them of factors like the dangers of kangaroos at dusk or slippery dirt roads. Wherever possible encourage students to travel with other people. If anything does go wrong on the road there is safety in numbers.

Community Facilities

The more information you can provide students about the facilities of your community, the more comfortable they will be. Some community information can be provided to students prior to them starting placement, via emails or packages of information you prepare for them. Give them information about the community as well as for the specific host organisations.

Let them know where and when they can buy food; where they can get emergency health care; and the opening hours of the local library. Let them know where they shouldn't go alone at night. Tell them where they can access Wi-Fi and importantly how strong mobile phone reception is.

What Skills do the Students Bring?

To plan what the students can do, you need to take into account what the students have to offer, what opportunities there are while they are with you and how much time they have available. While you may desire an army of students to help you set up a school orientation showcase, the reality may be that the students are allocated mid-year when orientation is not on the agenda. Or you may have wished for a bunch of social work students to help with post-drought trauma, but only a couple of speech therapy students were available.

Ask the students what skills they have and be prepared to explore what else they may be able to do with the appropriate support. Most students are in their mid-to-late stages of their university training. They have some 'specialist knowledge' but are unable to do all the tasks that fully qualified specialists can do. There are two reasons for this, the first being student and community safety. SpICE doesn't provide the same amount of discipline-specific supervision as occurs in traditional placements. So it's important that students don't give advice or do tasks that they may not yet know how to apply safely.

Secondly, SpICE is an opportunity to think of *new* ways of sharing specialist knowledge. By being guided by community mentors, students have the freedom to explore how what they know can be used in novel and more sustainable ways. For example, you might expect dentistry students to run a teeth cleaning program at your local school but a *new* way to share their knowledge may be to explore helping children to make their own books about tooth fairies, cavity monsters and super-hero toothbrushes.

Student Preparation Checklist

Some organisations will need evidence that students are fit and safe for the placement. The students will need to be advised of what is needed, prior to coming to your community and in plenty of time to collect their evidence. Below is an example of a checklist your community might provide to the students and ask them to complete prior to starting their SpICE placement. Space has been left for other requirements your community might add.

SpICE STUDENT PREPARATION CHECKLIST	
Student Name	
Phone	
Email	
Next of Kin Contact	
Compliance with Immunisations verified by Health service OASV assessor.	
Current National Police Check:	
Volunteer Working with Children Number:	
Current Driver's Licence Number:	
DEC anaphylaxis on-line training completion date:	
Verified by:	
Designation:	

Provide a brief summary of skills you can use:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Do you have any health or support needs that you would like your Mentors to discuss with you?

Confirming Student Timetables

Prior to the SpICE placement starting, your Community of Learners should have enough information to provide all the SpICE partners and the students with a preliminary timetable of student activities and contacts. This timetable is just the starting point and it is okay if there are still some gaps. An example timetable has been provided.

SpICE Brindalong Timetable
16th June – 4th July 2014
Community Focus: School Readiness with a Sustainability Theme.

Week 1

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
15 th June	16 th June	17 th June	18 th June	19 th June	20 th June
6.00pm Welcome BBQ, Centre Ways	9.30am Orientation at Brindalong Preschool 1.00 Orientation at Brindalong Public School	9.30 Brindalong Shire Council and excursion to recycling centre. 4.00 Attend staff meeting at Public School.	9.00 Preschool 2.30 Meeting or preparation time	9.00 Meeting with Discipline Specific Mentors 10.00 Visit to library. 1.00 School for lunchtime observations. 3.00 Preparation Time	10-12.30 Centre Ways Mums & Bubs Playgroup Lunch with Debrief Mentor Home
Learning Hooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mums n Bubs: Bushtucker and healthy lunchbox cookbook. School and Preschool: Ready for learning! Shire Council: Re-use and recycling in early childhood. Work space: Council office or Library.					

SPICE - STUDENT SUPPORT GUIDE

Week 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	23 rd June	24 th June	25 th June	26 th June	27 th June
	9.30 Meeting with Learning Mentor at Public School	10.30-2.30 Mums & Bubs Playgroup	9.00 Planning time	8.15 -2.30 Prior to School Health Checks - Outreach to Kinty with Sue.	9.00 Meeting with Lily re newsletter.
	10.30 School activities	3.00 Preparation time	11.00 Men's Shed visit with Robert	3.30 Mentor session	
	1.30 Preschool activities		2.30 To be advised		12.00 Home
	3.30 Mentor session				

Week 3

Student Names	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	30 th June	1 st July	2 nd July	3 rd July	4 th July
	To be advised	To be advised	To be advised	To be advised	9.30 Handover presentation to Community of Learners at Shire Council
					Home

Example: Contact details for the SpICE Community of Learners

Learning Mentor	Jenny	Tiffany	Sue	Robert
Position	Teacher	Preschool Director	Community Nurse	Recycling Centre Manager
Organisation	Brindalong PS	Brindalong Preschool	Brindalong Health Centre	Brindalong Shire Council
Email	Jenny.teacher@BPS.edu	Tiffany.director@Bpreschool.org	Sue.nurse@health.com	Robert.recycle@council.com
Address	North St, Brindalong	South St, Brindalong	East St, Brindalong	West St, Brindalong
Phone	63 621043	63 621043	63 621043	63 330000

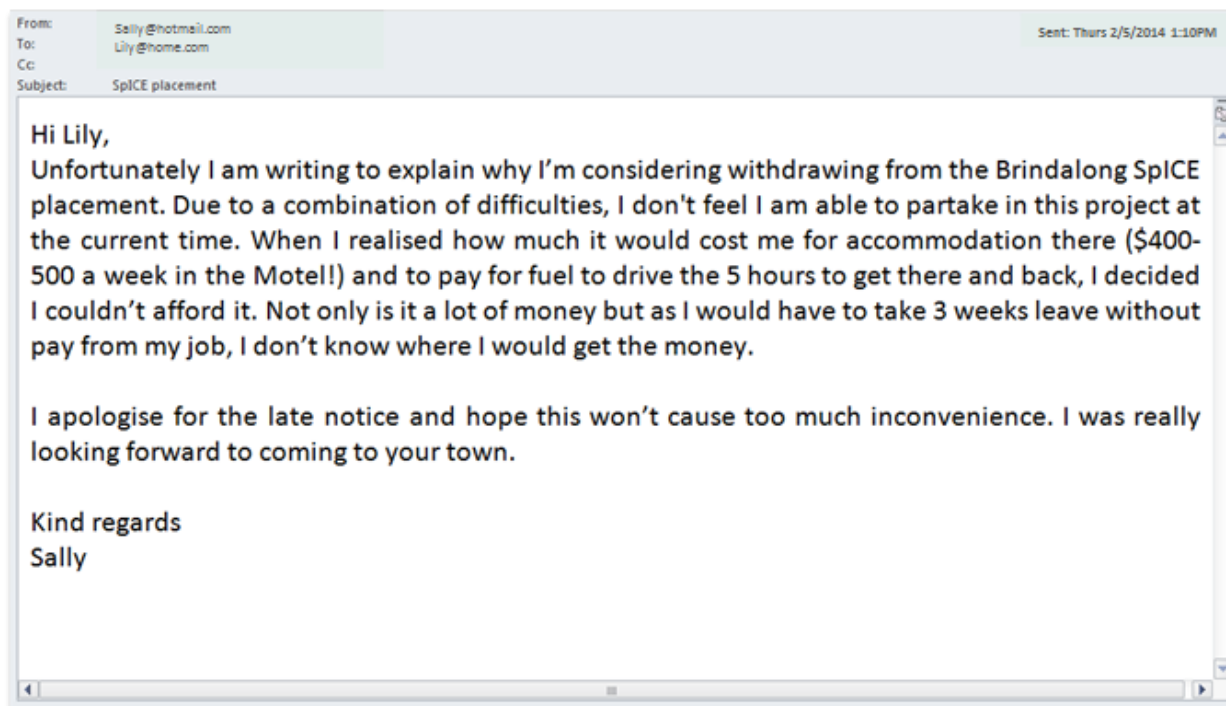
Debrief Mentor	Mitch			
Email	mitch@Brindalong.secondhand.com			
Organisation	Second Hand Shop			
Phone	63 220011 / 0400332215			
Cultural Mentor	Rhonda	Discipline Specific Mentor	John	Lecturers from Environmental Science Program
Organisation	Centre Ways	Organisation	Private Physio Practise	Local University
Phone	63629562	Phone	63652432	66365875

CSU Student Names	Course	Phone No	Email Address
Amanda	Enviro Science	0404045673	amanda@hotmail.com
Fred	Physiotherapy	0042289012	Fred@yahoo.com.au
Leah	Physiotherapy	0403556473	Leah@hotmail.com

SpICE Partners			
CWA	Lily	0417789090	Lily@home.com
Rotary	Bill	0419613280	
Local University	Peta	0437575758	peta@localuni.edu

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Lily has arranged a meeting with the Brindalong Community of Learners. One of the SpICE students has sent an email to say she needs to pull out of the placement. Lily isn't sure how to respond and so takes it to the group.



Since Lily circulated the email, the group have put their thinking caps on. They've been asking around to see what they can do to make it possible for Sally to do the SpICE placement.

Jim suggested he offer Sally his daughter's room seeing as she was away at uni. "It'd be nice to have a young person around the house again," he comments.

But Sue points out that he only has room for one student and no doubt the others might be facing the same problems. "We need a more long term solution if we want these SpICE placements to keep going," she says. "I thought the nurses' accommodation at the hospital might work, but it's full of medical locums at the moment."

Bill says "I had a chat with Brian out at Highgrove Farm. He said their shearers' quarters were vacant at the moment. He'd be happy for the students to stay there for \$10 a week, just to contribute to the electricity. But it's a bit out of town and might bump up the cost of fuel."

"What if we ask the mine to donate some fuel vouchers?" asks Robert, looking at Mitch. "They were looking for ways to put back into the town weren't they?"

"Could be a goer, but don't expect me to ask them!" says Mitch.

They agree to follow up these options and Lily offers to let Sally know the outcome. "Let's hope it's enough to get her back on board."

The Centre Ways garden is abuzz with the SpICE Welcome barbeque. All of the Community of Learners are there, at least for some of the time. The SpICE students add three new faces to the gathering, albeit slightly nervous and unsure faces. There are two physiotherapy students, Fred and Leah; and Angela is an Environmental Science student. The two physios are studying together but they have only met Angela a week ago. The gathering has been going well with introductions, lots of chatting and a general sense of achievement at having got to this point. The students are feeling like celebrities with all the attention they are being given. Each of them secretly hopes that they will be able to live up to expectations and do something worthwhile for the Brindalong community.



Activity

As a group in the tables below:

1. Write down 3 things that you consider absolutely need to be in place before students arrive in your community. Identify who should be responsible for putting this in place.

Tasks to be organised	Who is responsible?

2. Write down another 3 things that you could get away with if they weren't quite ready. Who could help get this organised?

Tasks in place prior to students starting	Who is responsible?

Chapter 4: How
to Support
Students Once
They Arrive

SpICE Principles Guide How You Support Students

SpICE is a very different way of preparing specialist students for their working lives. The focus on learning is about understanding how relationships can build locally relevant solutions. This is quite different to workplace training that focuses on developing an individual's 'specialist skills.'

The SpICE Principles are your guide about how you support students in SpICE to learn about relationships. Your job as a Mentor is to create opportunities for students to learn about and strive to apply the SpICE principles in their activities. You don't need to do it for them, just to guide them. The students aren't expected to know how to do things well yet. They are expected to take guidance and to try new things. In the table below, are descriptions of different ways you might support students to teach them about the principles.

SpICE Principle	How to support student learning	What it will look like when students apply the principle.
Opinions of community take precedence over organisations.	Present students with facts about your Learning Hook in <i>your</i> community. (NB: Your <i>Learning Hook</i> is what you want the SpICE students to do to help your organisation contribute to the Community Focus (Refer to Section 3, Chapter 3, Topic 3 – Learning Hooks).	Students explore why the Learning Hook is important <i>locally</i> – they can explain what evidence and impact the issue has on the people in your community not just organisations.
Including people.	Make links for the students between their knowledge/skills and what people in the community might want to know.	Students find ways to include more people in sharing knowledge about the Learning Hook. E.g. Children/parents/elderly
Build capacity to shape own future.	Support students to look for opportunities valued by your community.	Students design <i>new</i> resources and activities, based on identified opportunities, so they can be used by <i>more</i> people.
Collaboration not competition.	Connect students with people and places who can support their learning about the Learning Hook.	Students look at the Learning Hook from multiple perspectives and find ways to combine efforts for a broader outcome.
Joint decision making	Model to students how you network and negotiate with other people.	Students listen and talk to all the Community of Learners via conversations, emails and formal meetings.
Sustainability	Review progress of student learning and share learning.	Students communicate what they have done to benefit the community during their placement.

Chapter 4: How
to Support
Students Once
They Arrive

Planning a Balance between Community Benefit and Student Learning Needs.

There is a delicate balance in SpICE between providing benefit for the community and providing for the students' learning needs. There will be times when something that would make a great learning opportunity is not in the best interests of your community or vice versa.

If, for example, people in your community have had a series of students coming and going, they may be tired of the constant changing faces. On the other hand, expectations may be way beyond what the students are confident to do or have the time to complete. They need to have time to absorb what they are learning to get real benefit from it.

If you have a sense of unease about a proposed activity, it may be because there is an imbalance. To get this balance right refer to the SpICE principles. Consider any proposed student activity with both the community and students' learning in mind. If the principles can be met for both the community and students then the correct balance has been achieved. If an activity has to be changed or cancelled at the last moment, explaining the reasons to students, using the SpICE Principles can be a big help.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

It's four days into SpICE in Brindalong and so far everything has gone very smoothly. The students have been enthusiastically getting a feel for Brindalong by watching, listening and meeting lots of people.

It's all still a bit mystifying but they have been told that this is normal reaction to SpICE to start with. Amanda reminds the other two that the Uni said "If you think you know what's going on in the first few days, you might be heading down the wrong track." The mentors have also been getting into their stride. The Learning Mentors have proudly presented the students with folders of useful information to help get them oriented. In addition, Robert took on the job of making sure that they knew everything important about their Work Health Safety. He even supplied them with work boots suitable for some of Brindalong's rougher terrain. Jenny made sure that the students had the necessary checks to re-assure their hosts that they were safe to work with children and vulnerable people. Sue did the same in relation to checking the students were properly protected by immunisations.

Mitch hadn't met with the students since the barbeque but he had been hovering around the edges, staying in close contact with everyone. He was looking forward to meeting up with the students tomorrow for lunch. He was just sending them an email about where to meet him when the phone rang. Rhonda was on the line and very agitated.

"Mitch, I've got a big problem! The students are meant to be going to the Supported Playgroup tomorrow. They were going to make books with the families about where to find bush tucker locally. One of the staff here has just come in in a flap. She ran into a group of the mum's down the street. They'd heard that the students were coming to the playgroup and they're not happy about it. Apparently one of them took her child to the doctor a few months back and a student was there. She feels like the student made out she was a bad mum for putting juice in the child's bottle. So now none of them want "those uppity students who don't know anything about being a mum" to ruin

their playgroup. They say they won't go if the students are going to be there. What am I going to do?"

After talking over her dilemma with Mitch, Rhonda decided to postpone, but not cancel the playgroup activity. When she used the principles to check the balance of the benefit and learning need she figured that there was a big chance everyone would lose out if she didn't persevere with the activity. What really stuck out to her though, was that these mothers didn't have any voice about what was going on in SpICE or for that matter, in their community. In planning the initial activity, she had made assumptions about what would be good for them without including them in the decision making. The problem was she knew from past experience that these mums would steer clear of anything that looks like a formal meeting.

Rhonda thought she might have found a solution at the last playgroup. Tracey, one of the more influential mothers, had brought the scrapbook she had just finished to playgroup. There was a photo of Tracey when she was a girl sitting next to her aunty and some other women. They were weaving coloured grass baskets. The playgroup mums were all having a chuckle at Tracey's rather shaggy attempt. The photo got Tracey talking about her childhood up North. "I miss having my aunties nearby. I learnt all kinds of things when we sat around talking like that. You lot are hopeless, you don't tell me anything worth knowing!" she chided the other mums with a grin.

After the banter died down and the mum's went to check on the kids and the like, Rhonda went and had a chat with Tracey. They talked about what Tracey had said about her aunties and sharing knowledge. She broached the topic of the SpICE students and this time Tracey was agreeable to giving them a go if the other mums agreed. Tracey said she'd ask around and let Rhonda know what they decided.



Activity

One of the SpICE principles asks: "Are the contributions and opinions of community members taking precedence over the contributions and opinions of organisations participating in SpICE?"

With your group, discuss:

1. How you could support the students to seek the opinions of community members (ie not organisations) where you live?
2. How would you know if the students had been successful at engaging with your community?

Learning Hooks Help Students to Understand the Community Focus

The Community Focus binds the efforts of the Community of Learners (See Section 3 of the Guidebook for information on the Community Focus). The students are unlikely to understand the importance of the Focus in the way you do. They simply do not have the experience to do so. When the students come to your organisation, provide them with your Learning Hook. Your *Learning Hook* is what you want the SpICE students to do to help your organisation contribute to the Community Focus. This Learning Hook provides the direction of what the students need to *do* for you. But first, get them involved with you and your organisation's daily activities. This way they find out as much as possible about what you do and how you do it.

Once the students have spent some time getting to know your community, start using the Learning Hooks to sharpen their understanding of the Community Focus.

Listen to what the students have noticed in the community. Find out what reactions they are having to what they have noticed. Let them spend some time, thinking about any fresh, creative ideas they can generate. But don't leave them to dwell in this creative space for too long before you guide them towards getting started. Your job at this point is to draw together the threads of what the students have noticed and their fresh ideas and relate them back to the Learning Hook.

The following points are some things you could discuss with the students to help them understand what they need to do around the Learning Hook.

- Explain your or your organisation's normal role in relation to the Community Focus. What aspect of this would you like the Learning Hook to enhance?
- Who do you want the students to work with? Why this group?
- How do you want the students to use the Learning Hook to connect with people in your community?
- What is something tangible the students can make, teach or do to share their specialist knowledge with other people in relation to the Learning Hook?
- How can the students explore the Learning Hook from different angles?
- How will the Learning Hook continue to be of value once the students have left?

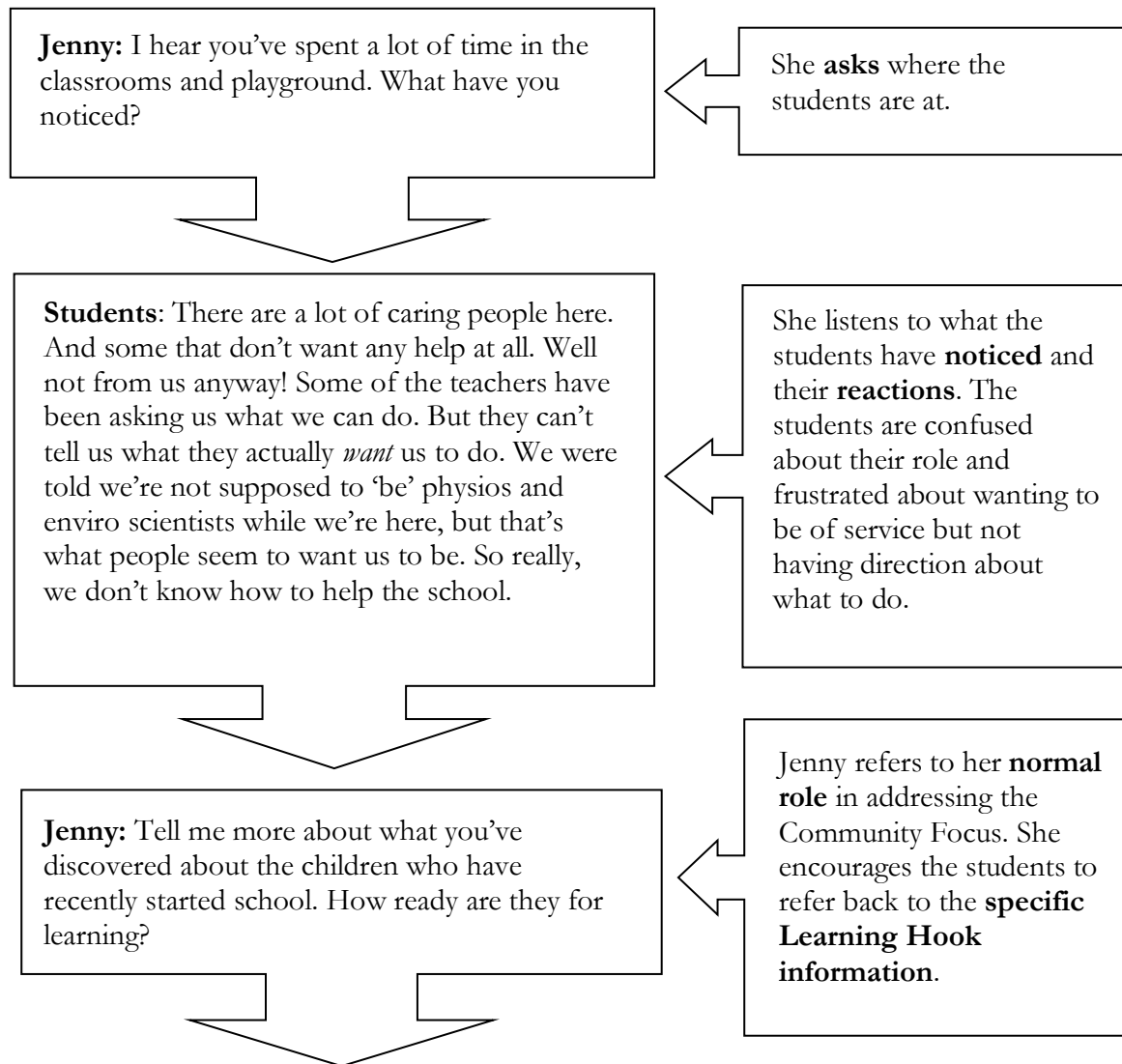
The Brindalong Community of Learners

The following conversation is from the Brindalong story. It illustrates how Jenny, the school's Learning Mentor, is guiding a conversation with the students to assist their understanding of the Learning Hook and how it contributes to the Community Focus.

Jenny is meeting with the students at the start of their second week. The students have lost a lot of their earlier shine and are looking both confused and a little frustrated. Jenny is recognising this may be a make or break point for the students. She needs to allow them room to contribute to broadening the Learning Hook, but also to get them feeling like they are making some progress. Jenny's Learning Hook is "A sustainability theme for the school readiness materials." This is a segment of the conversation where Jenny is supporting the students to seek information more actively.

The Conversation

How Jenny Guides the Conversation



Students: Well the kids have a wide range of ability. Some are starting to read little books and some have no idea. At lunch time there's a big variety in what the kids bring to eat, that's if they bring anything at all. They seem to spend most of their playtime on the climbing equipment but do the same thing over and over. But we were surprised that even the kids who aren't very capable still seem to really enjoy being at school.

She pays attention to **how** the students have found out information. In this case it's been from watching rather than actively seeking information.

Jenny: It's interesting that you're surprised that they enjoy school. Do you think enjoying school should be a goal in getting kids ready for school?

She encourages the students to hone in on their **reactions** to what they've seen.

Students: Do you mean we should forget about making sure the kids know the alphabet before they start school and tell them all the good things about being here?

Jenny can hear that the students want to get **started** on the 'doing.'

Jenny: Well, I mean, maybe we've been too focussed on the children's readiness for maths and reading etc. We could be missing something really important about them *wanting* to be here in the first place. How else can you explore more about what makes school interesting for children and if it is important?

She encourages the students to look more deeply at aspects of the Learning Hook to **enhance** what the school normally does.

Students: I guess we could ask the teachers with a survey or something. They seem so busy we don't want to take up their time. Maybe we could ask the parents but they don't hang around at school once they drop the kids off.

Jenny hears the students are beginning to think about **who** else could contribute.

Jenny: The adults' opinions will be really relevant but could you find out from the children as well? Maybe you could think about some ways to explore what the children think beyond just watching and asking?

Jenny leads the students to look at the question from **many different angles**.

Students: True. Some of the little kids probably wouldn't *tell* us much anyway. Children like competitions don't they? What if we had some kind of competition about the most fun things about school? Or got them to interview their parents about their school days or something? Then we could get everyone thinking!

Jenny has guided the students to start to think of something **tangible** they can do and to seek information more broadly.

Supporting Students through Stages of Learning

SpICE students will be at different stages of learning over the course of the placement and not all students will be at the same stage at the same time. When you meet with students gauge their stage to work out what kind of support they need. SpICE is a team effort so it can be difficult to figure out the stages of the individual students. It can also be hard to cater to the individual need of a student. Sometimes using the other students can be an asset. However, sometimes it's necessary to arrange to meet students individually to plan for their specific learning needs.

The table below describes four learning stages (Peyton 1988) and what support may be needed.

Learning Stage	How the student might behave.	How you can support the student.
<p>Student doesn't know that they don't know how to do a task.</p> <p>Risk: They can be a danger to themselves and other people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknowingly take on tasks above their skill level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be shown what to do and have explanations about what parts of the task are important and why. • They need to be closely monitored. • Work with other members of the Community of Learners to share this responsibility of supporting the student.
<p>Student knows that they are inadequately skilled at a task.</p> <p>Risk: They miss opportunities to develop new skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to avoid tasks • Hide themselves within a team • Let other people take the lead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them to identify the skill they need to learn. • Tell them that mistakes at this stage are okay as long as they have a go. • Help them identify who can support them in learning the task. • Get them to negotiate what roles they will take on with the team.
<p>The student is able to do a task but it requires effort to complete it successfully.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow to complete tasks • May be overwhelmed by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to practise the task to build their ability and confidence. • Provide feedback that

Risk: If the task varies from what they are used to, they may lose confidence in their ability.	<p>too many tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of work may fluctuate. 	<p>focuses on the quality of work and time management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify how they can apply what they are doing well in more contexts. • Modify their timetable to repeat tasks rather than introducing variety.
<p>The student is efficient and confident with various tasks.</p> <p>Risk: Student doesn't continue to seek new skills and knowledge. May take over tasks from other students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have extra time on their hands. • May offer to do tasks for other students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the student to teach this skill to other people. • Look for ways for student to extend their learning. • Ask the student to document their activities and reflections so it can be shared.

Meeting with Students

An important part of student learning is for them to have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the learning activities with their Mentors. Regardless of what type of Mentor role you have, you will need to make time to debrief with students. Some Mentors choose to schedule regular meeting times with the students while others will fit a debriefing session in whenever they can, for example when they're driving back from a learning activity.

Keep in mind that there is a network of Mentors in your community. Communicating regularly with the mentoring team can avoid some problems with students or at least provide an early alert. Students may not want to burden you with their worries. They may be slow to identify that they need more support or that they're feeling overworked. They may not even realise that they're getting a lot of learning in some SpICE Principles and completely missing out in others.

You can also make sure you have all the bases covered regarding supporting the students. Are they on track with their activities? Is anyone checking the quality or accuracy of their work? Who is giving them feedback on their activity? Are they thinking ahead about how they will report their achievements? And importantly, how are they coping with the experience?

There are some key times when SpICE students will need time to debrief including:

- As part of their orientation to your community or organisation.
- After they have spent some time in an organisation or the community as a whole (2-3 days after starting) to discuss what they have noticed.

- When they have gathered some information about the community and need guidance to balance community expectations and their ability.
- If there is a significant or stressful event for the students or the community.
- If they or you feel there is a need to talk either individually or with the students as a group.
- Towards the end of the placement to provide some closure on their learning.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

When Rhonda contacted the students to make a time to prepare them for the playgroup, she got a disheartening response from Angela, "We heard that the playgroup mums don't want us to come. They haven't even met us and they think we're racist or

something! The three of us have decided it might be better if we don't go."

Rhonda recognised that the students might feel uncomfortable talking this issue through with her because of her close relationship with the mums. She suggested that the students meet with Mitch, the Debriefing Mentor, to talk it through.

The meeting with Mitch and the students went well. He was able to explain to them that past experiences had made these mums suspicious of the students even though they had never met them individually. He said it was an example of the distrust some community members feel about 'people in authority.' It wasn't personal but the students represented everything that had ever been done to these parents that excluded them from making decisions for themselves. Mitch then suggested some strategies the students could use at the playgroup, like not wearing their uniform and asking Rhonda, as a trusted person, to introduce them individually to the mothers. He was pleased when Leah suggested that maybe they should steer away from giving advice unless they were asked for it. With a better understanding of the issues, the students agreed to go to the playgroup. However, sensing that they were still a little anxious, Mitch suggested a follow-up meeting with Rhonda and himself.

"I've loved your bi-weekly SpICE bulletins Lily," says Jim "It's a nice little snapshot of what's going on around the traps. Looks like the students are busy."

Lily had been thinking the same thing. She was worried that maybe they were too busy. When Leah came to drop off the information for the last bulletin, she was looking a bit overtired. She'd said she was fine and given a brief smile, but Lily wasn't convinced. She thought she might mention it to Sue who seemed to have a good connection with Leah. Maybe Sue could get to the bottom of it?

Lily had also noticed that the students were providing a lot of information about what was happening at the school and preschool but there was very little about their activities at Council. "Jim, did you see Robert yesterday at the Men's shed?" asked Lily.

"No. He didn't end up coming. The students postponed their activity of recycling doors into the playground picnic benches. Shame really. I was looking forward to getting out the power tools. They said they couldn't fit it in...something about wanting to watch something at the school I think? Is there a problem?" Jim asks.

"Nothing a bit of communication won't fix. I think it might be time for a SpICE catch up." She says.

Supporting Students through Emotion

SpICE placements are often very challenging for students as they are faced with unfamiliar situations and lots of new information. They may react to these challenges with emotional behaviour like fear, anger and uncertainty. As students are still learning to act in a professional way, they may have less experience to draw on to work through this emotion.

Sometimes they just need someone to *hear* how they're feeling. They need someone to understand that they are feeling vulnerable and unsure of themselves and quite possibly a little homesick. It's not unreasonable that when things get a bit hard, that they might doubt the value of what they're doing. Listening will re-assure the students that their input is valued. It will also guide you in what aspects of the placement they are focused on and give you ideas about how to proceed. However, responding to this emotion in a heavy handed way just makes some students focus on their anger rather than leaving space to work through the issues.

At other times, students may be expressing their emotion in an inappropriate way. Careful listening to their emotion is necessary to sort out when further action is needed. If their emotional behaviour it is undermining the SpICE principles, then it is likely to be causing *harm* to someone. Emotional outbursts that are doing harm ABSOLUTELY need to be dealt with.

Mentors will react to the same emotional behaviour in different ways and may be triggered to act sooner than others would. Sometimes there is a trigger that something needs to be done but the time, place or person to do it isn't right. This is another reason why collaborating is so important. It means that if you have recognised inappropriate emotional behaviour but don't know how to deal with it, you have a network of people who can help you.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Lily organised a quick SpICE catch-up lunch with the students and any of the Community of Learners who were available. While dessert is being served, Sue notices that Leah is spending quite a bit of time texting on her phone and is looking increasingly distressed.

She feels a bit irritated by this as she thinks Leah is missing out on her chance to contribute to the group discussion. "Is everything ok?" Sue decides to ask Leah. Leah looks up from the phone blinking away some tears. "Sorry, what did you say?" Leah asks.

"You've been on your phone a while. I was wondering if everything's ok?" Sue repeats.

"I'm ok, it's just my mum checking how I'm going." Leah attempts a little smile but it is obvious to Sue that something's not right.

Leah goes on, "My partner, James, rang Mum to help out with our baby. It's the first time he's had him on his own. I wrote down what he needs to do but..." More tears come to Leah's eyes and she can't hold them back.

Gently Sue hands Leah a tissue. "So is it your first time away from your baby? What's his name?" "His name's Will, but we mostly call him Pudding. Our little milk pudding." This time she manages a proper smile. "I know it's stupid. It's not like I've never left him before. Just not for more

than a day. I can't bear the thought that James might be forgetting the little things like his night-time kiss and cuddle. I just wanted to make sure Mum reminds James."

Sue gives Leah a reassuring look. "Those babies really get under our skin don't they? Takes a while to get used to being away from them."

Leah looking unhappy again says, "Yeah, I'm not sure how I'll get through three weeks without him but I really want to do this placement. I've spent the last 10 months in a new-mum-bubble and now I want to get back out into the world. SpICE seems so important that I didn't want to miss out on the opportunity."

Sue suggests she might like to use a room inside to speak to her family privately. "I'll get you a cup of tea if you like?" As Leah heads inside, Sue decides to give the Mentors the heads up. Otherwise, like her, they might assume that Leah isn't being very professional, when all she really needs is a bit of support for her homesickness.



Activity

Consider the scenarios below and discuss with the group if you think the emotional behaviour is causing harm. If you think it is, which principle is the behaviour compromising? When should it be dealt with? By whom?

SpICE Principles:

- 1 Are our activities sustainable over the long-term?
- 2 Are we providing people with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their ability to shape their own future?
- 3 Are we actively seeking to include people in our activities (but recognising that inclusion and participation happen differently for people and communities)?
- 4 Are we striving for joint decision-making and agreement?
- 5 Are we collaborating - as opposed to competing - within projects and processes?
- 6 Are the contributions and opinions of community members taking precedence over the contributions and opinions of organisations participating in SpICE?

Scenario 1:

The SpICE students are meeting with a school Learning Mentor. It has been suggested that they need to find out what the teachers think the children need to learn about oral health. The students say they are "scared" to approach the teachers who all seem so busy."

Scenario 2:

The SpICE students are having lunch with a group from the local Parkinson's Support Group at an outside café in the main street of a small rural town. From a distance up the street, their Debriefing Mentor notices that one of the students is sitting with her arms crossed and looking very bored with the company.

Scenario 3:

A SpICE student expresses her concern to her Debriefing Mentor about her fellow students gossiping on Facebook about other students on the team.

Chapter 5:
Maintaining the
Support of Your
Organisation

Explain Organisational Rules to Students

We can't avoid that all work places have rules, some for good reasons, and some just because that's what we've always done. To maintain the support of your workplace, help the students follow these rules. Make them aware of where all the rules are found and then talk them through the ones they really need to be familiar with. Policies on Work Health Safety and what to do in emergencies is necessary, but how your organisation responds to a natural disaster may not be. Don't forget to word-up the students about the 'unspoken' rules about your organisation, like who's chair they should never sit in and why nobody ever parks in that particular spot.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

"It would have been hilarious if it hadn't been so dangerous," says Sue.

"So tell me slowly this time, how did she end up with dog-prints all over her shirt?" asks Robert looking very confused.

"Well the students were meant to meet us out at Kinty to help with the before school health screening," explains Sue. "But Amanda was running late so she decided to take her own car instead of going with the others. Leah and Fred turned up but it was 1½ hours later before Amanda arrived. We'd all been in flap imagining she'd had an accident and none of us could contact her. We couldn't get help because we didn't know where she was. And of course, today of all days, we had a queue a mile long of kids to check! Anyway, eventually she gets out of her car with these big paw prints all over her shirt. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She'd got lost on the back roads, didn't have the map that's in the work cars and her phone had no reception. After driving around for about 50km she saw a farmhouse and plucked up her courage to go and ask directions. She was welcomed by the biggest farm dog she's ever met! To think what could've happened to her. Thank goodness she came out of it unharmed. If only she'd followed the driving policy we could have been saved the ordeal."

Support of Management and Other Workers

When people start noticing the SpICE students about, the difference between 'in principle support' and 'actual support' might start to become apparent. There might be subtle barriers like the space previously allocated for students urgently needs to be used for storage or more obvious ones like cancelling pre-arranged student learning activities with no further explanation. While there will always be genuine and unavoidable reasons for changes to plans, it is important to be alert to the possibility that people in your organisation are questioning or removing their support. Even worse, some might be actively working against the SpICE student placement.

Communication and respectful relationships remain the main tools to deal with this. Whether or not you include the students in the process to try and resolve issues is up to your judgment. This will be based on the severity of the situation, what you know of the people involved and how successfully you think it will be resolved. It can be valuable for students to experience these types of negotiations but they are also in a more vulnerable position (or perceive they are) than other workers. The others involved might be less willing to explain what's going on for them if students are present.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

"Sounds like the playgroup mums were happy with the bush tucker recipe book the students made with them." Sue says to Rhonda.

"I'm glad you're hearing good stuff from the mums. My boss has sent me a 'please explain' email."

"What do you have to explain? It all turned out well." says Sue.

"Not soon enough for Sara unfortunately. She was so upset with having to deal with the mums when they were feeling irate, that she went to the boss about it. Apparently he's rethinking the value of having students at Centre Ways. Causes "too much grief for the staff" apparently.

"What are you going to do?" asks Sue.

"You know, I'd just like to be able to be allowed to get on with it, without the interference. But I know if I don't deal with it, it's stuff like this that really undermines what we're trying to do. I've already spoken to Sara and she's fine with it now. I thought maybe I could take a jar of the bush lemon marmalade we made with the group to sweeten the boss? Might give me a chance to explain the benefits that have come from it?"

"If he likes marmalade!" laughs Sue. "Good luck."

Maintaining Support for Collaborative Learning

SpICE placements are very different to traditional ways of preparing students for the workforce. A collaborative learning approach to student support has the potential to raise all kinds of concerns and uncertainties about 'proper' ways to train students. And as we have said before, what people are uncertain about, they may try to block. It's important to try and avoid being *forbidden* to support students.

The reasons that could be given to stop you supporting students are listed below. Matched to these are examples of responses that focus on a solution rather than the emotion.

How 'NO' might sound	Responding with a solution
"Students are too time consuming"	"SpICE student support is shared, so there is only a minimal impact on my time."

"Supporting students is not the job we're paying you to do."	"Students are helping me explore ways to do my job better."
"You have no skills to support students from other disciplines/professions."	"Supporting students helps me build on the skills I do have. There are opportunities in SpICE to be mentored that are unavailable in my usual work."
"We can't prove that you're meeting your core responsibilities."	"Students enable us to learn new ways to measure what's important about community well-being."

The Brindalong Community of Learners

Robert and Sue have invited Rhonda over for dinner. They thought she might need a debrief after her meeting with the boss. "So how was it?" asks Robert.

"Actually, I was pleasantly surprised. I'd been worried he was going to end my student support days there and then." says Rhonda.

"I hadn't realised it was that serious." says Sue.

"Well I'd sort of been hiding the fact that I was supporting the students. As I wasn't needed as a Discipline Specific Mentor, I'd just let him think that I wasn't doing it at all. But Sara's complaint brought it out into the open."

"Jeez, that was a bit risky," says Robert. "He could've dug his heels in and never let you have students."

"Yeh. I get it now. But at the start, I'd just thought it would be easier if I kept a bit quiet about it. I really believe in what we're doing. Nothing's going to change if we don't give these students the chance to see what really happens here. But I wasn't sure I could get that message across clearly in the heat of the moment. I get so nervous and can't think of the right words. Luckily, I had time to get my arguments clear before I went in. I really pushed the point that the support I'm getting through SpICE isn't costing him a cent. Anyway some of what I said must have convinced him. He's letting me keep going. But he said I'd have to submit a report about my role in SpICE support. And he wants a copy of the cook book."



Activity

Individually, write down two reasons why you might be blocked from supporting SpICE students.

1. _____
2. _____

As a group choose one reason that has been given and discuss how you might approach this with solutions rather than emotion.

Celebrate

By the end of a SpICE placement you will have shared a significant part of the students' learning journey. It is likely that there will have been some very positive moments along the way. As the SpICE placement draws to an end, encourage the students to plan how they are going to formally finish the placement. How will they hand-over any resources or reports they have developed to the community? An end of placement event is a valuable way to acknowledge and celebrate the efforts and achievements of everyone involved in this collaborative learning experience.



Activity

Imagine you have been nominated to thank the students for their efforts at an end of placement morning tea. Consider what elements or outcomes would signify to you that it had been a successful placement. Use these to write two things that you would specifically thank them for. Then discuss these with the group.

1. _____

2. _____

Summary

Providing good teaching and learning in SpICE requires a lot of consideration of what drives you, how you work with others in your community and how you argue the value of hosting students in your organisation. While it may seem simple to teach a learner something you know, doing it well, requires preparation.

By now you should be starting to feel familiar with some of the following ideas.

- You have thought about why you want to support SpICE students and what you have to offer them.
- You have considered how you will share the support of students with others in your community.
- You have reflected on ways to make supporting students an acceptable part of your organisation's business.
- You have imagined what students can and can't do to help address the Community Focus.
- You have realised that student support isn't all smooth sailing but you're more confident in recognising problems before they become too big.
- You have some strategies for dealing with the problems and not just giving up.

Supporting students may not be a part of your normal work or anything that you have tried before, but there are many benefits from supporting SpICE students. It might be that you can attract more specialists to your community; or you can tap into the knowledge that students hold; or possibly you have a lot that you want to share, or learn? Overall, as a Mentor, your contribution to student learning will be beneficial in many ways.

The Brindalong Community of Learners

There is a lot of laughter coming from the Brindalong school staffroom. The Community of Learners have the local newspaper in front of them. There's a two page spread featuring SpICE and what has been achieved.

What do you think is on the page?

Maybe it's time to imagine what your SpICE story will look like.

The Brindalong SpICE Story

Brindalong is a town of about 1500 people, about four hours from the nearest big regional centre. There's a teacher (Jenny) at the local primary school, and the community nurse (Sue) who is employed to do health promotion and primary prevention for an area covering 130 kilometres in any one direction. Sue visits the school once a term as part of her job. Sue's husband (Robert) runs the local rubbish tip and re-cycling centre for the Council, and then there's Tiffany who, as the pre-school director, knows both Jenny and Sue.

None of them have ever thought of themselves as brave – but what they are about to do is the bravest thing anyone in Brindalong has ever seen. The four of them are going to take an enormous leap of faith; but they'll do it together, and because of that, they hope the fear won't be as strong.

Sue, Tiffany, Robert and Jenny all have different fires in their bellies. Robert is sickened by the waste produced by their town, and how nobody seems to care about the effect on the environment. Jenny and Tiffany are both really worried about the educational outcomes for children in Brindalong; how some children don't attend pre-school, and how the children - and many of their parents - don't seem to have much hope for the future. Sue, the nurse, feels overwhelmed by the demands of her job, and feels she is accomplishing very little.

In one way or another, all four are connected to each other. All four wish to do something to improve things. They all feel in some way that a 'fair-go' for all is in fact, very unequal. But they haven't actually talked together about these things.

Over time, Robert has talked to a few mates in other rubbish dumps round the region about the environmental impact of what is going on. On the basis of these chats, he approached his boss and told him he was interested about finding out what

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

other Councils were doing. His boss talked to him at length, and then because Robert was interested, he put him onto many organisations on the Web that were talking about what should be done with waste management and sustainability. Robert's boss said they'd love to do more in their community, but there just wasn't the money or the community interest to invest in trying new ways of doing things. Robert went home and looked up the websites Michael gave him. Much of this information was way above Robert's head, and he became disheartened. He left it there for a while.

One day Robert is on the way to the supermarket and passes the local second-hand shop. On impulse, he goes in and starts talking to the ladies who run it about what he's worried about, and how he's read on the internet that there are better ways to think about rubbish disposal. They have a long conversation, and the ladies agree with him completely, and say how no-one's interested in re-using and re-cycling, they just want to buy new stuff, and if there was less rubbish to get rid of, then that would be one part of the rubbish disposal problem fixed. They tell Robert to have a word with Mitch, their boss, as he started, and continues to organise, the second-hand shop. They go on to say Mitch gives stuff away if people say they need it. They tell Robert he's a bit of a dreamer about a better world for everyone. Robert smiles and says, "It's not all about money, is it?"

While the ladies shake their heads and mutter about it 'Being no way to run a business', Robert leaves feeling confused – but somehow more hopeful. He knows he ought to speak to Mitch, but somehow he's scared as well. Mitch sounds too different to him. Yet in spite of feeling muddled, Robert also thinks there might be something that could be done – but has no idea what!

Meanwhile, Jenny and Tiffany have, as part of their work, been meeting to talk about developing a better Readiness for School program for the parents and children of Brindalong. Talk soon turns to the children not attending pre-school, and the difficulties of reaching parents who will be sending their children to primary school next year, but who have no access to School Readiness information. Tiffany decides to speak with Sue, the nurse, because she thinks all children and parents will have had something to do with the health system, thus Sue might have some ideas about how to reach these parents. Without a doctor who lives in the town, Sue is the community link with health services.

Sue says she'd give a lot to be able to work with Tiffany and Jenny, because the School Readiness program might be a good way to get health promotion and primary prevention messages across. But she says the community nurse in the next district is on maternity leave, so she has to cover both areas, and she won't have time to help. However, she knows of Lily, a retired nurse, who is the president of the local Country Woman's Association, and also a really passionate community member who is always up for helping out for the benefit of everyone.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Robert meets up with Mitch (the owner of the second-hand shop) and buys him a beer at the Brindalong Hotel. Robert is feeling a little anxious about this meeting. He's not really met any 'dreamers' who give the stock from their shop away if someone needs something. On the one side he admires Mitch for doing this, but there's a niggle in him that sort of disapproves as well.

When they've settled down with their beer, Mitch asks Robert where he works and how long he's worked there.

"I run the tip now. I started at the Council straight from school."

"That's a long time in one place."

Robert shrugged, "They look after us, and then you get used to working there, so you don't even think of leaving."

"You get stuck in your ways, don't you?" Mitch agreed, "I was like that for years. Just got up, went to work and came home, and life piled up before you knew it."

"Where did you work?" asked Robert.

"One of the mines. Year in and year out, just doing my job, then I started to wake up and see things differently."

Robert asked what happened, and Mitch said, "Nothing much. It was just something I read in the paper – it was nothing important; some journo going on about how the mines were wrecking the environment. But it was like a leaking tap. I'd heard it over and over from so many places that it suddenly sank in that it was important. It was like a glass getting full up to the brim and then spilling over."

"So what did you do?"

"Nothing much for a while, to be honest. But I had my eyes wide open and my ears pinned back at work. It was like I needed to find the proof of it for myself that the papers were right, see? I needed the proof to make my own mind up. And the more I listened, the more I got convinced, and then the more I got convinced, the more I wanted to change things to make the mine better."

"So what happened?"

Mitch grinned at Robert, "What do you think happened? I went at it like a bloody bull in a china shop, that's what happened! I nagged so hard at my managers about how we could do things better they said I was a trouble-maker. I couldn't handle it after a while and resigned."

"Then how do we ever get to change things?" asked Robert.

"Not too sure, mate. But I know for certain the starting point is waking up to yourself and really looking and listening to what's going on round you. That's a big change in YOU. That's the starting point: you and what's going on around you!"

Sue, the community nurse, phones up Lily, who is the current president of the Brindalong Country Women's Association (CWA) and is also a retired nurse.

Sue says, "Lily, there's Tiffany from the pre-school and Jenny from the primary school who are wanting to improve their School Readiness information, and they want to reach all the parents of kids coming up to school age. But the problem is they don't know how to go about it. I'm under the pump at work and can't give them a hand – so I thought of you?"

"As if I haven't got enough going on!" says Lily, pleased to be asked, but not wanting anyone to take advantage.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

“I know, but it’s not like you’d have to do too much – they’d do the contacting. They just don’t know how to start. They’re not sure how to start looking for everything going on that might involve parents.”

“Well it wouldn’t be just the parents, would it? You’d have to think about all the places where the babies and toddlers might have been as well. So there’d be the playgroups, the infant services, the family carers, Community Health and their hearing screening program – and that’s just for starters. And for the parents, there’re all the sports clubs, the Council, let alone the pubs – they could put notices up there, couldn’t they?”

“You see why I thought of you, Lily!”

Sue and Lily continue their phone conversation:

Lily says, “But you know what’s worrying me about how Tiffany and Sue are wanting to go about contacting all the parents of kiddies going to school? It’s that most kids up to four years have health checks. Almost every parent takes their kids for them. So why don’t Tiffany and Sue link up with the infant services and put their School Readiness stuff with that? Kill two birds with one stone.”

Sue says, “Good thinking! We could put some health promotion messages in the School Readiness program, couldn’t we?”

“That *we* is sounding dangerous, Sue!” said Lily, laughing.

Tiffany is talking to Ally, one of her teachers in the pre-school. Ally has heard about Tiffany, Jenny and Sue’s conversations about SpICE. Ally says to Tiffany, “It sounds like everybody’s doing lots of talking, and yet you know as well as I do that at least five of our kids here need proper sensory assessments. Tiffany, we need an occupational therapist – we don’t need all this talk! And if we can’t have an OT, then let’s just phone the Uni and get a bunch of OT students to do the assessments for us.”

Tiffany thinks carefully before she answers. On the one hand, she shares Ally’s frustrations and is deeply tempted to get the help she needs now by phoning around and encouraging someone to come and help. But on the other hand, she realises that the problem will continue if a new approach for getting specialist service skills and knowledge is not identified.

Slowly she says, “Ally, we’ve got five kids now we think need assessment and help. Next year, there will be more – and the year after that, and after that. If we phone the Uni, that means you’ll have to organise it each and every year. And then what about the kids who aren’t speaking properly? We’ve got plenty of those as well. And young Billy with his pigeon toes – and most of the whole lot of them coming to school without having seen a toothbrush in the morning! If you phone the Uni for all those different students, you’ll never be teaching here - you’ll be too busy organising Uni students, and you’d have to do the same every year. It won’t solve anything.

“No Ally, this SpICE idea might take a lot of talking, and it might take a whole lot of thinking differently, but there’s the chance here that we end up knowing an awful lot more about how to go about helping the kids and the community. That’s important. And on top of that, I’ll not let Jenny down. The primary school has got as many kids

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

with problems as here. We can't go it alone and phone the Uni – or anyone else. We have to work together on this.”

Sue, the community nurse talks to Jim, who owns the local supermarket, on the pavement outside the shop. She says, “You and me, Jim, we’ve always been so interested in Brindalong getting stronger and not dying like half the towns round here.”

“And a full-time job it’s turned into!” Jim smiles.

Sue walks towards her car. “You know there’s something new a few people are starting to talk about that’s aimed at getting Uni students to town to do the heavy lifting of helping us get stronger – it’s called SpICE. They’d be doing the work.”

Jim is carrying Sue’s shopping bags and laughs, “All Spice or Old Spice? I could always do with extra shelf-packers!”

Sue opens the boot and replies, “Not quite that sort of heavy lifting! More like doing specialist projects in the town and teaching us new skills in the process. But we’d tell them what we wanted them to do.”

“Not shelf-packing?” Grins Jim.

“No. Things that we all need – like doing a project to teach us how not to make so much rubbish. Something like that.” says Sue. “Everyone’s still talking about it and nothing’s decided – would you like to come along when there’s the next SpICE get-together?”

“If it’ll help the town, I’ll come along” agrees Jim.

Sue and Robert host a barbeque at their place one Saturday night and invite Tiffany (pre-school principal), Lily (head of CWA and a recently retired nurse), Sue (who even though is overwhelmed with work still wants to be involved), Mitch (who started the second-hand shop) and Jim, the owner of the supermarket.

Jim says, “I was glad Sue stopped and talked to me the other week. I don’t know what we might be getting into, but almost anything is worth a go, isn’t it?”

“Do you know how nervous I was talking to you?” answered Sue. “Up till then, it had just been us talking pie-in-the-sky. Talking to you made this SpICE thing real. It felt really big. You know what I mean?”

Lily glances at everyone in turn and says, “But there’s plenty more who we could speak to. I know Robert’s working for the Council, but we could have a chat with the Bob Mackey the Mayor. And then there’s my brother-in-law Bill at Rotary. And what about Centre Ways – there’s that social worker who works there – she was your bridesmaid wasn’t she, Tiffany - what’s her name?”

But it’s Jenny that answers, “You mean Rhonda. She’s the social worker. I know her through childcare.”

“Yes, that’s it! Rhonda. We could go and talk to all of them.”

There was silence for a while. Then Robert says, “I’m up for it, but I’d feel happier if there was someone with me in case I start explaining it wrong!”

Everybody laughs. “Figure we’re all in the same boat there. With any luck they’ll come along for the ride because they know us. That’s not a bad place to start if you think about it.”

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

When everyone was at Sue and Robert's barbeque, they each agreed to do some more talking with their organisations, as well as engaging others in Brindalong, to confirm (or otherwise) that there might be the interest and opportunity to improve things in the community by initiating a SpICE project. They also considered the SpICE principles and simultaneously came to a realisation. They all laughed and then raised their glasses in a toast, acknowledging themselves as the first, albeit fledgling, SpICE Community of Learners for Brindalong!

When talk resumed, they went back to the SpICE principles and started a wide-ranging conversation about who lives in the town, what organisations serve the town, and who else they know who might be passionate about improvement in the town. Each person took responsibility for contacting people they know, and for finding out more about their community, its strengths, and where, perhaps, capacity could be developed. Each person at the barbeque also undertook to test the waters of their own organisation to see how the idea of working together in partnership to develop the capacity of the town might be received.

A couple of weeks later, the fledgling SpICE Community of Learners for Brindalong gets together over a meal at the local pub. Their number has increased by two: Bill, the Secretary of the local Rotary Club, and Rhonda, a social worker employed by Centre Ways, a local well-being organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Since that evening at Sue and Robert's barbeque, there's been a lot of talking to people in town, and many of them are feeling that 'they've lost their way'. While everyone still has their individual 'Fires-in-their-belly', they feel that talking to other people in the town only distracted them. Jenny from the primary school says everyone she spoke to added another problem to be 'fixed' by somebody else.

Tiffany from the pre-school said, "But it's not only problems. I spoke to a lot of parents about school attendance, and wanting to improve our School Readiness program. But most of them said it wasn't any of our business to worry about who wasn't coming to school. They said we've got a really good school system here, and why worry about those who don't want to take advantage of it? Then I've got half my teachers thinking I'm running mad with SpICE. They're in my ear saying what we actually need are some assessments done, and what we need to do is to just nag at someone to come and do them! I'm really confused."

Robert said, "Have you noticed that everyone talks about 'need'? Everyone says, 'We need this or that', like the whole town is a big bag of problems that need fixing by the Government. But we know that's not true. Look at what we've got here – it's a great place to live, isn't it? Maybe people are just used to talking about what everyone else should be doing to help them, but there'll never be an end to that, will there?"

Rhonda the social worker says, "But there are a lot of people who really do have need for more and better services."

"But we can't solve that!" said Robert, and everyone heard the frustration in his voice. "All we can do with SpICE is build up the town. You make something stronger, and that'll help some of those big problems."

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Everybody nods, feeling a bit more focused. “We just have to make a start, don’t we?” said Sue. “From all the talking round town, what were people saying?”

Generally feeling a bit better, the Community of Learners compare notes. In the end, there are 2 clear opinions about what the focus of the first SpICE should be:

- Children, school readiness, early literacy, and health messages
- Rubbish and the sustainability of the environment

When asked later, nobody remembers who actually said, “Well, why can’t we put them together somehow, since the sustainability and environment idea is surely part of kids being prepared to have a healthy future?”

Then someone else said, “And if the children are motivated, that’ll mean the adults will get shamed into being more thoughtful about the environment.” Then someone else added, “That was what they did with No Smoking, wasn’t it? Got the kids disapproving, then all us parents changed our tune!”

Everyone becomes excited, and starts thinking about the idea from their own perspective. “We could have a sustainability theme for our School Readiness program!” said Jenny. “Maybe we could have a focus on Bush Tucker?” added Rhonda, “we could maybe start a bush tucker garden at the pre-school and primary school....”

“....And get them built with rubbish from the tip!” added Robert.

“You can count on me to round up the shopkeepers!” said Jim.

“And the CWA!” added Lily.

.... and so the ideas kept coming for quite a while.

Then all of a sudden: everyone goes quiet. Everyone realises, almost at the very same time, that they haven’t the time, and certainly the knowledge, to pull all this together without help.

Robert pulls out the picture of the SpICE Model and looks at the Community of Learners circle in the middle. Into the silence he says, “Does everyone realise we haven’t got a university in our Community of Learners?”

It’s Sue who breaks the silence in the Brindalong Hotel by asking which university is the closest to town. Jenny says: “I did my teaching degree with them.”

Another silence; eventually Robert asks, “Don’t suppose anyone knows someone who works there?”

Jim, the owner of the supermarket, says “My daughter’s studying there. Can she help?”

“She could maybe help us explain how the University works, but we could do that just as well.” Robert says thoughtfully. “Maybe we should properly decide what we want to do here in the town – you know, for sure, so we can draw up a proposal or something?”

They all realise they have more talking and to do, so settle down to work out what happens next, and who is going to do what.

As part of this discussion, people look at the list of roles that SpICE needs, and start saying what they are comfortable with doing – and what they would prefer others to do.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Jim from the supermarket, and Sue, the community nurse, say they feel comfortable about approaching their local university to invite them to participate in a SpICE project in Brindalong. “In fact,” Sue adds, “We’d be happy to do a lot of the talking and getting people joining in SpICE.”

Then Jenny says, “I’ve got so much going on at the moment, I’ll stick with what I know as a teacher and be a Learning Mentor if that’s all right with everyone?”

Lily, who is also the president of the Country Women’s Association says, “You all know I’m struggling with the messiness of all this talking and talking – can I *please* take charge of getting some structure into what we’re up to?” And before she’s even stopped talking, Bill from Rotary says, “I’ll help you there, Lily!”

Mitch, the ex-miner owner of the second-hand shop, “Well, I fancy having a go at being that De-Briefing Mentor thing. I don’t know what the students will get from me, but I promise I’ll look after them.”

“You’ll teach them about good old fashioned human charity, Mitch!” said Lily, stoutly.

“I’ll help you Mitch,” said Rhonda, “I’d like to do some Discipline-Specific Mentoring as well if we had a few social work students in town, but - ” she adds hesitantly, “- what’s worrying me is how much time this is going to take.”

Up till now, SpICE has been something everyone ‘does’ after hours, or during the day when the demands of their proper jobs allow. Jenny from the primary school says, “I’m having some questions asked about why I’m running off to talk with people all over town instead of staying in school.”

“I’ve got the same problem” added Tiffany. “One of the pre-school committee was asking. Not that she’s angry, just curious. But it’s taking a bit of time away from me being on the floor. I don’t want them to get angry.”

Everyone who isn’t self-employed or a volunteer realise they need to gain the support of their employing organisations. Even though they know you can’t get SpICE up and running without the passion of people, making SpICE a part of Brindalong means the central buy-in of the organisations responsible for serving the town.

“That’s the next job, then.” says Robert.

But nobody answers....

Lily (from the CWA) is sitting with Bill (from the Rotary Club) in a Brindalong coffee shop. Lily says, “I’m really struggling with the mess of all this SpICE talking. Everyone seems to be going round in circles and never getting anywhere and I can feel my blood pressure rising every minute I’m sitting there! To be honest, Bill, if it wasn’t for you sitting with me, I swear I’d back out of it.”

“Don’t do that, Lily! We all need you.”

“I’m just not used to this going backwards and forwards and never coming up with a plan. “

“Maybe that’s because at the CWA you’re always the one making the plans and everyone else just doing the work you set.”

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

“That doesn’t sound very nice!” said Lily, but she was thinking. “You mean I’m maybe not good at working with other people?”

“I didn’t say that”, said Bill hurriedly, “I said you’re used to being in charge. And this SpICE thing isn’t like that.”

“So it’s about me wanting things my way, and not about the talking round in circles everyone else is doing that’s the problem?”

“Maybe, Lily. Maybe it’s that.”

They were quiet for a while, and Lily stared into her coffee cup.

Jenny is trying to have her SpICE activities considered as a legitimate part of her work as a teacher at the primary school. In preparation for her meeting with Shirley, the Principal, she has studied her job description, as well as several key policies of the Department of Education. As soon as Jenny enters the Principal’s office, Shirley says, “What’s all this I hear about you running round town talking about this SpICE thing?”

Jenny takes a deep breath and answers, “I’m really interested in the new Rural and Remote Partnership Policies published by the Department of Education. Because of it, I’ve been looking round for projects that could demonstrate the ‘community partnership’ part of my job description, and I would love to be involved in furthering these policies in Brindalong, especially clauses...” She pulls the document from her pocket and reads out all the statements that mention ‘collaboration’, ‘partnerships with communities’ and ‘capacity building’. Without pausing she then goes on, “A group of us in Brindalong, from the Health Service, the Council, business and the Pre-school, would like to directly implement these clauses by doing a SpICE project. Here are the principles of SpICE. They call them KPIs, but I’m not sure why.” She unfolds a photocopy of the SpICE principles and lays both documents side by side on Shirley’s desk. “See how similar the principles of SpICE are to the Rural and Remote Partnership policy?”

“But you’re already up to your eyes in face-to-face teaching! You haven’t got time for anything else!” answers Shirley sharply.

“But I need to meet the ‘community partnership’ requirements of my job description otherwise I’ll never get promotion!” Jenny hears herself getting emotional, so takes another deep breath before continuing more slowly, “See, I’ve prepared a timetable of my teaching and other duties.” She passes it to Shirley, “My proposal is that I continue with all my teaching, but that the additional duties, such as play-ground duty etc, be the time I spend on SpICE. It would work out to 7 hours a week. I know it increases my workload, but it’s what the policy says we should be doing, and there’s a real chance with SpICE that we could improve the outcomes for our school students.”

Jenny stops speaking abruptly and forces herself to stay quiet.

Shirley takes her time before saying thoughtfully, “They were saying at the regional meeting how schools need to be involved in partnerships...” Then she blinks, frowns and looks up at Jenny, “But *YOU!* What makes you think you can do something like this? They were talking about us principals taking the lead on this – not the teachers!”

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Jenny does not allow herself to get offended. Instead she asks, “Perhaps you’d like to join me with SpICE, then?” But Shirley answers quickly, “Me? I’m much too busy.” “Well then, could I?”

But Shirley is not convinced. “I’m not sure about this – not sure about this at all. I’ll speak to my Director and get back to you.”

A week later, Jenny is asked to return to the Principal’s office. Shirley introduces Mr. Worthington, Director of Rural and Remote Partnerships for the Department of Education.

Mr. Worthington smiles at Jenny, “Shirley has been telling me you want to involve the school in a SpICE project in town?”

Jenny has spent a lot of time preparing for this interview and says calmly, “I’ve been looking round for projects that could assist the school to implement the Rural and Remote Partnerships policy. I would love to be involved in furthering these policies in Brindalong, especially clauses ...” She repeats the same statements as last week, but now she knows them off by heart. “A group of us in town, from the Health Service, the Council, business and the Pre-school, would like to do a SpICE project and want the School to also partner in it. Have you heard about SpICE?”

“I have indeed, yes.” He answers, “And I need to tell you we’d be very happy to be involved, as there are a number of links between the goals of SpICE and our own policies. Shirley, I’m confident I could find funds to double Jenny’s involvement in this SpICE project, and the Department would be happy to take the management of it off your shoulders and provide governance.”

Jenny is relieved on the one hand, but worried as well. It sounds like Mr. Worthington wants the school to run SpICE in Brindalong. “Thank you so much for your support but additional governance won’t be necessary!” says Jenny. “If you look at the SpICE Model, you’ll see right in the middle: ‘Community of Learners.’ That’s the inbuilt governance mechanism for SpICE. But I’d welcome your offer of day-to-day input, regular feed-back and advice. As for doubling my involvement, we want to take this slowly to ensure it is properly set up. Besides, all the other organisations are involved for a day a week at this stage, so at the moment I think one day a week will do. Also, I’m really mindful of my responsibilities to the school, and want to make sure that my teaching isn’t affected.”

All the way through the interview, Shirley has looked uncomfortable. Now she says, “It’s all very well, but there will be all kinds of hurdles in letting her do this. And Mr. Worthington, you know Jenny’s only been teaching for five years. What happens if she makes a mistake in this SpICE thing? It’ll look terrible for the school.”

Jenny surprises herself by answering smoothly, “I was worried about that, too. So I spoke to my colleagues and a couple of the parents. They thought the principles and aims of SpICE would help us with our Closing the Gap targets, as well as build knowledge and skills all over town, so they are happy to help. This is the proposed roster that would cover me.” She unfolds her plan, and as she hands it to Shirley, catches a smile on the face of Mr. Worthington.

More confident now, Jenny continues, “All the teachers are supportive of the school being seen as a contributing community partner in SpICE. And in terms of hurdles, the SpICE principles are like a set of building blocks which guide and support.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Everyone in town who is involved in the project is new to SpICE, and we know there'll be challenges. But that's OK – we've got the principles to go by and we will be doing it together."

It is a full month later, and yet another SpICE Community of Learners meeting is being held. In the intervening month, there have been some changes in the Community of Learners. Everyone has spoken with their organisations about their legitimate involvement in SpICE:

- The Shire Council: Happy to help, host students, and to support Robert's involvement in SpICE, as long as his work does not suffer, and as long as there is no direct cost to the Council.
- Brindalong Primary and Pre-Schools: Commitment to be a core part of SpICE, host students, and will volunteer school premises for meetings etc. However, both Jenny and Tiffany have been warned not to upset the community, and to ensure they do nothing that brings their organisations into disrepute.
- The CWA and Rotary Club: Happy to fully involved in SpICE.
- Centre Ways Aboriginal Well-Being organisation: In principle support, but will take things very, very slowly as the organisation wants to directly experience the cultural safety (or otherwise) of the students.
- The Supermarket and second-hand shop: Happy to help in anything that strengthens the community.
- Public Health Service: Would like to be involved, as it sounds interesting. However, there are strict guidelines the health service has to meet, as well as service delivery outputs. Given the current financial situation and budgetary constraints, they can give 'in principle' support. If specialist health students come to the community, the health service is unlikely to have the capacity to help with their supervision. However Sue, the community nurse says, "Look, I can still be involved. I'll just have to blend it in to my other work."
- The university: We'll go slowly, because we have to guarantee educational outcomes for students, but we'll give it a go.

The Community of Learners has also settled on the first Community Focus. As a starting point, the community would like assistance with developing skills and knowledge around: children, school readiness, early literacy, health promotion, sustainability and the environment

The specific organisations who want to host students are: the Primary school, the Pre-school, the Council (Waste Management and Parks Departments), the Public Library, and a number of early childhood support groups run by Centre Ways.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Tiffany (from the pre-school) and Jenny (from the primary school) are having a glass of wine at the pub. Tiffany had phoned Jenny that lunchtime in a panic about SpICE.

“It’s my teacher Ally.” She tells Jenny, after taking a great gulp of wine. “She’s talking to everyone about how I’m not thinking straight about getting the kids an OT assessment. She says I’m not doing my job properly, and all because of the SpICE business. I tell you, Jenny, I’m tempted to throw it in!”

“I’ve been in my boss’s office a couple of times too many on account of SpICE.” Replies Jenny, “But she’s not making me scared. It’s funny, but when Shirley - she’s my boss - says something nasty I just get this screen in my head snapping across like a metal fly-door, and nothing she says gets to me.”

“Wish I had one of those.”

“Well borrow mine, Tiffany - free gift! It’s like it’s made up of all the good stuff we’re trying to do. You know, like helping the kids and their parents, and making each and every one of us all stronger from doing SpICE. When I think of all that I can stand my ground. Better than that, when Shirley’s acting twitchy and bitchy to me, I don’t feel it. It’s like thinking of the good keeps the bad stuff out. Makes me stronger.”

“Finally!” exclaims Lily as she puts the finishing touches on the list of SpICE Learning Hooks. “I was beginning to think we’d never decide on what these students could do in the different organisations.”

Robert leant over her shoulder to read the Learning Hook he had come up with for the Council. He says slowly, “It’s all very well us telling the students what we want them to do, but I wouldn’t know where to start ‘developing education resources around rubbish disposal.’ How do I teach them how to do it, if I don’t know?”

Lily turned to face him. She was frowning. “Unless I’m very much mistaken, isn’t that the point of SpICE? If we knew how to do all this, and had the knowledge that backs it up, we wouldn’t be needing all these specialist services would we? We’d be able to solve all the things we’re fired up about all by ourselves.”

Robert rubbed the flat of his hand hard over his forehead. “As soon as I think I’m understanding SpICE, off it floats again.”

“Well just at the moment, I think I’ve got it straight. These Learning Hooks are jobs the students will work out how to do. Along the way of learning how to do them, they’ll link up with Hooks from other organisations in town. And all that linking will be aimed at our Community Focus. And *that* will give Brindalong a big bang for its buck, and the students will have learnt to think differently about how to deliver services. See?”

Robert shakes his head slowly. “You’re a marvel, Lily. You’re a living treasure.”

“Thank you, Robert” Answered Lily. “I’m tending to agree with you there.”

The Community of Learners is at Sue’s house one evening. The SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework is sitting on the dining room table, and everyone is staring at it.

‘It looks like another huge opportunity for more talking.’ Sniffs Lily.

‘I thought you evaluated things with graphs and percentages?’ says Robert.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Jenny says, 'I don't think this triangle-thing is what the schools want. They want numbers to prove SpICE is working.'

'And the Health Service,' adds Sue ruefully, 'What on earth are we going to do?'

Mitch from the second-hand shop grins, 'I love it! It's turning the whole thing on its head. Come on, we can do it! What's our vision – that's easy. We talked about it months ago. 'For the children of Brindalong, we want to improve literacy, school readiness, health, sustainability and the environment!' There – put that in the 'Vision' triangle Sue and see if it fits!'

'It's not a crossword, Mitch!' says Lily, but everyone is smiling.

'So far so good,' says Sue, 'Now what about this bottom row. It says 'What would the benefit of SpICE *look* and *feel* like to you and your community?'

Everyone starts talking all at once, and Lily struggles to keep writing down what they say.

'...People would stop on the street and ask what's the latest with SpICE.' 'People would be excited about something happening'. 'They'd be feeling like they were part of something important.' 'They'd feel connected to things.' 'I'd just feel useful.' 'And happier about living here.' 'I feel like I'd be doing something new.' 'Wouldn't it be lovely for people to feel all that attention from the students?'

Eventually there is quiet. Then Mitch says, 'Let's sort out which are different, and which are the same, then we'll write them in the triangles along the bottom row.'

All members of the Brindalong Community of Learners have a copy of the SpICE-Rack Evaluation Framework taped to their fridges at home. This helps remind them of what they are listening and looking for when going about their business in the town.

The Evidence Box sits at Sue and Robert's house, but not before Lily and several CWA members covered the cardboard with a bright new wool crotched cover.

Mitch is standing in front of his fridge, gently waving an email in front of it. He reads it again, and then looks at the triangles of the SpICE-Rack.

Dear Mitch,

I was chatting to Mel Burke last evening, and he was telling me there's this SpICE thing going on, and how you had organised getting Uni students to come and train everyone in Brindalong on different things. Good for you, Mitch! Then I was wondering how our town could get some of the action? I'm pretty sure I could speak for the Council in saying let's go ahead and start talking!

Cheers, John

Mitch pulls up a chair and sits in front of the fridge, then he starts jotting down questions he needs to email back to John:

- What benefit did Mel Burke report to John? What did he actually say?
- Who did Mel Burke speak to in Brindalong and what was said in the conversation?
- Has anyone else reported benefit to John? If so, who?

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

Mitch figures that the answers to these questions will allow him to fill in a couple of triangles of the SpICE-Rack.

Even before the students had arrived in Brindalong, Mr. Worthington, Director of Rural and Remote Partnerships for the Department of Education, was wanting an evaluation of where Jenny 'was up to' with the Brindalong SpICE project. Jenny called Lily immediately.

'Please help me, Lily – I'm just not confident the SpICE-Rack is what he's expecting! What happens if it's wrong?

'You just leave it to me, dear! And I'll get Bill to help me. This cross-referencing and making things nice and tight is right up my alley. And right up Bill's as well. Is that all your Mr. Worthington is wanting?

'He's wanting a breakdown of how I'm spending my time, who I'm talking to – that sort of thing. I can do that, it's easy'.

'Then you do that, and you leave the SpICE-Rack to me and Bill. What colour file do you like?'

'You think pink would be all right?'

'Pink it is, Jenny!'

At the Brindalong Shire Council a SpICE meeting with two lecturers from the University gets started. Peta teaches physiotherapy and Ann teaches environmental science. After everyone introduces themselves, it takes a few moments before anyone speaks as no-one is sure who should take the lead. Mitch decides to jump right in, "Welcome to Brindalong. It's great to have you here. Nothing like putting faces to names!"

Peta, who is much better at remembering faces than names, smiles and replies, "We'd willingly get out and about more if there were more invitations like this. It sounds like you've got something pretty exciting happening here."

"We're really hoping you're going to help us make it happen," says Robert. "There's a lot we don't know how to do."

Tiffany jumps in a little abruptly, "That last email you sent us, well that just sent me into a bit of a spin. I didn't realise the students were from different courses. I thought you were going to send us some teaching students. I'd know what to do with them. Or even some occupational therapy students. We've got lots they could do. I guess I was a bit shocked. And worried." she finishes more quietly.

Peta and Ann are a little taken aback. It had been no small task to organise SpICE at the Uni, and also to find some students who were willing AND available to try something new. But Peta could hear the fear in Tiffany's outburst and realised she needed to explain about student placements.

"Has anyone had students before?" asks Peta. Jenny replied that her school had hosted some prac teachers over the last three years and Sue said that there was a constant stream of nursing students through the Health Service. Jim, thinking of his daughter, jokes that he knows "all about how Uni students need the latest

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

smartphone and large data top-ups to stay connected!” But he’s never seen a student ‘on placement’ or ‘do’ anything apart from their nails and hair.

Peta pushes on after a supportive look from Ann, “I guess the thought of having students is a bit daunting if you’ve never done it before. It’s probably not surprising that you’re concerned.”

With some murmuring, the group nod in agreement. With the air cleared, they settle back to hear more about student placements, student support and what it might feel like to share the students around. They all agree that they are going to create a great SpICE placement, an experience that’s never been seen in Brindalong before!

After Peta and Ann leave, the others stay on to talk things over. Tiffany is confused. “I still don’t really understand how I can be a Learning Mentor when I don’t even know what these students should know. I might teach them the wrong things and confuse them. That’s not likely to help their ‘learning’ is it?”

Mitch seems to have things clearer. He explains that the different Mentor roles just provide different types of support. “I guess it’s called a Learning Mentor because you’re supporting them as they go through learning activities. I don’t think these Learning Mentors need to have all the answers, they just need to set them on the right track, to make sure it’s going okay, and get extra help if it’s not - that sort of thing.”

“Well, from what I’ve heard,” says Jenny, “I’m convinced I can be a Learning Mentor, And despite your doubts, Tiff, I think you’ll be pretty good at it too. I mean, how hard can it be? It sounds like they shadow us, kind of ‘a walk-in-my-shoes for a day’ thing. And I’m already getting some ideas about some of the learning jobs I can give them when they’ve got blisters from my shoes and need to put their own back on! Mitch, are you still thinking about being a Debriefing Mentor? I’m a bit nervous you’ll just gossip about us when you meet with the students!”

Mitch laughs, “I fancy being a Debriefing Mentor so I can learn about all the good stuff that goes on in town. And with all I’m learning about you lot, hopefully I can keep the students’ efforts true to our focus!”

Robert says, “I’m thinking I might know someone who could be a Discipline-Specific Mentor for the physio students. I’ve had a few appointments with him at his private practice. He told me about some of the work he did in a remote community. I reckon he might be up for something a bit different if it gets him out of his clinic.”

“Well I guess that’s a starting point,” says Sue. “I might ask around at work to see if anyone else is interested in helping us. And Peta and Ann did say they can link us in with people at the Uni if we needed.”

Lily, Bill and Jim are making the final arrangements for the SpICE student’s welcome barbeque. Some of their mates from CWA and Rotary have offered to help out with the food. Centre Ways has offered to have it in their garden. “Bill, do you think you should be Master of Ceremonies and make the introductions?” asks Lily.

“Well that’s how we’ve always done it, but I think SpICE calls for something new. What do you think Jim?”

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

“Maybe a bit of the old and the new.” Jim replies. “You could welcome the students and then perhaps we could all introduce ourselves. I doubt they’ll remember our names, but it might make it easier if they know a few of our faces before they start work in earnest.”

“That reminds me” says Lily. “I need to organise some name tags.”

While Tiffany is getting the last of the supplies for the welcome barbeque, she has Ally nagging her on the phone.

“You tell them Tiffany,” says Ally angrily. “I’m not going to go and ‘welcome’ these SpICE students. As far as I’m concerned they should send them back to the Uni and give us what we wanted. Occupational Therapy students!”

As Tiffany tries to compose her response, Ally continues her tirade. “And while you’re at it, I think you should have a long hard think about all the time you’ve spent on organising things. I think you should get the lion’s share of the students’ time. It would be a complete waste to send them out to Robert at the tip. How could he possibly need them?”

Tiffany, finally fed-up with Ally’s point of view, interrupts, “Look Ally, I know you’re not on board with this and that’s your choice. But I’m really looking forward to it and having a chance to stretch myself. Please don’t spoil it for me. Anyway, I have to get going. It’s a pity you’re going to miss out on a piece of Lily’s sponge cake at the barbie. Do you want me to save you some?”

“Oh go on then, as long as she hasn’t laced it with Spice for the occasion.”

Jenny from the Brindalong school, has contacted a teaching friend from the city where the SpICE students are studying. They have set up a video-conference between their two schools so that the Brindalong Community of Learners can ‘meet’ the students before they arrive in town. Jenny and Sue also want to check that the students have completed all the mandatory requirements before they start the placement. Unfortunately, on the day of the video-conference, the Brindalong school’s internet is down because of the severe frosts that morning. Jenny ends up phoning the students and arranges to email them a preparation checklist and requests the students send her a brief summary of what skills they have to offer.

Lily has arranged a meeting with the Brindalong Community of Learners. One of the SpICE students has sent an email to say she needs to pull out of the placement. Lily isn’t sure how to respond and so takes it to the group.

Hi Lily,

Unfortunately I am writing to explain why I’m considering withdrawing from the Brindalong SpICE placement. Due to a combination of difficulties, I don’t feel I am able to partake in this project at the current time. When I realised how much it would cost me for accommodation there (\$400-500 a week in the Motell) and to pay for fuel to drive the 5 hours to get there and back, I decided I couldn’t afford it. Not only is it a lot of money but as I would have to take 3 weeks leave without pay from my job, I don’t know where I would get the money.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

I apologise for the late notice and hope this won't cause too much inconvenience. I was really looking forward to coming to your town.

Kind regards

Sally

Since Lily circulated the email, the group have put their thinking caps on. They've been asking around to see what they can do to make it possible for Sally to do the SpICE placement.

Jim suggested he offer Sally his daughter's room seeing as she was away at uni. "It'd be nice to have a young person around the house again," he comments.

But Sue points out that he only has room for one student and no doubt the others might be facing the same problems. "We need a more long term solution if we want these SpICE placements to keep going," she says. "I thought the nurses' accommodation at the hospital might work, but it's full of medical locums at the moment."

Bill says "I had a chat with Brian out at Highgrove Farm. He said their shearers' quarters were vacant at the moment. He'd be happy for the students to stay there for \$10 a week, just to contribute to the electricity. But it's a bit out of town and might bump up the cost of fuel."

"What if we ask the mine to donate some fuel vouchers?" asks Robert, looking at Mitch. "They were looking for ways to put back into the town weren't they?"

"Could be a goer, but don't expect me to ask them!" says Mitch.

They agree to follow up these options and Lily offers to let Sally know the outcome. "Let's hope it's enough to get her back on board."

Lily and Jenny are doing a last minute check of the students' timetable. The timetable has what organisation they go to each day, the names and contact details of the various Mentors and the students and a brief indication of the activities that have been planned so far. The Community Focus heads the page – 'School readiness with a sustainability theme.'

"I think we've done a good job with this" says Jenny. "I really like that they'll get to look at school readiness from so many perspectives," she adds.

"We've certainly involved lots of people" replies Lily. "It's been a timetabling nightmare but what an example of how our community pulls together!"

"The thing that I think is so exciting is that it will really bring their theory to life when they meet the real kids who are having a rocky start in life," says Jenny.

Lily nods in agreement. "I think we're all going to learn a thing or two."

On a bright shiny afternoon in Brindalong, two cars drive into town. A couple of passers-by know that the drivers aren't locals. It took them five attempts to successfully reverse park outside Centre Ways.

Meanwhile, putting the finishing touches on the barbeque, Robert and Sue are talking about the imminent start of the students.

"Do you think we're ready?" asks Robert.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

“I hope so. The students are about to arrive!” answers Sue with a grimace. “I just hope we’ve planned enough for them to do.”

“Well we’ve just got to remind ourselves, it’s ok not to have all the answers. Got to leave some room for the students to earn their stripes. That’s the point isn’t it, that we’re getting a bit of help to move things along? And the students get to strut their stuff and learn something along the way. If we knew how to do it all, we wouldn’t need to be doing SpICE.”

Sue comments, “You’re sounding very wise about SpICE all of a sudden Robert!

“Just repeating what Lily told me!” laughs Robert.

The Centre Ways garden is abuzz with the SpICE Welcome barbeque. All of the Community of Learners are there, at least for some of the time. The SpICE students add three new faces to the gathering, albeit slightly nervous and unsure faces. There are two physiotherapy students, Fred and Leah; and Angela is an Environmental Science student. The two physios are studying together but they have only met Angela a week ago.

The gathering has been going well with introductions, lots of chatting and a general sense of achievement at having got to this point. The students are feeling like celebrities with the all the attention they are being given. Each of them secretly hopes that they will be able to live up to expectations and do something worthwhile for the Brindalong community.

It’s four days into SpICE in Brindalong and so far everything has gone very smoothly. The students have been enthusiastically getting a feel for Brindalong by watching, listening and meeting lots of people. It’s all still a bit mystifying but they have been told that this is normal reaction to SpICE to start with. Amanda reminds the other two that the Uni said “If you think you know what’s going on in the first few days, you might be heading down the wrong track.”

The Mentors have also been getting into their stride. The Learning Mentors have proudly presented the students with folders of useful information to help get them oriented. In addition, Robert took on the job of making sure that they knew everything important about their Work Health Safety. He even supplied them with work boots suitable for some of Brindalong’s rougher terrain. Jenny made sure that the students had the necessary checks to re-assure their hosts that they were safe to work with children and vulnerable people. Sue did the same in relation to checking the students were properly protected by immunisations.

Mitch hadn’t met with the students since the barbeque but he had been hovering around the edges, staying in close contact with everyone. He was looking forward to meeting up with the students tomorrow for lunch. He was just sending them an email about where to meet him when the phone rang. Rhonda was on the line and very agitated.

“Mitch, I’ve got a big problem! The students are meant to be going to the Supported Playgroup tomorrow. They were going to make books with the families about where to find bush tucker locally. One of the staff here has just come in in a flap. She ran into a group of the mum’s down the street. They’d heard that the students were

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

coming to the playgroup and they're not happy about it. Apparently one of them took her child to the doctor a few months back and a student was there. She feels like the student made out she was a bad mum for putting juice in the child's bottle. So now none of them want "those uppity students who don't know anything about being a mum" to ruin their playgroup. They say they won't go if the students are going to be there. What am I going to do?"

After talking over her dilemma with Mitch, Rhonda decided to postpone, but not cancel the playgroup activity. When she used the principles to check the balance of the benefit and learning need she figured that there was a big chance everyone would lose out if she didn't persevere with the activity. What really stuck out to her though, was that these mothers didn't have any voice about what was going on in SpICE or for that matter, in their community. In planning the initial activity, she had made assumptions about what would be good for them without including them in the decision making. The problem was she knew from past experience that these mums would steer clear of anything that looks like a formal meeting.

Rhonda thought she might have found a solution at the last playgroup. Tracey, one of the more influential mothers, had brought the scrapbook she had just finished to playgroup. There was a photo of Tracey when she was a girl sitting next to her aunty and some other women. They were weaving coloured grass baskets. The playgroup mums were all having a chuckle at Tracey's rather shaggy attempt. The photo got Tracey talking about her childhood up North. "I miss having my aunties nearby. I learnt all kinds of things when we sat around talking like that. You lot are hopeless, you don't tell me anything worth knowing!" she chided the other mums with a grin.

After the banter died down and the mums went to check on the kids and the like, Rhonda went and had a chat with Tracey. They talked about what Tracey had said about her aunties and sharing knowledge. She broached the topic of the SpICE students and this time Tracey was agreeable to giving them a go if the other mums agreed. Tracey said she'd ask around and let Rhonda know what they decided.

Jenny is meeting with the students at the start of their second week. The students have lost a lot of their earlier shine and are looking both confused and a little frustrated. Jenny is recognising this may be a make or break point for the students. She needs to allow them room to contribute to broadening the Learning Hook, but also to get them feeling like they are making some progress. Jenny's Learning Hook is "A sustainability theme for the school readiness materials." This is a segment of the conversation where Jenny is supporting the students to seek information more actively.

"I hear you've spent a lot of time in the classrooms and playground. What have you noticed?" asks Jenny.

Leah, one of the students replies "There are a lot of caring people here. And some that don't want any help at all. Well not from us anyway!" Fred, sounding fed-up interrupts, "Some of the teachers have been asking us what we can do. But they can't tell us what they actually want us to do. We were told we're not supposed to 'be'

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

physios and enviro scientists while we're here, but that's what people seem to want us to be. So really, we don't know how to help the school."

Nodding her head in acknowledgement, Jenny says, "Tell me more about what you've discovered about the children who have recently started school. How ready are they for learning?"

This time it's Angela who answers, "Well the kids have a wide range of ability. Some are starting to read little books and some have no idea. At lunch time there's a big variety in what the kids bring to eat, that's if they bring anything at all. They seem to spend most of their playtime on the climbing equipment but do the same thing over and over. But we were surprised that even the kids who aren't very capable still seem to really enjoy being at school."

Looking at all the students Jenny says, "It's interesting that you're surprised that they enjoy school. Do you think enjoying school should be a goal in getting kids ready for school?"

"Do you mean we should forget about making sure the kids know the alphabet before they start school and tell them all the good things about being here?" asks Angela.

Trying to encourage the students to think of new approaches, Jenny says, "Well, I mean, maybe we've been too focussed on the children's readiness for maths and reading etc. We could be missing something really important about them wanting to be here in the first place. How else can you explore more about what makes school interesting for children and if it is important?"

Fred still looking a bit irritated says, "I guess we could ask the teachers with a survey or something. They seem so busy we don't want to take up their time. Maybe we could ask the parents but they don't hang around at school once they drop the kids off."

"The adults' opinions will be really relevant but could you find out from the children as well?" asks Jenny. She suggests, "Maybe you could think about some ways to explore what the children think beyond just watching and asking?"

Catching on to Jenny's suggestion to explore the idea from many perspectives, Leah exclaims, "True! Some of the little kids probably wouldn't tell us much anyway. Children like competitions don't they?" Looking at the other students for support she continues, "What if we had some kind of competition about the most fun things about school? Or got them to interview their parents about their school days or something. Then we could get everyone thinking!"

When Rhonda contacted the students to make a time to prepare them for the playgroup, she got a disheartening response from Angela, "We heard that the playgroup mums don't want us to come. They haven't even met us and they think we're racist or something! The three of us have decided it might be better if we don't go."

Rhonda recognised that the students might feel uncomfortable talking this issue through with her because of her close relationship with the mums. She suggested that the students meet with Mitch, the Debriefing Mentor, to talk it through.

The meeting with Mitch and the students went well. He was able to explain to them that past experiences had made these mums suspicious of the students even though

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

they had never met them individually. He said it was an example of the distrust some community members feel about ‘people in authority.’ It wasn’t personal but the students represented everything that had ever been done to these parents that excluded them from making decisions for themselves. Mitch then suggested some strategies the students could use at the playgroup, like not wearing their uniform and asking Rhonda, as a trusted person, to introduce them individually to the mothers. He was pleased when Leah suggested that maybe they should steer away from giving advice unless they were asked for it. With a better understanding of the issues, the students agreed to go to the playgroup. However, sensing that they were still a little anxious, Mitch suggested a follow-up meeting with Rhonda and himself.

“I’ve loved your bi-weekly SpICE bulletins Lily,” says Jim “It’s a nice little snapshot of what’s going on around the traps. Looks like the students are busy.”

Lily had been thinking the same thing. She was worried that maybe they were too busy. When Leah came to drop off the information for the last bulletin, she was looking a bit overtired. She’d said she was fine and given a brief smile, but Lily wasn’t convinced. She thought she might mention it to Sue who seemed to have a good connection with Leah. Maybe Sue could get to the bottom of it?

Lily had also noticed that the students were providing a lot of information about what was happening at the school and preschool but there was very little about their activities at Council. “Jim, did you see Robert yesterday at the Men’s Shed?” asked Lily.

“No. He didn’t end up coming. The students postponed their activity of recycling doors into the playground picnic benches. Shame really. I was looking forward to getting out the power tools. They said they couldn’t fit it in...something about wanting to watch something at the school I think? Is there a problem?” Jim asks.

“Nothing a bit of communication won’t fix. I think it might be time for a SpICE catch up.” She says.

Lily organised a quick SpICE catch-up lunch with the students and any of the Community of Learners who were available. While dessert is being served, Sue notices that Leah is spending quite a bit of time texting on her phone and is looking increasingly distressed. She feels a bit irritated by this as she thinks Leah is missing out on her chance to contribute to the group discussion. “Is everything ok?” Sue decides to ask Leah. Leah looks up from the phone blinking away some tears. “Sorry, what did you say?” Leah asks.

“You’ve been on your phone a while. I was wondering if everything’s ok?” Sue repeats.

“I’m ok, it’s just my mum checking how I’m going.” Leah attempts a little smile but it is obvious to Sue that something’s not right.

Leah goes on, “My partner, James, rang Mum to help out with our baby. It’s the first time he’s had him on his own. I wrote down what he needs to do but...” More tears come to Leah’s eyes and she can’t hold them back.

Gently Sue hands Leah a tissue. “So is it your first time away from your baby? What’s his name?”

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

“His name’s Will, but we mostly call him Pudding. Our little milk pudding.” This time she manages a proper smile. “I know it’s stupid. It’s not like I’ve never left him before. Just not for more than a day. I can’t bear the thought that James might be forgetting the little things like his night-time kiss and cuddle. I just wanted to make sure Mum reminds James.”

Sue gives Leah a reassuring look. “Those babies really get under our skin don’t they? Takes a while to get used to being away from them.”

Leah looking unhappy again says, “Yeah, I’m not sure how I’ll get through three weeks without him but I really want to do this placement. I’ve spent the last 10 months in a new-mum-bubble and now I want to get back out into the world. SpICE seems so important that I didn’t want to miss out on the opportunity.”

Sue suggests she might like to use a room inside to speak to her family privately. “I’ll get you a cup of tea if you like?” As Leah heads inside, Sue decides to give the Mentors the heads up. Otherwise, like her, they might assume that Leah isn’t being very professional, when all she really needs is a bit of support for her homesickness.

“It would have been hilarious if it hadn’t been so dangerous,” says Sue.

“So tell me slowly this time, how did she end up with dog-prints all over her shirt?” asks Robert looking very confused.

“Well the students were meant to meet us out at Kinty to help with the before school health screening,” explains Sue. “But Amanda was running late so she decided to take her own car instead of going with the others. Leah and Fred turned up but it was 1½ hours later before Amanda arrived. We’d all been in flap imagining she’d had an accident and none of us could contact her. We couldn’t get help because we didn’t know where she was. And of course, today of all days, we had a queue a mile long of kids to check! Anyway, eventually she gets out of her car with these big paw prints all over her shirt. I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. She’d got lost on the back roads, didn’t have the map that’s in the work cars and her phone had no reception. After driving around for about 50km she saw a farmhouse and plucked up her courage to go and ask directions. She was welcomed by the biggest farm dog she’s ever met! To think what could’ve happened to her. Thank goodness she came out of it unharmed. If only she’d followed the driving policy we could have been saved the ordeal.”

“Sounds like the playgroup mums were happy with the bush tucker recipe book the students made with them.” Sue says to Rhonda.

“I’m glad you’re hearing good stuff from the mums. My boss has sent me a ‘please explain’ email.”

“What do you have to explain? It all turned out well.” says Sue.

“Not soon enough for Sara, unfortunately. She was so upset with having to deal with the mums when they were feeling irate, that she went to the boss about it. Apparently he’s rethinking the value of having students at Centre Ways. Causes “too much grief for the staff,” apparently.

“What are you going to do?” asks Sue.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

"You know, I'd just like to be able to be allowed to get on with it, without the interference. But I know if I don't deal with it, it's stuff like this that really undermines what we're trying to do. I've already spoken to Sara and she's fine with it now. I thought maybe I could take a jar of the bush lemon marmalade we made with the group to sweeten the boss? Might give me a chance to explain the benefits that have come from it?"

"If he likes marmalade!" laughs Sue. "Good luck."

Robert and Sue have invited Rhonda over for dinner. They thought she might need a debrief after her meeting with the boss.

"So how was it?" asks Robert

"Actually, I was pleasantly surprised. I'd been worried he was going to end my student support days there and then." says Rhonda.

"I hadn't realised it was that serious." says Sue.

"Well I'd sort of been hiding the fact that I was supporting the students. As I wasn't needed as a Discipline Specific Mentor, I'd just let him think that I wasn't doing it at all. But Sara's complaint brought it out into the open."

"Jeez, that was a bit risky," says Robert. "He could've dug his heels in and never let you have students."

"Yeh. I get it now. But at the start, I'd just thought it would be easier if I kept a bit quiet about it. I really believe in what we're doing. Nothing's going to change if we don't give these students the chance to see what really happens here. But I wasn't sure I could get that message across clearly in the heat of the moment. I get so nervous and can't think of the right words. Luckily, I had time to get my arguments clear before I went in. I really pushed the point that the support I'm getting through SpICE isn't costing him a cent. Anyway some of what I said must have convinced him. He's letting me keep going. But he said I'd have to submit a report about my role in SpICE support. And he wants a copy of the cook book."

There is a lot of laughter coming from the Brindalong school staffroom. The Community of Learners have the local newspaper in front of them. There's a two page spread featuring SpICE and what has been achieved.

What do you think is on the page?

Maybe it's time to imagine what your SpICE story will look like.

THE BRINDALONG SPICE STORY

References

- Clarke K, Denton M. Red Dirt Thinking on Child Wellbeing in Indigenous, Rural and Remote Australian Communities: The SpICE Model “I just don't want my kid to struggle like I did at school”. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*. 2013;42(Special Issue 02):136-44.
- Peyton, JWR 1988, ‘The Learning Cycle,’ in Peyton, JWR, editor, *Teaching and learning in medical practice*, Manticore Europe Ltd, Rickmansworth, UK, pp. 13-19.