

Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Way Evaluation

Prepared for: National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) and LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA)

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Glossary

CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
DPO	Disabled People’s Organisation
ILC	Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, trans, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual/aromantic/agender plus other identities and experiences not listed in the acronym relating to gender, sexuality and bodily diversity
LHA	LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEDA	National Ethnic Disability Alliance
NESB	Non-English speaking backgrounds
OVOLOW	Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Way project
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
ToR	Terms of Reference

Brief summary

Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Way (OVOLOW) is a joint initiative of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA). The OVOLOW project aimed to:

- Increase knowledge, skills, confidence and participation for LGBTIQ+ people with disability through online mentoring and peer support
- Develop online training for making digital stories
- Develop online resources to support rights, advocacy, and community engagement.

OVOLOW processes were based on co-design principles and involved sector experts, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), community organisations and LGBTIQ+ people with disability in the design.

The UNSW evaluation was mixed methods interviews, researcher observations, workshop registration data, survey data and website analytics. This evaluation is unable to measure long term impacts of digital storytelling training given the scale of the project funding and the evaluation timeline. Accordingly, this evaluation focussed on the processes of developing and implementing the project outcomes, rather than solely measuring outputs.

Findings from the evaluation can inform similar future initiatives.

1. Success of the process and outcomes relied on a commitment to key principles, including inclusivity and accessibility, embedding lived-experience expertise, prioritising peer leadership, and processes of co-development and co-design throughout.
2. Opportunities for intersectional partnerships serve as a model for project management across multiple domains of expertise; in effect creating an "intersectional space" for organisations to engage with each other, their stakeholders, and LGBTIQ+ people with disability. Future projects would benefit from focusing on the strengths brought to an intersectional space and embedding protocols in project management that make use of the expertise of staff and representative organisations in the intersectional partnership.
3. Effective intersectional governance requires steps to establish processes to form good working relations, followed by steps to review, refine and monitor information sharing between the structures, people and parts of the project. Transparent processes for this goal are important for online projects and inevitable staff changes in a long project.
4. Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of LGBTIQ+ people with disability involves synthesis between the intended outcomes and the process of designing and receiving training. Many benefits were from participating in design and activities.
5. Training people in storytelling requires a careful balance of content that could engage beginners and content that furthers the skills of people already involved in storytelling. This means that content needs to be tailored to the person, which is difficult to achieve in an online group context. Practical knowledge dissemination and upskilling were viewed as more relevant than aspirational or motivating content.

6. Good co-design includes timely feedback to refine project processes and activities, which includes 'closing the loop' on feedback provided by project stakeholders, to ensure continued commitment and engagement. Regular communication about all parts of a project contributes to a sense of ownership and engagement.
7. Web-based resources relevant to LGBTIQ+ people with disability are an effective method to share information and build connections and capacity of people, communities and organisations. Processes to support updating the content of websites and the communities who use them need investment to stay current and relevant.

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the ‘Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Way’ (OVOLOW) project. OVOLOW is a joint initiative of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA). It was funded through the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program in the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). The project was created to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people with disability across Australia. The OVOLOW project aimed to build the individual and collective capacity of LGBTIQ+ people with disability to strengthen existing knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in advocacy, with a focus on self-advocacy, and increase community engagement.

The objective of the evaluation was to understand the impact of digital storytelling to effect social change and, in particular, how it achieves inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people with disability in social, economic and community life. The research aimed to identify how the digital storytelling model works, what elements make it a success, and how and why it achieves impact and change for LGBTIQ+ people with disability. The overall purpose of the research was to establish an evidence base for digital storytelling, provide insights for LHA and NEDA and other organisations seeking to learn from or adopt a similar approach.

The development of OVOLOW was based on co-design principles and involved sector experts, Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), community organisations and LGBTIQ+ people with disability in the design of the initiative.

The initiative was delivered through a range of activities including:

- (i) design and delivery of workshop training in digital storytelling, conducted as a series of three 2-hour sessions online, which were repeated once over a two-week period.
- (ii) development and implementation of the OVOLOW website containing information about various aspects of digital storytelling and associated activities.
- (iii) convenorship and facilitation of an Advisory Committee and Co-Design group to provide peer-based lived experience expertise to the project.
- (iv) initiation and support a Community of Practice with LGBTIQ+ people with disability and DPO representatives.
- (v) collection and dissemination of resources for LGBTIQ+ people with disability through an online Resource Hub.

The OVOLOW project prioritised the involvement of peers these activities, such as in design, content delivery, and through workshop facilitation and participation, as a way to provide mentoring and peer support throughout the project. An Advisory Committee guided the overarching project principles as well as offering advice and guidance on the project components. A Co-Design Group guided the design and implementation of training materials, content, language and promotions. Initially, the project was to be delivered face-to-face, but it moved to an online delivery mode due to COVID-19 restrictions and ongoing

pandemic impacts. The funding cycle from the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program meant that project activities had to be completed within a three-year timeframe, and limited opportunities for ongoing engagement and sustainability beyond the project scope. Funding timeframes constrain the implementation of suggestions made by workshop participants and project stakeholders. Additionally, long term impacts of digital storytelling were not measurable, given the scale of the project funding and the evaluation timeline. Accordingly, this evaluation focuses on the processes of developing and implementing the project outcomes, rather than solely measuring outputs.

Intended outputs of the OVOLOW project were:

- Storytelling workshops co-led by peers.
- Digital stories produced by workshop participants to be included on the OVOLOW website.
- OVOLOW website that is accessible, in plain English, and which allows flexible engagement.
- Community of Practice that is national in scope, has regional and remote reach, sustainable beyond life of project, and resourced for sharing among members.

NEDA engaged researchers from UNSW Sydney to undertake a process and outcomes evaluation of the OVOLOW initiative. The evaluation adopted a collaborative, inclusive and developmental approach that involved working with NEDA and LHA to implement, adapt and refine evaluation tools and methods. The evaluation was designed around four key evaluation questions:

- How well did the project develop and implement digital storytelling for increasing people's confidence and community empowerment?
- How was the shift from face to face to online delivery experienced due to COVID-19 and its impact on the process and outcomes of the project?
- What was the role and impact of the Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group and Community of Practice in increasing participation and contribution to community?
- How effective was the training in strengthening knowledge, confidence, skills and capacity of participants?

The evaluation findings draw on 13 interviews with 21 participants (workshop participants, Co-Design Group and Advisory Committee members, contractors, and LHA and NEDA staff members), as well as researcher observation data, workshop registration data, survey data, program documents, and website analytics.

In this report, 'participants' is used to refer to all people involved in the project and evaluation. This includes people who attended the online workshop training modules (referred to as 'workshop participants') and people who were involved in the design and implementation of the project (referred to as 'project stakeholders'), such as Advisory

Committee, Co-Design Group and Community of Practice members, external contractors and facilitators, and LHA and NEDA staff. Some project stakeholders were also workshop participants (and are referred to by the role that they occupied when describing their experiences).

Key findings

Outcomes for participants

The OVOLOW project was successful in increasing knowledge and skills about storytelling as a form of advocacy for self and others, increasing the confidence and empowerment of people to act, and facilitating a sense of community between, and enhanced community engagement among, LGBTIQ+ people with disability. These outcomes were achieved through an innovative approach to intersectionality that involved learning from people with disability, the diversity of cultural and linguistic experience, and the social and political history of LGBTIQ+ identities and experiences in combination. It organised collective opportunities offered in the project, which enhanced people's capacity for action through the process of collective knowledge sharing. The processes recognised the vulnerability, perception of safety and participants' boundary setting skills to tell and listen to stories. The project facilitated the connection to peers, and recognition of participants' shared experiences in the project activities.

From the perspective of project stakeholders in the workshop training, the project was seen as valuable and enriching; however, from the perspective of people who only attended the workshops without being engaged in the wider project, the project was less effective in achieving its outcomes. There was limited evidence of workshop participants going on to create their own digital stories, and thus limited opportunity to evaluate measures of change.

Impact of online activities

The necessity to shift online to protect the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people with disability from respiratory infection owing to the COVID-19 pandemic opened new opportunities for inclusion and accessibility. Inclusion and accessibility were consistently prioritised and achieved across all processes and activities associated with the project. Effective and meaningful participation from all project stakeholders required additional efforts in planning and facilitation, which sometimes was not fully achieved. Workshop participants found the online process easy to navigate, including information about the workshop on social media and the registration process, which was aided by a successful media campaign that reached many people across Australia. Successful participation depended on participants having some basic familiarity with technology and levels of digital literacy to register and participate. While the online delivery of the workshop compromised opportunities to connect in person and to orient the activities to learning by doing, the way that participants perceived the effectiveness of the online training was likely influenced by participants' and stakeholders' prior experiences of workshops pre-COVID-19 and thus may require a reorientation in the participants' expectations associated with online content delivery.

Process of developing the training workshops and website

The notion of “radical accessibility” underpinned all the processes associated with the training workshops and the OVOLOW website. A Co-Design Group was convened to advise on content for the website, and the scope of work was clearly defined, with members understanding their roles and responsibilities. Co-Design Group members felt that they had significant impact on the website outcomes, which created a sense of ownership over and pride in the site. As the membership was diverse and the processes for participation inclusive, Co-Design Group members were able to learn from each other and develop skills in addition to those that they required to be eligible for group membership. There was less opportunity for Co-Design Group members to advise and see suggestions implemented in the final phase of the project, and to advise on the content delivered in the workshop training. The workshops were peer-led and served as opportunities to provide and receive peer support through interactions between the facilitators and workshop participants, though the online format of the workshops sometimes inhibited interactions between participants. Stakeholders variously involved in the project had a clear sense of connection across its processes and activities.

Process of the Community of Practice and Resource Hub

A Community of Practice was formed to develop a way of facilitating national linkages and capacity building through knowledge transfer, to respond to a recognised national gap. The Community of Practice was peer led, and the processes of the Community of Practice were accessible to ensure meaningful participation and contribution over their shared interests. The success of the Community of Practice was due in part to clear planning, including terms of reference, effective chairing and secretariat tasks. The Resource Hub was developed to provide a central place for resources to facilitate and amplify the voices and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people with disability, which could be sustained and continue to develop after the project. There are further opportunities to enhance the profile of the Community of Practice in the wider sector.

Project Governance

A governance structure was established in the project design phase that organised responsibility for various aspects of the OVOLOW project across LHA and NEDA. An Advisory Committee was established comprising sector experts with lived experience, who provided design advice throughout the project. Emphasis was placed on accessible processes, similar to that of the Co-Design Group, and new members were invited to join during the project to ensure diversity among the Committee. Two contractors delivered the outputs from the project. The project staff and contractors spent time establishing good working relationships by listening and refining the objectives. This process meant the many changes to the design and scope of the outputs could be accommodated. The connections made between stakeholders variously involved in the project was evident.

Implications

Implications from the evaluation for similar projects include:

1. Success of the process and outcomes relied on a commitment to and adoption of key principles to underpin project work, including inclusivity and accessibility, embedding

lived-experience expertise, prioritising peer leadership, and processes of co-development and co-design throughout.

2. Opportunities for intersectional partnerships serve as a model for project management across multiple domains of expertise; in effect creating an “intersectional space” for organisations to engage with each other, their stakeholders, and LGBTIQ+ people with disability. Future projects would benefit from focusing on the strengths brought to an intersectional space and embedding protocols in project management that make use of the expertise of staff and representative organisations in the intersectional partnership.
3. Effective intersectional governance requires steps to establish processes to form good working relations, followed by steps to review, refine and monitor information sharing between the structures, people and parts of the project. Transparent processes for this goal are important for online projects and inevitable staff changes in a long project.
4. Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of LGBTIQ+ people with disability involves synthesis between the intended outcomes (producing a digital story) and the process of designing and receiving training (learning about effective storytelling processes). Relying solely on intended project outputs (e.g. digital stories) as a measure of success can obscure the value and benefits of the process of participation in design and activities.
5. Training people in storytelling requires a careful balance of content that could engage beginners and content that furthers the skills of people already involved in storytelling. This means that content needs to be tailored to the person, which is difficult to achieve in an online group context. This balance may require clear messages to orient participants’ expectations who may have had prior experiences of in-person, hands-on workshop formats. Practical knowledge dissemination and upskilling were viewed as more relevant than aspirational or motivating content.
6. Timely feedback is essential to regularly refine project processes and activities, which includes ‘closing the loop’ on feedback provided by project stakeholders, to ensure continued commitment and engagement. Ensuring regular communication and engagement between various stakeholders contributes to an overall sense of ownership over the project and to stakeholder satisfaction.
7. Web-based resources relevant to LGBTIQ+ people with disability are an effective method to share information and build connections and capacity of people, communities and organisations. Processes to support updating the content of websites and the communities who use them need investment to stay current and relevant.

1 Introduction

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) engaged a research team from the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at UNSW Sydney to undertake an evaluation of the *Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Way* (OVOLOW) project. This report presents the evaluation findings and is structured as follows:

- Section 1: project background, rationale and evaluation questions
- Section 2: outcomes for participants
- Section 3: impact of online activities
- Section 4: processes of training and OVOLOW website
- Section 5: processes of the Community of Practice and Resource Hub
- Section 6: project governance
- Section 7: implications of the evaluation.

Our Voices, Our Loves, Our Way initiative

OVOLOW was a joint initiative of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA). It was funded through the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program in the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

The OVOLOW project aimed to build the individual and collective capacity of LGBTIQ+ people with disability to strengthen existing knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in advocacy, with a focus on self-advocacy, and increase community engagement.

Benefits anticipated by achieving the project aims are:

- Increase in social connection for LGBTIQ+ people with disability.
- LGBTIQ+ people with disability strengthen existing knowledge, skills, and capacity.
- LGBTIQ+ people with disability are empowered to self-manage, take more control, and participate in their own care and their community.
- Local and national linkages are developed, to increase community autonomy and social connection of LGBTIQ+ people with disability.
- Published learnings from the project contribute to a much-needed evidence base and can help inform and improve future projects in this space

As such, the goal of the OVOLOW initiative was to improve the health and well-being of LGBTIQ+ people with disability across Australia, and to promote inclusion and create connections between people and their communities.

The initiative was delivered through a range of activities including:

- (i) Design and delivery of workshop training in digital storytelling, conducted as a series of three 2-hour sessions online, which were repeated once over a two-week period.

- (ii) Development and implementation of the OVOLOW website containing information about various aspects of digital storytelling as well as in advocacy, human rights, making complaints, intersectionality, navigating services and burnout and self-care.
- (iii) Convenorship and facilitation of an Advisory Committee and Co-Design group to provide peer-based lived experience expertise to the project.
- (iv) Initiating and supporting a Community of Practice with LGBTIQ+ people with disability and Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) representatives.
- (v) Collect and disseminate resources for LGBTIQ+ people with disability through an online Digital Hub.

The funding cycle from the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program meant that project activities had to be completed within a three-year timeframe, and limited opportunities for ongoing engagement and sustainability beyond the project scope. Funding timeframes constrain the implementation of all recommendations or suggestions made by workshop participants and project stakeholders.

The OVOLOW program logic (Appendix E) summarises the elements contributing to the initiative and outcomes.

Rationale for the evaluation

People with disability are among the most socially excluded in Australian society (ABS 2018; Bigby & Wiesel, 2011). Intersectional disadvantage experienced by LGBTIQ+, CALD, and First Nations communities, further compounds this social exclusion. Too often, LGBTIQ+ people with disability face barriers that limit their participation and meaningful engagement in everyday life and their voices are disregarded. Participation in activities that facilitate social interaction with other people is an important factor contributing to a person's sense of wellbeing. Relationships, choice and independence, activities and valuable social roles contribute to the life satisfaction of people with disability (Makkonen, 2002).

The objective of this evaluation was to understand the impact of this model of digital storytelling on affecting social change and, in particular, how it achieves inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people with disability in social, economic and community life. There is substantial research about the importance of people with disability being able to make choices and speak out for themselves. Such advocacy can facilitate social participation, build confidence and self-esteem and improve the wellbeing of people with disability (Anderson & Bigby, 2015; Anderson, 2002). However, little research has focused on identifying models or approaches to building capacity and skills of LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

This research aimed to identify how the digital storytelling model works, what elements make it a success, and how and why it achieves impact and change for LGBTIQ+ people with disability. The overall purpose of the research was to establish an evidence base for the digital storytelling model, provide insights for LHA and NEDA and other organisations seeking to learn from or adopt a similar approach.

Evaluation questions and methods

The evaluation adopted a mixed-method design, using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis. It was guided by four key questions:

1. How well did the project develop and implement digital storytelling for increasing people's confidence and community empowerment? (Section 2)
2. How was the shift from face to face to online delivery experienced due to COVID-19 and its impact on the process and outcomes of the project? (Section 3)
3. What was the role and impact of the Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group and Community of Practice in increasing participation and contribution to community? (Section 4, 5, 6)
4. How effective was the training in strengthening knowledge, confidence, skills and capacity of participants? (Section 2)

A mixed methodology based on a developmental research approach was adopted to answer the evaluation questions (Patton, 2010). This approach is useful when projects are breaking new ground. In this case, using capacity building and leadership development to empower people. The evaluation took place alongside the project design, implementation, and delivery.

Details about the methods and limitations are in Appendix A.

A planned evaluation activity was evaluating digital stories produced by workshop participants on completion of the online training workshops. As no digital stories were available at the time of data collection, a decision was made to review vodcasts (video podcasts) produced by LHA with LGBTIQ+ people with disability to identify moments of significant change that demonstrate storytelling as a form of advocacy for self and others (see description of method in Appendix A). These vodcasts are not direct outputs from the project aims or activities and are therefore not measurable project outcomes.

2 Outcomes for participants

Stories of change extract from Karan on outcomes of storytelling (Appendix D)

Most people in the community won't meet a blind person in their life, have a social interaction with them. If you are blind, that makes you feel alone. Growing up, I lived with a lot of shame about my disability, I didn't know any vision impaired peers, I felt alone.

When I 'came out of the closet', I proudly said that I am blind, I felt a strong sense of relief, I no longer had to 'hide' my disability, try and fit in, I felt empowered. Starting to talk about my disability, also through my work as an advocate, was a way to heal myself.

This section reports on the perceived effectiveness of digital storytelling for increasing people's confidence and community empowerment. The analysis focuses on the link between the project's stated objectives and its intended outcomes. Findings reported here are drawn from interviews with the workshop participants and project stakeholders (Advisory Committee, Co-Design group, Community of Practice, external contractors and facilitators), post-workshop survey data and feedback, and researcher observations.

Key points

The project increased knowledge and skills about storytelling for people to advocate for themselves and others. This outcome was achieved through the intersectional lens of the project, which required learning from people with disability, the diversity of cultural and linguistic experience, and the social and political history of LGBTIQ+ identities and experiences in combination.

Successful outcomes for workshop participants required recognition of personal vulnerability, perceptions of safety and boundary setting skills to tell and listen to stories.

The project increased the confidence and empowerment of people involved in the project to act. This outcome was achieved through the collective opportunities offered in the project, which enhanced people's capacity for action through the process of collective knowledge sharing.

Successful outcomes for project stakeholders required a careful balance of training content that could engage beginners and further the skills of people already involved in storytelling. There was limited evidence of workshop participants going on to create their own digital stories.

The project facilitated a sense of community between, and enhanced community engagement among, LGBTIQ+ people with disability. This outcome was achieved through connection to peers, and recognition of participants' shared experiences in the activities of the project.

Successful outcomes required synthesis between the intended outcomes (that of digital storytelling) and process of undergoing training (that was based on storytelling processes).

Increase in knowledge and skills in dynamic and innovative ways

The OVOWLOW project sought to increase the knowledge and skills of LGBTIQ+ people with disability in storytelling. It sought to do this by providing online training (workshop and website) to facilitate storytelling as an effective form of advocacy for LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

There was widespread recognition of the capacity for storytelling as a form of advocacy for self and others. OVOWLOW project stakeholders, who ranged from Community of Practice members, Co-Design Group members, and contractors engaged by LHA and NEDA, all recognised the power of storytelling for making change. Storytelling was seen as more than an individual skillset; it was also regarded as a skill that could be collectively and cumulatively harnessed for the benefit of LGBTIQ+ people with disability and their communities. As such, telling stories was at the heart of the OVOWLOW project:

Good storytellers make you feel something, and through an experiential feeling, that's where I think you're going to learn, connect, develop, grow, which was the goal of the project – OVOWLOW Project stakeholder.

This recognition extended to the way the OVOWLOW project was envisioned, designed, implemented, and evaluated. The space for storytelling created through the experience of participating in the project was seen to be particularly resonant among LGBTIQ+ people with disability, given their shared experiences of marginalisation in wider society. Stories were seen to privilege the voices of people with lived experience:

The whole project is one long master class in owning and telling our stories and sharing them with others and using them for change. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

Maybe I'm biased to that, but it does talk about the importance of having people going through something - living embodiment of something - of oppression systems to really highlight in their own voice or their own way of saying this is how I'm feeling at this moment. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

Storytelling was seen as both a process and an outcome. Workshop participants reflected on what unconscious bias towards ableism that they may hold, with the intention to ensure inclusivity in their work:

I take away from this workshop how to make it 110% inclusive. (Workshop participant).

OVOWLOW project stakeholders were clear to differentiate between storytelling-as-advocacy and storytelling-as-therapy; the latter of which they saw was out of the project's scope.

OVOWLOW project stakeholders also identified the need to make space for vulnerability through the process of telling stories, which stakeholders did by modelling what they believed to be best practice in the disability and LGBTIQ+ rights sectors:

And allow space for vulnerability as well [...] because this stuff is bloody hard for us to do - being an activist, being an advocate, being out there, being visible to talk about trans rights, about LGBTI rights, disability rights in the states of the world. [Advocacy] has an individual toll and it has a collective toll. And so, we've been

naming that and giving that a space to be acknowledged and I think that that has been very important. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Workshop participants also said making space for vulnerability was a successful outcome of the workshops as it allowed for the collective experience of sharing stories. Accordingly, some workshop participants said community connection was more important and valuable than the practical skills of storytelling that the workshops offered:

I think the most valuable thing from the whole thing for me was just the community experience. I think it's so rare that you get to meet other people like you and share stories and see what other people are doing, [...] and talk about, you know, the same stuff that we all kind of face regardless of what our disability or our gender or sexuality is. (Workshop participant).

The challenges in feeling safe to tell stories – both for the person telling the story and for people who are listening to the stories – was something that many participants remarked on as a process that needed further attention:

It doesn't feel safe for me to tell stories about my life as an advocate, you know? (Workshop participant).

However, as the project itself was centred on capacity building for storytelling, stakeholders also identified spaces for storytelling as embedded in the overall project design, including the emphasis on accessibility, not just within the online workshop training:

I know there's obviously things that we don't share, but you know, there has been little moments that have been really nice that you have shared, the little bits of story and there's been, you know, ugly moments where, you know, you have spoken up about what your access needs are and talked about that part of your story. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Other people emphasised how the recognition of personal vulnerability – and the safe spaces that are demanded in response – in the project led people to consider innovative ways to tell their stories, such as sharing artwork, given that it doesn't require participants to “self-identify or disclose”. The anonymity of art as a form of storytelling was an insight that one participant came to as an outcome of the storytelling workshops.

A skill that participants and stakeholders learnt through the OVOLOW project was setting boundaries. Boundaries were identified as important to safely tell stories, and people said they had to learn to identify where their own boundaries lay. This extended to respecting other people's boundaries while exchanging their stories. Workshop participants spoke of knowing what level of context is required for stories to have effectiveness without having to compromise privacy and safety:

I also now understand that like, you know, people have enough context and just whatever you choose to share is enough. You don't have to give them your entire back story. They don't need your this, that, and the other to listen to your lived experience and connect with it and understand it, and you don't need to tell everyone everything to justify why you're sharing your lived experience or your advocacy. (Workshop participant).

Intersectionality lens as innovation among LGBTIQ+ people with disability

The OVOLOW project's explicit focus on intersectionality led to a rewarding experience for participants and stakeholders involved in the project. Many participants appreciated the way the project combined the rights of people with disability, the diversity of cultural and linguistic experience, and the social and political history of LGBTIQ+ identities and experiences. An intersectional lens was seen by stakeholders as a foundational guiding principle to the project, and should inform future projects that have an intersectional component:

Recognising that that intersectional experience is really important to this project. So, I think that was done really well and I think that that would be really good to take into future intersectional projects. (OVOLOW Project stakeholder).

Project stakeholders commended LHA and NEDA for both working at the intersections of LGBTIQ+ people with disability, while acknowledging that each organisation has their expertise.

Workshop participants likewise were complementary about the novel focus on intersectionality, as previous experiences with advocacy training were restricted to rights for people with disability. One workshop participant said their intersectional identities were affirmed through the process of participating in the workshops:

So, I think that intersectionality really made sense, [...] and I never really put the connection together until this workshop [...] And so to have an understanding of how those two identities do kind of also have that connection. (Workshop participant).

Workshop participants also commented favourably about learning new knowledge around intersectionality from the experiences of people who may hold different identities and experiences. Participants saw this as a valuable learning opportunity regardless of their prior experience in advocacy.

Increase in confidence and empowerment to act

The OVOLOW project sought to increase the confidence of LGBTIQ+ people with disability in storytelling so that they felt empowered to advocate for themselves and others. There are clear findings related to increased confidence among both OVOLOW project stakeholders and workshop participants to effect change. Workshop participants reflected on case examples provided that demonstrate how people with lived experience can "use their voices to uplift and educate". These motivating examples were seen to enhance people's capacity for action through the process of collective knowledge sharing that extended beyond the formal training activities. Participants recognised that collective knowledge sharing was a favourable outcome of the wider project:

There is an individual capacity building element there that I've experienced from this collective knowledge sharing. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Workshop participants spoke of the increased confidence they gained through their participation, and openness to share their stories that the workshops encouraged:

I think I'm just ballsier now. The facilitators made you feel just like so tough, and they were like, "Yeah! You can do it. Boom!" But they were also like honest [...] And so I think, yeah, it was just such a big chunk of confidence that was really part of it. [...] So, I think, yeah, the confidence in tackling the imposter syndrome was really, really big. (Workshop participant).

Some participants said increased confidence meant accepting what values drive advocacy work. One participant noted this acceptance involved not making themselves "palatable" to a non-queer, able-bodied public. Rather than formulate concrete plans for actions, many participants felt that their increased confidence that they recognised post-training meant that they had confidence in the process through which they were already engaged in advocating for themselves and others:

That what I am doing is already my process, not a failure of what I think should be my process. (Workshop participant).

Training facilitated interest and capacity for digital storytelling outputs

A planned outcome of the project was to create digital stories through the workshop and website training. There was little evidence that workshop participants intended to produce their own digital stories that centred around their advocacy and/or activism. At the end of data collection in February 2024, no workshop participant had created a digital story that was accessible in the public domain (by way of hashtag on social media or sharing directly with the OVOLOW project team). Some participants may have generated stories for their private use.

Evidence from data collected through the evaluation suggests that the training had more "aspirational" and "abstract" content, rather than "practical tips", "guidelines" or "strategies" to produce digital stories:

I also found that many of the exercises were focused on what we are already doing or how we are already overcoming challenges, but I think it would have been more useful if we had space to come with the issues and challenges we were facing that we haven't been able to solve on our own. (Workshop participant).

For example, some workshop participants felt that there may have been assumed knowledge of what digital storytelling was or entailed, or that attendees were already engaged in storytelling as advocacy:

It was, "Well, if you're creative in this way, you can do that. If you're creative in that way, you can do that," but no actual kind of guideline on how to do that or how that should look. (Workshop participant).

Another workshop participant who perceived themselves as already engaging in advocacy said de-emphasising verbal storytelling was something they were explicitly seeking in the training but felt that they did not adequately receive:

Being able to get that storytelling out there in a verbal way I can do. What I wanted to explore was other ways to do it. (Workshop participant).

Some workshop participants who already viewed themselves as engaging in digital storytelling felt they did not gain new skills through the workshop. This feedback aligns with feedback from the facilitators who felt that an unintended consequence of their focus on inclusivity and safety for participants was that the workshops had less focus on knowledge and skill building. Yet, this sentiment was not universal. One participant stated they felt that the workshops were “aimed towards people who had never done any advocacy or storytelling or anything like that, or, like, maybe had done storytelling, but never shared their individual experience”. For this participant, content felt “relevant” for them, and they had taken a lot of content “onboard”. Other participants said the workshops served more as a process to generate motivation and intention to engage in storytelling advocacy and “finding voice”. This purpose required a process of working out what it is that workshop participants wanted to say and how they wished to say it.

The need to tailor workshop content for each participant was highlighted so that the training could meet participants “where are you at with your storytelling”. The recognition that participants had different skill levels, which may reflect their own experiences in advocating for themselves or others, was inconsistently recognised in the training outcomes. As such, workshops were required to hold a careful balance of content that could engage beginners and further the skills of people already involved in storytelling:

Like it was trying to meet people in this place where they had already had experience with advocacy, but then was not giving any information that would be new to someone with experience and advocacy. (Workshop participant).

At the same time, there was clear synthesis between the intended outcomes (that of digital storytelling) and process of undergoing training (that was based on storytelling processes). On the whole, workshop participants tended to emphasise their satisfaction with the process (accessibility, inclusivity) over the outcomes (skills, knowledge and capacity for storytelling):

I can see how other people might’ve developed a nice sense of community. I didn’t personally get there, and I would’ve gotten there if we’d been doing group activities or any activities whatsoever other than responding to questions. (Workshop participant).

Feedback from participants emphasised the need to provide more time and resources to allow participants to articulate their own challenges and identify areas where they needed assistance. Greater prioritisation of skill strengthening was recommended over confidence and knowledge for future iterations. At the same time, due to changes in the project aims and direction, some project stakeholders and workshop participants did not realise that creating digital stories following the training was an intended outcome.

Future plans following participation in storytelling workshops

Workshop participants were asked to provide feedback on their experiences of the storytelling workshops. Many participants responded about their plans for the period immediately following the workshops. These intentions included “getting started” in advocacy work through sharing one’s own experiences, doing “things differently” when running meetings to reflect better accessibility for LGBTIQ+ people with disability, and taking

“onboard all the feedback” that they received over the course of the workshops. Participants’ increased confidence was evident from intentions such as seeking formal (paid) representation or media opportunities to further make themselves visible as a storyteller.

The participants also said the workshops helped them “come up with some ideas” about how to share their experiences of disability within intersectional contexts. This suggests that participants perceived the workshops modelled good practice for inclusion and recognition of diversity that they could learn from, and storytelling as a vehicle for enacting change, in addition to gaining specific skills and knowledge. Some participants said they planned to raise awareness of disability in the various “scenes” in which they participated socially.

The longer-term plans expressed by participants included experimentation and exploration of different ways of storytelling, engaging in collaboration and creative endeavours with other people, and amplifying one’s voice in “as many arenas [and] as many mediums as possible.” These intentions all demonstrate increased confidence in participants’ capacity to generate change.

Increase in participation and contribution to community

A planned outcome of the OVOWLOW project was to instil a sense of community among LGBTIQ+ people with disability, which would translate into increased participation in community-based activities around advocacy for self and others.

The OVOWLOW project facilitated connection to peers, and recognition of participants’ diverse identities and shared experiences. Overwhelmingly, workshop participants and OVOWLOW project stakeholders perceived a strong sense of community and support among the participating LGBTIQ+ people with disability. Moreover, the perception of community served as a source of support:

The biggest thing I got from this workshop was a sense of community and support. So, I will continue with my advocacy [...] and remind myself of this community when I feel down or worried. (Workshop participant).

Accordingly, the process of conducting these workshops led to the development of a “sense of community”, which participants felt that they could draw on in the future or to “remind” themselves of the community that was generated when they may be geographically or physically isolated from one another. This perception translated into a sense of empowerment to act, drawing strength from the building community with peers.

It was unclear whether the stories that stakeholders and participants were invited to share could be used to measure change.

Collective (and collectivising) capacity building

Participants identified the storytelling training as a vehicle for collective capacity building. This capacity was firmly associated with the collectivising processes that accompanied the formal training development. This included opportunities for collaboration among LGBTIQ+ people with disability:

Like chronically ill and disabled folks will relate to feeling quite isolated in recent years and it's just like great to get to connect and collaborate with people. (Workshop participant).

Some people said the opportunities for collaboration translated into speaking up on issues that were sometimes avoided, which participants recognised as ways that people were “left out” or excluded from spaces. Alongside their intention to advocate for other people was their recognition of the intersectional dimensions to exclusionary practices, such as racism, and the need to be inclusive of people of colour. This spoke to the need for attention to group dynamics within spaces shared with LGBTIQ+ people with disability. As such, recognition of diversity within the LGBTIQ+ people with disability community was perceived to be essential in making space for people to tell their stories.

In addition to collaboration and connection arising from the training, OVOWLOW project stakeholders also reflected on the need to create new spaces in which LGBTIQ+ people with disability could reflect and connect with others with shared experiences:

We're always queering things, crippling things, you know. We talk about radical access. It's also automatically talking about radical love. You know, those things are combined. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

One example was in the Community of Practice, where acknowledging the “fallout and the impact” of the failed referendum for the Voice to Parliament in October 2023 also required participants to provide space in meetings for First Nations members to “lead in, holding us however they wanted”. In reflecting on this requirement, participants also connected the “holding of space” to the storytelling principles that underpinned the project:

This has provided like a space for that storytelling from a very personal, you know, open peer support way to talk about, you know, the last year, 18 months, [...] So, we've had this and I think that that's really helped around people sharing their stories, telling their stories. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The long-term impacts of digital storytelling were not measurable, given the scale of the project funding and the evaluation timeline. Accordingly, this evaluation focused on the processes of developing and implementing the project outcomes, rather than solely measuring outputs.

3 Impact of online activities

Stories of change extract from Karan on online activities (Appendix D)

This is why I am so passionate about being *out there*, having a presence on Instagram and other platforms, it is like a Pride March and activism, letting people know, “I am here, I am queer, I am blind, these are the things I do in my life”.

I love video and media design; I use film editing software for my media posts. It is sometimes hard to do, but I do not want to be dependent on certain applications.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in massive upheavals to the way that people interact, with increased use of and habituation to online modalities. In some cases, these online activities have remained due to increased access for some people and ongoing risk for others. When the project was developing, pandemic restrictions were in force, meaning that a shift to online was the only feasible option for all associated activities. Although COVID-19 restrictions have since been lifted, the OVOLOW project continued to be designed with online activities in mind. The findings reported here document the impact of the shift from in-person to online delivery on the OVOLOW project and participants, including the impact of online delivery of the workshops. Findings reported here are drawn from interviews with the workshop participants and project stakeholders (Advisory Committee, Co-Design group, Community of Practice, external contractors and facilitators, and LHA and NEDA staff members), post-workshop survey data and feedback, researcher observations, social media metrics and registration data.

Key points

The need to shift online opened new opportunities for inclusion and accessibility, but which required extra responsibilities for planning and facilitation.

Success measures were based on the reported consistency in the experiences across all stakeholder groups and activities of the project.

The workshop participants found the online process easy to navigate, including information about the workshop on social media and the registration process, but required participants to have familiarity with technology and levels of digital literacy to register and participate.

The online delivery of the workshop compromised opportunities to connect with each other and to orient the activities to learning by doing. This outcome was likely influenced by participants and stakeholders' prior experiences of workshops pre-COVID-19.

The reach of the project was aided by a successful campaign on social media, specifically Instagram.

Online alignments, opportunities, and constraints over the project

Project stakeholder's online engagement was consistent across the different groups (Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group, Community of Practice). The shift to online engagement benefited some people, which was recognised even among people who did not require accessibility supports:

I think it was also, it made things significantly more accessible for my peers. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The shift to an online project was done seamlessly. In some cases, people in the project thought that online engagement was part of the original design:

I imagine that because it was always national and the cost of bringing people together, I suspect it perhaps was always intended to be an online space. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The impact of the shift to online participation was also seen to bring new opportunities for engagement. Some participants said online was the only mode of engagement available to them. The changes to the project for online accessibility were especially apparent in the Co-Design Group, as accommodations for their accessibility needs required a careful focus on how to best ensure participants could engage comfortably and meaningfully. Overwhelmingly, their feedback was that any adaptations to accessibility were successfully achieved. Participants pointed to the notion of "radical accessibility" as important as both a principle to aspire to and as an achieved outcome of the project:

I think that sort of this radical accessibility, which is something kind of new that I've kind of come across, as in a new term, but I think that, you know, I and people in DPOs have been doing this forever, but we've got a new term for it. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The importance of building breaks into the structure of any online meetings - which did not always happen - was emphasised by both workshop participants and OVOLOW project stakeholders. However, others, especially people with a longer period of participating in OVOLOW stakeholder groups, said online meetings were flexibly structured so that participants felt they could "just step away and come back, and not interrupt things". This also meant that participants who were in paid employment could join meetings online without compromising their employment in ways that may not have been accommodated by in-person meetings:

I think that having to move it all online presented a really great opportunity that maybe didn't exist when we had planned to do everything face-to-face road show style, which was purely that we are now able to reach so many more people by moving all of the activities online than we would've been if everything was face-to-face. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

These comments from project stakeholders reflect the dedication and management required to effectively facilitate online interactions among the stakeholders. It demonstrated how the staff facilitated the project in online spaces, with a focus on resolving tensions or barriers to engagement. Their approach included chairing responsibilities that included spoken contributions, as well as constantly monitoring the chat function, which often required

simultaneous attention by more than one person. The labour required to successfully facilitate online meetings required careful planning, including advance notice of meetings, to ensure that people remained connected and engaged in the project:

It was difficult, particularly during lockdown to keep consistency, people turning up but again there was you know we got to check-in the day before, there was always a lot of notice for meetings, so it was very well organised and structured in that way. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

In some cases, however, these tensions could never be fully resolved, but these were considered out of scope of online facilitation:

With any group, you know, sometimes there are some personality things that kind of come up or some ways of communicating and some access conflicts. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Exclusively online engagement meant that some participants felt there was a missed opportunity to develop the connection and rapport that they perceived could only come from face-to-face engagement:

As for our group meeting online, we didn't do, like, significant rapport building or anything like that. I think if we met in person, you know, that's something that's always missed in online meetings. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Impacts of online engagement for storytelling training

People were connected to the OVOLOW project through various components of online activity. First, the social media campaign was seen to draw attention to the project and connected people to the project's storytelling workshops. OVOLOW project stakeholders noted that online engagement with social media was "huge", with one participant noting that such high levels of engagement reflected the demand for the type of training offered by the project:

And I think that the levels of engagement that we're seeing from that messaging is really encouraging. It indicates that it's something that is really important to people. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Among workshop participants, the process of connecting to the training was seen as easy:

I found workshop details on Instagram post (sponsored), targeted ad, saw the description and thought it sounded interested and clicked through, liked the intersection between queer and disability, and fact that it was free. (Workshop participant).

Second, the online registration process for the workshop training worked successfully with minimal effort according to the workshop participants. The online registration form: enabled workshop participants to register for workshops of their choice; provided information to the convenors of participants' accessibility needs; and captured demographic data on participants:

I remember it being very simple and straightforward. [...] It was only asking for the basic information that was required rather than an excessively large amount of additional information on top of that. (Workshop participant).

Preparation for the online workshops was not seen as onerous by participants. They appreciated the electronic reminders and information circulated beforehand. Having the option of providing verbal or written consent for the sessions where one of the evaluation team was present was also seen as important. Recommendations from some workshop participants included minimising the number of pre-workshop emails, and some people were uncomfortable about receiving direct phone calls:

I can imagine a call at a random time from an unknown number may be distressing for some, so perhaps something to consider in future sessions. (Workshop participant).

Finally, the online delivery of the storytelling workshops received mixed responses. Workshop participants said the online platform was familiar to them due to the shift during the pandemic. The delivery assumed that most participants were digitally literate, with experience and skills from the general shift to online:

Engaging online totally fine, a lot of experience online and so feel comfortable. [...] Easier to engage in a way that feels right of for the individual. (Workshop participant).

The workshop participants noted that they needed to make adjustments for the online delivery, such as a quiet room to engage online. They liked that control:

Then sensory-wise, because it was online, then whatever setup I had, I could be put in complete sensory comfort because this is my space. So, that was kind of self-accommodating in and of itself. (Workshop participant).

The participants emphasised the need for structured breaks in the two-hour workshop sessions or running shorter one-hour workshops:

2 hours was quite a long time for sessions even with the break so I would suggest breaking it into one-hour sessions once a week for a few weeks or one-hour sessions that run across five day. (Workshop participant).

A small number of participants expressed a preference for in-person workshops. They felt that this would have facilitated better connections and trust between participants to enable them to engage more meaningfully with the content. This preference was probably influenced by their experiences of workshops in person before COVID-19, which were difficult to meet in an online workshop. The facilitators also had prior experience facilitating in-person workshops. They knew that learning styles centred on 'learning by doing' were more difficult online:

There definitely were some sort of like challenges that I noticed, particularly with like the workshops and moving them online, just because workshops generally are so interactive, and I think that sort of like creating that same space in an online setting is something that we generally, like anyone who does this kind of like work is still navigating and still figuring out how to do really effectively and really well. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Social media reach and impact

By 10 May 2024, the @ourvoicesourway Instagram account had 1500 followers and 57 posts.

Following posts in late September 2023 to announce the launch of the resource, a post from @ourvoicesourway on 12 October announced the online Storytelling Workshops in October and November with a link to register. The post described the aims of the workshop and included the following: #connection #inclusion #lgbt #lgbtiq #lgbtiqa #pride #disability #chronicillness #neurodivergent #queercrip.

Subsequent posts announced the Advocacy and Storytelling workshop.

Other posts covered:

- the launch of the Our Voices Our Lives Our Way website/resource hub
- subscribing to the monthly newsletter
- A conversation between @chloeshayden and @georgiestone about the impact of Georgie Stone's trans character on the TV show Neighbours.
- external resources for LGBTIQ+ people with disability
- World Braille Day
- how to find LGBTIQ+ inclusive healthcare services
- the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade
- statistics on the number of people using Auslan
- the storytelling toolkit
- the launch of new podcasts.

The post with the most likes (n=498) announced Neurodiversity Celebration Week 18-24 March 2024.

4 Process of developing the training workshops and website

Stories of change extract from Margherita on intersectionality (Appendix D)

I am 63 years old, have an Italian background, I am short, I live with a form of dwarfism. I have worked as an artist and disability queer advocate for over 20 years.

On any given morning, I must come out of three closets, I come out as a person with a disability, I come out about my sexuality, I am a lesbian, I come out about my cultural background.

The findings in this section document the process of developing the training workshops and OVOLOW website. The aim of OVOLOW was to develop online training through workshops and the website regarding various aspects of digital storytelling, including information on how to tell a purposeful and safe story. In this project, the processes of harnessing lived experience and peer expertise in co-designing content was as important as the outcomes achieved. Findings reported here are drawn from interviews with the workshop participants and project stakeholders (Co-Design group, external contractors and facilitators, and LHA and NEDA staff members), post-workshop survey data and feedback, researcher observations, and website metrics.

Key points

The Co-Design Group advised on content for the website. The group membership and processes were inclusive and based on the notion of “radical accessibility”, which prompted a sense of peer connection and support, as well as potential to transform the way that LGBTIQ+ people with disability can advocate.

The success of the process required that the scope of work of the Co-Design Group was defined, and members understood their role; yet an unintended outcome was that members learned skills they could apply in other contexts.

Co-Design Group members felt that they had significant impact on the website outcomes and saw that their suggestions were implemented, which created a sense of ownership over and pride in the site.

Delays were experienced in implementing feedback in the final stage of the OVOLOW website design, and possibly led to limited scope for the Co-Design Group to engage with other aspects of the project.

Workshop training was designed and implemented with accessibility at the forefront, which is reflected in participants’ experiences of inclusivity, and is a case example of “radical accessibility” in operation.

The workshops were peer-led and served as opportunities to provide and receive peer support through interactions between the facilitators and workshop participants, though the

format of the workshops sometimes inhibited interactions between participants, which meant limited opportunities to receive feedback on their advocacy experiences or plans.

Stakeholders involved variously in the project had a clear sense of connection across the various processes and activities of the OVOLOW project, and that the workshops amplified the resources available in the OVOLOW project.

Feedback was incorporated into the second round of workshops in 2024, such as linking to the website before the workshop, structured time and methods for interactions, and focus on sharing storytelling upskilling.

The OVOLOW website about storytelling continue to be refined with feedback from the project, users and workshop participants.

Role and impact of the Co-Design Group

The Co-Design Group (CDG) was convened at the outset of the project to co-develop training content for the OVOLOW website by using strengths-based and trauma-informed processes. The scope of work of the CDG was defined and members understood their role. CDG members were able to articulate their role and responsibilities clearly – as primarily creating content for the website that drew on their lived expertise in the subject matter:

I feel like my job was to essentially give feedback on the content creation and the development of the website overall, and my job was to engage and share with others my story and lived experience to kind of direct and navigate how they would just continue with the process overall. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

LHA was responsible for the recruitment, running the CDG and paying the CDG members. The group met monthly for 2 hours online.

The CDG was responsible for co-designing and contributing to advice around the animations on rights and advocacy, videos for storytelling tips, user generated content, and written resources to promote self-advocacy skills.

The rationale for the CDG was that the OVOLOW project required the involvement of peers in design. The process was based on “individual capacity building” where “self-advocacy really became that targeted focus of storytelling workshops and the training modules”. This meant that diversity among CDG members was foundational to the processes in which they engaged:

Obviously, we're not representing everybody, but we have lived experience and using our lived experience to filter things and to give our feedback along the way. So, we were also using different skills that we had in different areas like that too. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The CDG work continued when the project was extended because of the time required for co-design. Members were paid in recognition of their lived expertise:

Really co-designing is a process that you just, you know, it's a process, it takes time to do it well. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

I mean honestly, I felt valued. I was almost feeling like it was a job, like a paid job. It felt real. It wasn't token. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The prioritisation of accessibility and inclusivity was key to the success of the CDG process. Communication within CDG meetings and in email follow ups was seen as well facilitated in ways that encouraged meaningful engagement. Members felt that they could raise issues outside the agenda, and the chair effectively returned discussion back to the focussed subject. Members asked questions during and after meetings according to their preferences for information and contribution:

I loved that everyone's needs were met. So, if someone said, "I need you to not cover your mouth because I can't hear you," we were all aware of that, or if someone said, "I have to turn off the lights and be in darkness right now so that I can focus," that was met. There was so much understanding of each individual need to the point that sometimes that took a lot of time to navigate and took away from the process moving forward quickly and, I guess, one hand, we all met our access needs; on the other hand, it slowed the process a lot. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The CDG was structured to ensure that members could engage according to their own strengths and requirements. This connection and trust facilitated the "learnings" that members were able to achieve and take away for use in their personal and professional lives. Inclusivity, and the safety it enables for members, was perceived as a benefit, especially if members felt triggered by content they were asked to co-design. But some members felt that any negative reactions they experienced in meetings was their responsibility to resolve so that they could continue to participate:

So, when people were discussing systematic abuse and trauma and things around that, I found that I had to have things in place and I was aware then for the next meeting, oh, hang on. If something like that comes up again, I better be prepared. So, that's how I was coping with it. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

CDG members were clear that upskilling people was an incidental benefit but not the primary scope of work as understood through the formal documentation of the ToR:

I personally would not expect them to provide me with any skills. I don't see co-design as that at all. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The diversity of the group met its intersectional aims over time, including diversity in ethnicity (with First Nations and CALD emphasised), geography (rural, regional), and people with variations of sex characteristics (intersex). The intersectionality was most apparent in the second intake of new members following a diversity audit by LHA:

We had First Nations representation from the outset, but we really like strengthened that with the addition of new members and also like people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people in rural and remote areas. That was a real big gap in the co-design group originally. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

And I think that is one of the challenges and we've had to ask ourselves, who's not being heard here, who's being left behind, who's not having a voice, and I think for us, it was really identifying that was the intersex people and we addressed that. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The online workshop content and scripting was not in the scope of the CDG. Members expressed some frustration that they had no opportunity for design input into the workshops, which was the responsibility of the contractors. They felt co-design on the workshop content and process could have removed triggering material. Some members were also frustrated about their limited scope of engagement with other aspects of the project, such as the limited scope of the CDG responsibilities and lack of contact with other stakeholders, which they saw as a missed opportunity for greater capacity building. Members recognised that the budget may not have been large enough to facilitate this greater scope of involvement:

I was a bit disappointed that we didn't get the developers in the space with us. Like we were like the secondary voice. I just wish we were the primary voices working with the developers, so that we could also learn how to work with a developer (OVOWLOW project stakeholder)

At the same time, members acknowledged that LHA served as the medium through which the contractors implemented CDG members' expertise. Sometimes the content developed from the CDG were misaligned with other parts of the project because of the complex governance process (see Section 6).

Members identified some difficulties with the pace of meetings, where accessibility adjustments, introductions and so on slowed the progress achieved in each session. They acknowledged that effective chairing was required to allow everybody to engage, such as negotiating the tension between when to take a break and when to finalise an important discussion. Therefore, it was clear that despite some limitations in timing and deadlines, the accessibility and inclusive ethos were retained throughout the course of the group meetings.

Suggestions were made to use small break out groups to encourage members to discuss issues they felt uncomfortable raising in the large group format. Members also recommended increasing the frequency of meetings and reducing the duration of each, for example, two sessions of 90 mins each, rather than one two-hour meeting. The delays and extension of the project due to COVID meant that new CDG members had difficulty developing familiarity in the process. However, this was a recognised difficulty with timeframes and funding that resulted in a short induction process and only one-on-one engagement by the convenor. These constraints left the onus on new members to familiarise themselves with the project information. A minority perspective was that staff changes meant that some members felt uncomfortable disclosing personal information to more than one project staff member.

Peer-led spaces generated through the co-design processes

The CDG was a microcosm of the intended outcomes for the project. This included the implementation of "radical accessibility" that positioned the CDG as a transformative space with future potential. The ethos of a peer supported space underpinned the CDG activities, facilitating support for collaborative and collective outcomes. Interactions between CDG members supported the inclusive ethos:

[CDG] really gave me something to anchor on, you know, that we had this group, you know. Monthly meetings, something to look forward to, something to do. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The space is also really hopeful, also a bit revolutionary, you know, the transformational kind of space and I think it's just full of possibilities and going forward, I think things are very full of possibilities, which is lovely, I think. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

I did feel like I could be vulnerable and be myself without being judged, but I was never once gendered the whole time. I was never once gendered, which is the best ever, which is great. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

A safe and supportive space was created through the process that enabled members to be their authentic selves. Safety was broadly conceived by CDG members as a process through which members' and staff's transparent and respected disclosure of intersectional identities and experiences was facilitated and respected. Sharing personal and professional experiences between members generated connection, as well as a sense of trust:

One is that the safety was built in from day one. So, we weren't having to disclose ourselves to the group because we all were LGBTIQ from the community. So, it's not like we were in a co-design for a particular issue where we had to choose whether we will disclose or not. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Like when I first went in the group and I realised that the person running the group was neurodiverse and sharing herself, I was surprised [...] This is how this group is meant to run. This group runs so well partly because it was modelled in that way by the leader of the group (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Role of the co-design group in developing the OVOLOW website

CDG members felt that they had significant impact on the website outcomes. Generally, members felt proud of the website content, and saw that their suggestions were implemented. This created a sense of ownership over the site:

Co-design for me was actually a really new thing and there were limitations that as an advisor, you can kind of give the advice [...] whereas co-design, you have this sense of ownership of, 'no, I actually did make a difference and I can see the results and I'm seeing them as they're happening' (OVOLOW project stakeholder)

They recognised that meaningful engagement was a challenge to implement and required consistent reflection, adaptation, and refinement. At times, they felt that they could only influence the design on limited aspects of the site. Members felt that the final website would need to continue to improve the images used; for example, to avoid ableism in the use of slender, blemish-free people who use mobility aids (rather than depicting physical diversity):

I think it's challenging with a project such as this, you really need to be on top of the kind of work product that's coming out of it and making sure that outcomes are visible all the way through in that work product, so that disabled people know that what they're doing is being valued and that they can see themselves in the final product and they can have ownership of all aspects of the content. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

I think our co-design group need to continue to monitor the website and continue to support the people who come through the website with their stories. [...] I would like to see that happen. I don't think that the website is adequate, and I don't think the web workshops are adequate. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Most CDG members felt they did not have adequate engagement in the last phase of the project. They felt the engagement was rushed by the looming deadlines as the project finished. This experience led to the reflection that co-design of a website in this sector needs more time in the implementation stage. Members felt that they should be formally acknowledged on the website (this feedback was passed on to LHA). They also felt that the finalised website should be shared with CDG members as a 'closing the loop' process:

You know, it's just too much was put towards the back end of things, and [sustainability] really needed to be front and centre all the way through as far as the project design goes because there wasn't continuity. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

So, I haven't yet heard anything because the way everything rushed through at the end, we didn't get a chance to really sit back and spend an hour. [...] It's sort of like we were there and then someone else took over it, done it and it's over [...] There's no closing of the loop. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

So, I think making sure that, you know, with project timelines and with engaging external contractors in that, making sure you've actually allowed enough time at those stages. You know, content work takes time and, you know, that should be reflected throughout the project, not just towards the end of something. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Delays were also experienced in implementing feedback at this critical final stage, and possibly led to limited scope for the CDG to engage, which was acknowledged by the contractors and required careful management of time and capacity. This meant that revisions were required to be smaller, rather than as comprehensive as the CDG may have recommended, for the timeline, budget and scope of the project to be achieved. At this stage, revisions were required to be implemented quickly, which put strain on the contractor's work capacity:

It's always very hard to fit things in, and so like we were expecting reviews and feedback obviously, but sometimes it was quite a tight turnaround where we would need to change something and have it prepared within the next day or two, which sometimes is just not something that I could fit in. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Some CDG members were open to having more opportunities to be involved in the ongoing life of the website, including serving as ambassadors (though this is out of scope of the CDG). They did not have a sense of a common goal in what the website should look and feel like to be considered finalised, and what measures of sustainability were built into the co-design process. They expected that the website would remain a work in progress to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and community needs, which was not possible under the funding cycle:

I think one of the things when we developed the website, I said the website has to almost be like another being, as if it's a living person with feelings and the website is an invitation to being a friend with it, to be a source. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Workshop implementation and engagement

Registration spaces for the first round of workshops were quickly filled. From the survey data, three workshop participants attended one online training workshop, and equal numbers

of participants attended two or three workshops (out of eight participants). From evaluation interviews, four workshop participants attended all three online training workshops, and one each attended one and two workshops (out of six participants). At the time of interviews, not all workshop participants had viewed the OVOWLOW website, which was released after the first round of online training workshops.

Accessible workshop process

The workshops were designed and implemented with accessibility and inclusivity at the forefront. This included structural considerations (timing, breaks) and use of multiple modes of content (videos, sharing of anecdotal experience), participation (chat, cameras on or off, audio on or off) and facilitation (prompts, activities, discussions), with the aim that the workshop would be experienced as “comfortable” and “beautifully inclusive”.

On the whole, participants felt that the emphasis on accessibility meant that the workshops were welcoming and inclusive. Their experience echoed similar perceptions among the stakeholder groups (CDG, CoP, AC) that when accessibility is prioritised, its impact goes beyond mere participation, as “radical accessibility” is then perceived as an outcome in and of itself:

Great that all participants and facilitators had lived experience and accessibility enabled structure/modes for engagement. (Workshop participant).

The workshop facilitators also emphasised the need for inclusivity and safety in the way that they encouraged engagement with the content and drew on the expertise of the contractors who also had experience in the disability sector. The way that the facilitators gave equal weight to audio and chat was appreciated, with workshop participants noting the deft handling of multiple modes of engagement:

I think the girls really nailed it and were like if you didn't want to share, you didn't have to at all. If you wanted to just type it in the text, then you could do that, and [they] would read them out. (Workshop participant).

The reception to using videos in the workshops was mixed, with some people preferring the videos to “mix up” content, but others finding them unnecessary. Instead, these latter participants recommended that facilitated discussion could be prioritised, and that the video content seemed too advanced for a beginner session:

I know the videos were a very intrinsic part of it, but I found that the facilitators were just so engaging and so interesting that I would have been more than happy to just talk to them about those topics. (Workshop participant).

Suggestions from the participants to facilitate greater accessibility were shortening the length of time each single facilitator speaks to ensure “alertness”, using IT functionality on the platform to greater effect (e.g. switching between group view and speaker view), streamlining audio and chat so as not to interrupt the workshop flow, and structuring breaks consistently within and across each session. Participants said that if the workshop structure and/or run sheet was shared in advance, they could set their expectations and plan for their

own preferred engagement and capacity. Delayed or cancelled breaks distressed some people who felt that they had limited capacity to advocate for their need for a break:

I don't think it's appropriate to just sort of raise that comment of, "Is everyone okay if we skip the break and continue?" because, yeah, you can't. It's too hard for me to actually advocate for myself there. (Workshop participant).

Participants made suggestions about how to make online engagement with each other more accessible, especially for people who needed to consider questions in advance. They felt they had limited capacity to engage in "unexpected questions thrown out to the group in a way that made it hard to answer". Some people needed more time to prepare their responses and have the materials after the workshops to follow up for themselves. They suggested setting a "communication order", which they defined as a list of attendees in the order they would be called on to respond to questions and prompts; and adding prompts in the chat as well as on the PowerPoint slide:

I had to try and remember the wording of the question enough and hold that in my brain and then try and think of a response whereas if the question had been put in chat, then I could've had more confidence in typing a response out or formatting it in my head before speaking. (Workshop participant).

The questions in advance. When we know what we're answering, it is so much easier to compile your thoughts prior to being in the moment because then there's the pressure there where it's like, "Hey, tell us about yourself" and then you forget literally everything you know about yourself. (Workshop participant).

I'd potentially do them like one a week instead of back-to-back, like one day after another, just so that you've got a little bit of time to, like, have a think and stuff like that. (Workshop participant).

The workshops participants said they gained benefits from the workshops (Section 2) but did not directly gain many practical skills to create digital stories. These benefits reflect the wider project goals about building a community, rather than focussed solely on the specific outputs produced through the workshop training. However, most suggestions from the post-workshop satisfaction data and feedback received directly to LHA from workshop participants were about improving the pitch, scale and delivery of the workshops:

- More practical guides on self-advocacy and speaking up.
- Think about who aren't we hearing from, who might be left behind in that, who's not represented those workshops.
- To connect to queerness and disability explicitly and innately.
- How to advocate through stories and how even like little acts of creative expression can be advocacy or a little storytelling.
- Open to allies, not just LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

Facilitation and engagement in the online workshops

Workshop participants praised the facilitators for their “warmth” and “bubbiness”, which encouraged participant interest and engagement over the course of the workshops. The facilitators said that they intended to dismantle any perception of power difference with the participants; that they were “learning as much from the participants as they were learning from us”. The participants said the facilitators disclosures and candour regarding their own experiences were refreshing and generative of connection and community. The reputation of the facilitators and their visibility in the queer and disability communities brought prestige to the workshops:

But I got to meet, you know, the coordinators who are very, you know, big in different realms of both, you know, disability and comedy and so that was still an incredibly pleasant surprise, something I definitely would never have had access to otherwise. (Workshop participant).

The facilitators’ interaction was described by one workshop participants as “full”, in which there was limited “space” to engage. For example, the facilitators tended to answer their own questions when participants did not immediately respond. Holding the workshops online made an interactive workshop more difficult to achieve. Some participants described the workshops as more like a presentation, panel talk, discussion or webinar:

I didn’t experience them as workshops. I felt like they were more similar to a panel talk and discussion, which is completely fine but is not what I would expect from a workshop (Workshop participant).

Some feedback from participants reflected preferences about process. For example, a tension in interactive workshops is the degree to which facilitators follow a script or are responsive to the questions from participants. The facilitators aimed for flexible content, as long as the topics were covered. Some participants did not like the ad hoc interactions as they felt that this could introduce material that was uncomfortable to some participants. The participants suggested the facilitators formalise their language and respond to non-verbal communication (facial expressions, body language) to adjust their facilitation style. Some participants suggested structured chairing to engage with the participants, rather than each other, and to curtail extended comments from participants. Indeed, one workshop participant felt they needed to fill silences in the sessions, but acknowledged that other participants did not have the capacity to engage as much:

It was, you know, only really a solid peer experience for those who felt that they could actively engage to the level that I did. (Workshop participant).

Opportunities to provide and receive peer support

The workshops were seen by everyone involved, including facilitators, contractors, staff and participants, as valuable for peer support through the connection they facilitated by bringing LGBTIQ+ people with disability together in this online space. They agreed it was “100%, absolutely very important” that the project be peer led, rather than by allies:

It felt comforting to be around or in space with Queer people with disability, felt sharing and activities allowed connection with each other, mutual understanding

even if experiences were different, allowed to hear others, and resonate with self. (Workshop participant).

I think probably a main challenge [...] was to determine that balance of ally and lived experience model. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

This prompted a shift in the contractors' direction away from the original combination of lived experience and allies. The change prompted a sense of safety among workshop participants that contributed to what they felt that they could say in workshops, in ways that reflected their authentic selves:

I didn't feel like I had to leave my queer or disabled identities at the door - and could bring my whole self to the session. (Workshop participant).

Participants voiced interest in continuing these connections made through other fora, such as WhatsApp chat and other workshops or seminars. This sentiment was amplified for people who attended all three online sessions of the workshops.

Some workshop participants reflected that a greater focus on their intersectionality could have been provided in the content. Part of this focus could have been to include material beyond the person's action and resilience, to address structural conditions inhibiting advocacy or that experiences of disability were emphasised over experiences of queerness:

Content needs to be more connected to queerness and disability, as connection felt more incidental based on WHO was there, i.e. experiences shared by participants, facilitators and videos, 'experientially connected' only. Topics broad, but extra step to connect to queer people with disability and how to manage that was missing. (Workshop participant).

Some workshop participants felt they needed more opportunity for direct interpersonal engagement with other attendees. They would have liked more targeted opportunities to interact about work on their own ideas for storytelling or to collaborate with others. The emphasis on sharing experiences perhaps meant less time for learning skills from each other:

So, like we all came in as like newbies, but the questions were like, "Well, what do you do in this situation?" or like "What do you do to ...?" which like a lot of us didn't necessarily have experience in. (Workshop participant)

Further opportunities to encourage peer support in the future to share plans for digital storytelling would also contribute to ongoing connection and community. These opportunities could be structured into the workshop design and communicated in advance to attendees to encourage preparation:

With the format being mostly a presentation, with the occasional open-ended question to the group, I just wasn't sure how much discussion you wanted us to go into, and if good discussion now, meant rushing through content later. (Workshop participant)

Overall, the workshops built a sense of connection and cohesion among similarly identified people.

The networking potential at the workshops was limited, despite the facilitators' goal for interaction. One participant recounted how they sent private messages to attendees who they wanted to meet with after the workshops. The presentation style of the workshops precluded some participants from sharing their plans. A suggestion was to spend more time facilitating introductions to build more connection and community, and to encourage all participants to share. Participants who only attended the later workshops, felt that everyone was familiar with each other, leading to a sense of social disconnection or not "feeling welcome":

However, there was no opportunity to introduce ourselves or there was no reflection on what was the last, you know, workshop like for you and what do you want to add. (Workshop participant).

Other safety suggestions were for project staff to check in with people who left early, did not return from a break, or did not attend a registered session in case they have experienced distress. They suggested that participants' stated concerns about capacity, skills or confidence be affirmed to reassure them about "imposter syndrome" and "self-doubt":

Facilitator would say 'your voice matters. What you have to say matters' but felt a bit like an empty platitude – but doesn't give you a way forward. Not expecting a workshop to take away self-doubt, but more practical and less abstract to help. (Workshop participant)

Amplification of workshop training with other project activities and resources

Stakeholders involved variously in the project (Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group) and especially stakeholders who attended the workshops, had a clear sense of connection across all elements. They pointed to ways the workshop training could be amplified through other resources, such as the Resource Hub and OVOLOW website:

I think that particularly with the resources I can speak to like I think the work is the same thing, that they will build confidence, they will build compassion, the people's sense of community and sense of identity in a way that will improve outcomes. (OVOLOW project stakeholder)

I think the best thing that comes from this is that everyone who has been part of it goes forward with a sense of wanting to do more in this space [...]. which I think increases your presentation, increases our own potential and increases what we can imagine for ourselves in the future. (OVOLOW project stakeholder)

People who only attended workshops had less of a sense of the workshop's purpose. Participants who attended all three sessions had mixed feedback, with some praising the iterative content and others suggesting that some content was repetitive.

Workshop participants received a kit of resources (merchandise) upon registration for the workshop, which they appreciated. They suggested it could be more effective to distribute alternative resources before the workshop that would have direct bearing on the workshop activities:

It would've been far more useful to have a printed booklet of all of the questions or maybe links to the content or something like that because there was never a point where we actually used [...] So, it always felt like it was just sort of throwing money at the project and not actually thinking about value there (Workshop participant).

Refining the workshop design and delivery

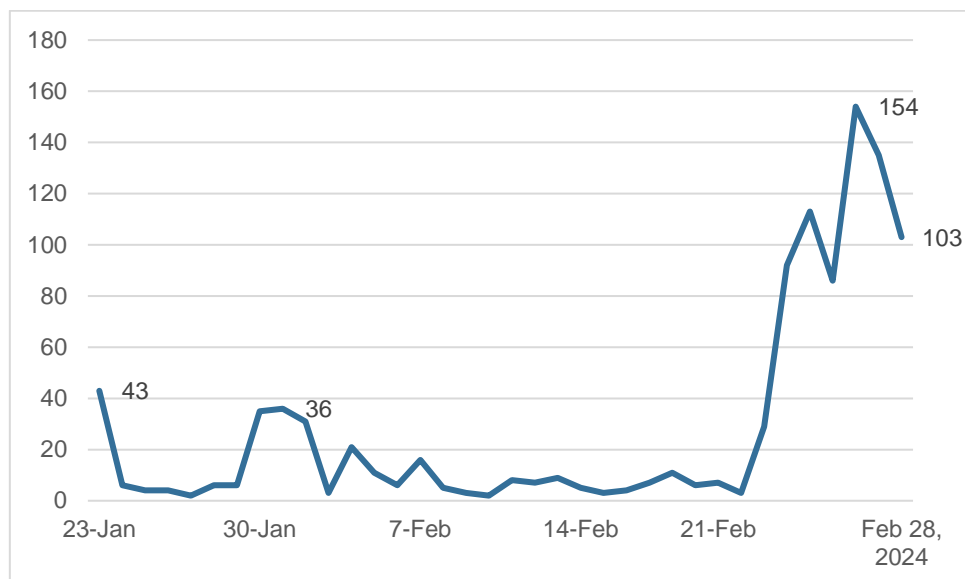
The workshops were modified based on participant feedback and preliminary evaluation feedback. Main changes were reducing video content, more online engagement tools, distributing optional pre reading material, and preparing for questions/activities. Advertising based on the anticipated outcomes was refined to manage participants' expectations, including learning outcomes and describing the three-part structure. Updates to the online training workshops were not subject to additional evaluation.

OVOWLOW Website development and engagement

In addition to the workshops, the second activity of the project was to develop a website, with advice from the CDG (see earlier in Section 4). The LHA-led OVOWLOW website (<https://ourvoices.org.au/>) was launched in January 2024. The website contains diverse content (text, videos, images) to provide information to users on how to tell stories that function as a form of advocacy for self and others. It is designed as a series of tutorials or learnings around the various aspects of storytelling.

The objectives for the OVOWLOW website were that it be accessible, content provided in plain/easy read English, and structured in a way that enables flexible engagement by users, in a similar style to "choose your own adventure".

Over the first month (23 January-28 February), 900 new (unique) users engaged with the site via 1,018 sessions. Most site visitors were new (92%) and 8% were returning visitors. In that first month, daily sessions fluctuated considerably (Figure). There were 43 sessions of engagement on 23 January, the day of the site launch. The number of daily sessions ranged between 2 and 36 until 21 February, after which they increased. The number of daily sessions peaked at 154 sessions of engagement on 26 February, before dropping again to 103 sessions on 28 February (the end of the reporting period).

Figure 4: OVOLOW website, daily sessions (23/01/24-28/02/24)

The average duration of engagement was 20 seconds, and 11 resources were downloaded during the reporting period. Most users (81%) accessed the site via mobile phone, with the rest accessing via a desktop computer. Most users (88%) accessed the site directly, 3% via Facebook, 3% via LinkedIn and 2% via Instagram and 4% via other sources.

Delays in the OVOLOW website development meant that it was not available for the first round of workshop participants in 2023. When the OVOLOW website was live, emails were sent to all participants at the end of January, alerting them to the website, and including stories by a CDG member on their experience of co-designing it.

Not all workshop participants said they viewed the website before providing feedback about the workshops. However, for those who attended workshops and then later viewed the website, some noted the similar content between the workshop and website. They suggested that the website could be used as a resource to complement the workshop training, especially if the link to the website was distributed before the workshop:

Once I went and looked on the website and I saw that all of the content and pretty much everything that was discussed was up on the website, it almost felt like it was just repeating that content in a way that was more taxing to the people who are engaging with it as well.[...] I definitely think having looked at the website and gone through the way the website breaks the content down and realising that it's exactly the same as what we did in the workshops, I would say definitely not doubling up on that content. Now that the website is available, send that to participants beforehand, so they can go through that and then make the actual workshops focus on workshops along prompts, on activities, on community building. (Workshop participant).

Refining the OVOLOW website

High level feedback was provided to LHA and NEDA from the preliminary evaluation analysis. The contractor made changes to design, user experience, and navigational

features, and added more content. The updated website was intended to be released in late April 2024. The features for the 'choose your own adventure' format, and an easy read pathway was anticipated by May 2024, along with Auslan interpreted versions of each animation. Moreover, the website link will be sent to registered participants ahead of the online training workshops to give them enough time to review. Updates to the OVOWLOW website were not subject to additional evaluation.

5 Process of the Community of Practice and Resource Hub

Stories of change extract from Karan on peer support (Appendix D)

I had lots of encouragement from my peers, people who said they were worried about the stigma of ‘disclosing’ their vision impairment in social or work contexts. I have done this [work as an advocate and social media posting] for two years now. This is one of the things I am proud of in my life.

When I look at what I have done on social media to raise awareness, because every day, I get messages [from peers], saying, “Thank you! Because of you today I had the courage to tell my manager I am going blind as well”. It is important to me, it is a way to connect with others, and give other people the strength and confidence that they need to deal with something that’s really hard going blind is scary.

People feel lonely and scared, [blindness] is not talked about in the media, or not positively.

This section analyses the process of developing the Community of Practice (CoP) and its associated Resource Hub. A CoP is a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals. These often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this focus.

The CoP was intended to be national in scale, to have regional, rural, and remote reach, to be resourced for sharing information, and to be sustainable beyond the life of the OVOWLOW project. Local and national linkages among LGBTIQ+ people with disability and organisations were supported through Terms of References (ToR) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). These connections were used to co-create a Resource Hub (originally named digital clearing house) for holding and disseminating resources for LGBTIQ+ people with disability and organisations. The findings reported here are from the evaluation interviews with stakeholders, website metrics and program documents.

Key points

A Community of Practice (CoP) was formed to develop a way of providing peer led connection and support for LGBTIQ+ people with disability, organisations and communities, to respond to a recognised national gap. The CoP decided the best structure was a LGBTIQ+ Disability Resource Hub that collate and distribute resources to members, and could be sustained and continue to develop after the project.

The Chair and members of the CoP were peers from peak bodies. The process of the CoP was accessible to encourage wide contributions and connections, and members' accessibility needs were largely met to ensure meaningful participation and contribution over their shared interests.

Clear planning led to the success of the CoP, including the ToR guiding the CoP's responsibilities and activities, and clear purpose of the CoP was evident from the outset. This included recognition over what was in and out of scope.

To avoid the CoP becoming too static to be effective, new members would contribute to its longevity, and there were opportunities to enhance the profile of its unique intersectionality in the wider sector.

The Resource Hub was developed to provide a central place for resources to facilitate and amplify the voices and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people with disability, but which requires continual investment, funding and government support.

Design and development of the Community of Practice

LHA and NEDA identified the need for a national forum for LGBTIQ+ people with disability, which took the structure of a Community of Practice (CoP). The objective of the CoP was to facilitate national linkages and capacity building through knowledge transfer with LGBTIQ+ people with disability, DPOs, LGBTIQ+ organisations, First Nations and CALD groups. The CoP was envisioned as a way to facilitate sharing knowledge, best practice, and resources to support LGBTIQ+ people with disability across Australia:

Look, I think the overall objective, my read on it, was like I said to create essentially a coalition of what's happening in the community, what we're doing as advocates within the system and within our own self-advocacy. What information can we bring together that's going to help other people? (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

NEDA was responsible for the recruitment and running of the CoP. The CoP was embedded in the overall processes and objectives of the OVOLOW project for consistency. However, it was intentionally structured and led independently of the online training workshop and website (Section 4). The CoP was specifically developed to respond to a current national gap in knowledge about the intersectionalities for LGBTIQ+ people with disability:

There wasn't any such resource hub dedicated to this particular like LGBTIQ+ people with disability and even if you do want to look for such information, it's so hard for you to get that because sometimes it's just those intersectionalities are not thought of when people have, in the past, when you've seen certain existing resources. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The CoP members are peers who are advocates who identify as LGBTIQ+ people with disability and representatives of disability and/or LGBTIQ+ peak bodies or organisations and who also identify as LGBTIQ+ people with disability. A CoP of peers was important to meet the accepted politics of peer-led work in the sector and harnessed the ethos of "nothing about us without us". Valuing intersectionality extended to the peer-led ethos that underpinned the rationale for the CoP and which was reflected in the Chair selection.

Member selection was also carefully considered to ensure connections across a diverse sector:

I think the other thing has been centring concepts of disability justice into this, so that, you know, the politics of the space [...] and there's just been this really nice, yeah, that sort of solidarity and just allowing a space for everyone in terms of this concept of radical accessibility. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Clear planning led to the success of the CoP, including the ToR guiding the CoP's responsibilities and activities. The ToR detailed what was in and out of scope of the CoP, and laid out the responsibilities of the chair, secretariat and its members. The first meeting was convened in December 2023, and meetings are conducted online fortnightly or monthly as the project progressed. The design and development before the first meeting focussed on the recruitment of an appropriate chairperson, and negotiation over structure, scope and function between that chair and NEDA. Sitting fees were provided to members who did not attend the CoP in a salaried professional capacity. The sitting fee was seen as a valuable way to acknowledge members' contributions:

We just sort of worked backwards from the kind of end date with looking at the kind of budget and resources and, you know, how many Community of Practice meetings would be achievable within the budget, reasonable expectation of peoples' time and them being given that sitting fee [...] So, yeah, that has all gone really quite well to plan I think. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

I was so shocked to think I was going to get money for it because I believed in it and that makes a difference in getting paid for something you really enjoy doing, but again, it highlighted for us who we would normally left out. [...] That meant a lot. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Clear purpose was evident from the outset. In retrospect, the OVOLOW project stakeholders acknowledged that better planning could have been made to include national representation. That planning would have required a longer period of relationship building to ensure more diverse commitment to the CoP:

If there was the sort of time, I think having a closer engagement with jurisdictions which, you know, are smaller jurisdictions in population, so the Northern Territory, you know, particularly, Western Australia as well to a degree, to have bigger sort of representation of remote Aboriginal communities at those jurisdictions more broadly. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

CoP members also made some suggestions for expanded engagement and future activities, some of which were out of scope of the ToR. Specific suggestions were made to making the CoP visible in the community and employing a media strategy, for example, to make the CoP public facing, which could also include jointly authored academic articles with peer researchers (although these activities were not in the scope of the CoP as defined in the ToR):

For me, Community of Practice means actually going out and doing things in the community and bringing it back from the group and reflecting, and we didn't really do that. We kind of talked a bit about the project, what resources to put in, but there was

no guidance into formulating immediate plan of release, you know. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

And sometimes it's important in this global world, you connect with other people overseas who are doing, especially like we know in trans rights and disability activism, that maybe people, even though there are different laws and structures and systems, but the oppression and the community collective voices can make a difference, and I feel that this was a missed opportunity [to make the CoP international in scope]. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

NEDA and the CoP Chair worked effectively together to consider the longer-term benefits of funding and plan for sustainability. This included recognition of the role that CoP members played in establishing and maintaining the Resource Hub. The sustainability included planning for flexibility to respond to future issues, needs and priorities:

Often [...] it disappears because the project ended. Something that I can see as a legacy impact is that we've used this Resource Hub so that there is something that continues, was created by community and can be ongoing. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Potential sources of funding to make that viable for [another organisation] to continue the sort of maintenance and, you know, keep the Resource Hub alive and taken care of, if that makes sense. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

If we could get some sort of recognition that we were part of this community of projects, we did the selection of material on that, as some sort of way that we can take with us into other spaces, that would be wonderful because then you feel like, oh, wow. I was there for a year and I did this and this and this. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Fears were voiced about the risk of CoP becoming too static to be effective. New members would be a way to address this risk and contribute to longevity. They suggested the CoP could enhance the profile of its unique intersectionality in the wider sector. Some suggestions made by stakeholders were out of scope of the ToR, but may be useful for future projects:

It needs to now get new people or invigorate, so invigorate it [CDG] to create it because I'm frightened that it'll [Resource Hub] just go sit somewhere and it will just sit there. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

So, if there's conferences, someone at this intersection needs to be there. It can't be either/or. There needs to be someone at this intersection there at a disability conference or at an LGBTIQ+ conference, and people are also talking about, in terms of current impact, so impact that has been happening during the project [continues]. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Engagement within the Community of Practice

Accessibility was prioritised to encourage meaningful participation. A comprehensive list of participants' accessibility requirements was compiled at the outset and adhered to over the course of the CoP meetings. Accessibility ranged from pre-meeting requirements (agenda and printed materials sent in advance; high contrast visual materials and accessible [easy read] documents; reminders sent), accommodations during the meeting (Auslan interpreters;

captions; recaps at start and end of meetings; cameras and written [chat] participation optional; sensory stimuli reduced; meeting breaks; content warnings; support person attendance) and post-meeting requirements (check ins; reminders and follow ups).

Most CoP members stated that their accessibility needs were fully met with only two noting that their accessibility needs were partially met (external environment was unsuitable for effective participation; breaks in the meeting). These accessibility issues were taken seriously (for example, the risk of photosensitive epilepsy was identified - and presumably logged as per internal organisational processes - as a WHS hazard).

The CoP was chaired to encourage connection between members. Members appreciated the opportunity to learn from each other. This was due in part to the commitment and practice of intersectionality in which a recognition of intersecting identities and experiences was the priority of the CoP:

So, it's just been, yeah, it's just been very lovely and, you know, both being able to connect with some, you know, queer disabled folk who I've known in the past and they're meeting some amazing new people who I'd never heard of before and never come across before and just being extremely excited that I've got to meet them. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The CoP members also had opportunities to discuss issues arising from member organisations to contribute to community benefits. These included discussion about policy changes towards supported decision making; sector moves to create LGBTIQ+ and gender diverse supported decision-making toolkits; and examples of positive impacts of representation, inclusion and diverse voices in community-led work. The CoP members were able to contribute to discussions faced by other members of the CoP and put forth considerations for action that could be shared:

Well, there've been some really amazing conversations about all sorts of stuff relating to Community of Practice, but also the content of peoples' work that folk have got feedback on, you know, and around a whole range of issues relating to kind of health and well-being, but also some very nuanced understandings [...] So, you know, and I doubt that that would've come from any other space had it not come up in conversation in the Community of Practice space. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The main activity of the CoP was like a co-design group to collectively develop resources for the Hub. This immediate priority took precedence over more action-oriented or activity-based work that could have had practical impact for the community. Some contributions from the members were not followed. Without feedback about why, this process may have led to some members questioning whether their contributions were valued:

So, there were some things that I've used personally that I was offering that weren't taken up and I don't know if that's because it wasn't in line with their objective or just because [project leads] didn't have capacity. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Who's going to make the selection of what goes in and out? Is it transparency? Those are the sorts of things because when you create something, the ownership should go to the whole community and that's my fear [...] I mean that they're not, but we need to make sure that this what we create is open, it is transparent because part

of our community is always shrouded, like in the NDIS, hidden assessments, medicalised. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

Suggestions to improve the process were about timing of meetings (recognising the difficulty to get through everything in the time allocated); timing of breaks; structure for members' contributions (to ensure equal opportunity for engaged) and printed materials to be posted as well as emailed.

Resource Hub development and engagement

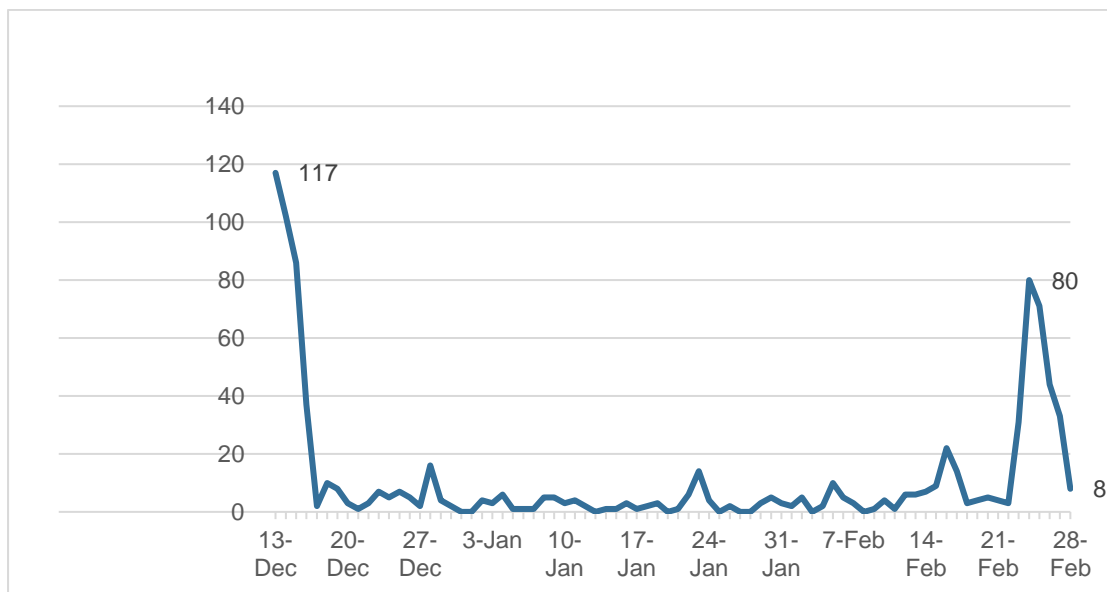
One planned output of the CoP was the Resource Hub (<https://ovolowresourcehub.org.au/category/our-stories/>). The Resource Hub is a collection of resources, stories, art, toolkits and research that amplifies the voices, knowledge and advocacy of LGBTIQ+ people with disability. It contains information about the CoP and the OVOWLOW project, and is organised by topics, with referrals and resources available.

The naming of the Resource Hub was important, as early development stages were focused on the idea of an archive. The early ideas were modified to a Hub, which was expected to facilitate the iterative, continual change in the disability space. As a repository for materials collected during the life of the OVOWLOW project, maintaining the Hub would require continual investment, funding and government support.

The NEDA-led LGBTIQ+ Disability Resource Hub launched on 13 December 2023. The site data for the 2.5-month period beginning from the site launch to the end of February 2024 are presented here.

Over the reporting period, 844 people engaged with the resource hub site, of whom 838 were new (unique) users who interacted with the site just once. The largest number of users on a single day was 117 users who accessed the site on 13 December 2023, the day the site was launched. The number of users declined thereafter. The few small peaks in the graph below represent only a small number of users (16 users on 28 December; 14 on 23 January; 22 on 16 February). However, between 23 and 24 February the number of users increased, peaking at 80 on 24 February (Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival ran from 16 Feb 2024 – 3 Mar 2024). The number of users declined steadily thereafter, with just 8 users on 28 Feb (Figure 1).

Figure 1: OVOLOW Resource Hub, daily users (13/12/23-28/02/24)



The average engagement time was 39 seconds. Most users were from Australia (84%), 8% were from the United States and 3% from the United Kingdom. Five percent of users were from 14 other countries. Half the site visits (50%) were direct (i.e. via a saved link or by entering the URL), almost a third (30%) were via referral, 15% via social media and 5% via web search. The Resource Hub home page had the most views (46%), followed by the Support and Referrals page (8%), the Health and Wellbeing Archives page (6%), the About Us page (5%) and the Tool Kit archives page (4%).

6 Project governance

The findings in this section document the role and impact of the OVOWLOW project governance. The governance structure comprised of the Advisory Committee (AC), the two contractors engaged to create content and outputs, and the LHA and NEDA project management teams. The role of stakeholders was in design and implementation. Their aim was to increase participation and contribution to communities of LGBTIQ+ people with disability. Findings reported here are drawn from stakeholder interviews and program documents.

Key points

A governance structure was established that separated responsibility for various aspects of the OVOWLOW project between LHA and NEDA, and included lines of instruction and direction among stakeholders, such as the Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group, and contractors, to ensure project outputs.

The Advisory Committee was comprised of sector experts with lived experience, who provided design advice throughout the project. Emphasis was placed on accessible processes. New members joined during the project to share the responsibility and extend diversity among the Committee.

Regular review and refining the interrelated roles of the parts of the governance would help clarify to the participants the value of their contributions relative to other parts of the structure.

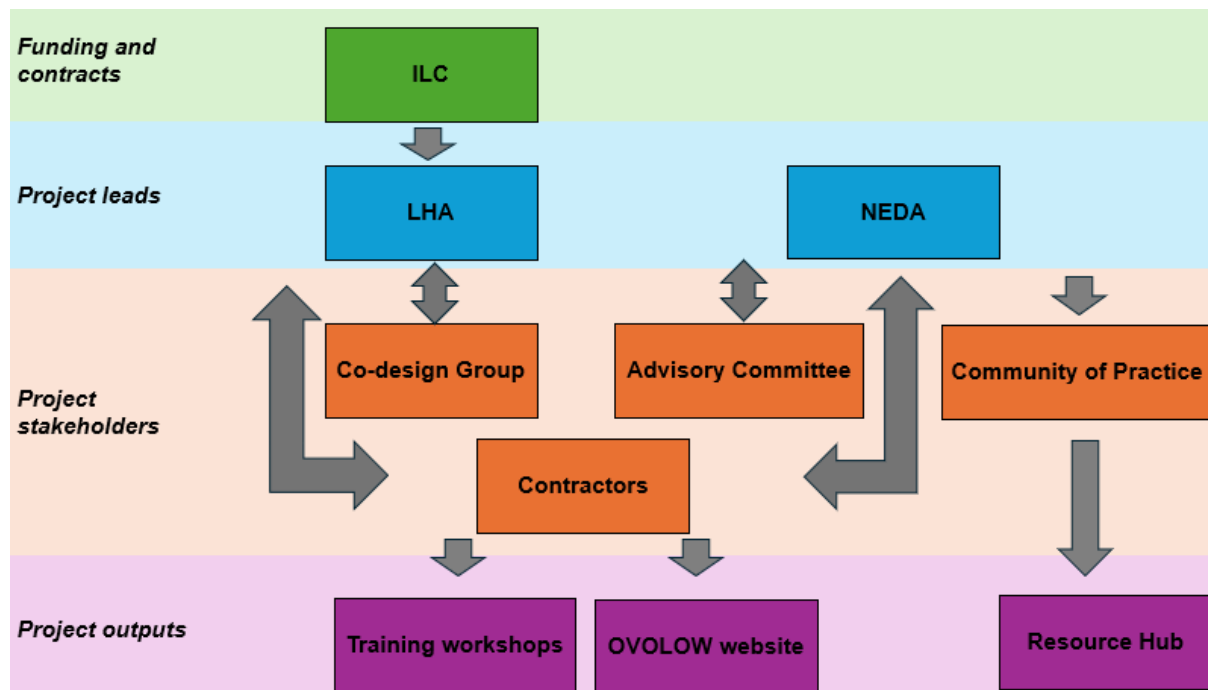
Two contractors delivered the outputs from the project. The project staff and contractors spent time establishing good working relationships by listening and refining the objectives. This process meant the many changes to the design and scope of the outputs could be accommodated.

Ambitious intersectional governance requires steps to establish, review and refine processes for good working relations to share information between the structures, people and parts of a project.

Governance structure

The OVOWLOW project was governed through a structure involving key stakeholders to achieve its outputs (Figure 2).

Figure 2: OVOWLOW project governance model



The following principles guided the governance of the project:

- Inclusivity and accessibility prioritised, including participant safety.
- Lived-experience expertise embedded throughout the project.
- Project co-development and co-design, using strengths-based and trauma-informed processes.

Role of the Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee (AC) was convened early in the design phase of the project, and was comprised of sector experts, Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), community organisations and LGBTIQ+ people with disability. NEDA was responsible for the recruitment to, and running of, the AC. The AC was tasked with guiding or steering the overarching project principles as well as offering advice and guidance on the component parts of the project, including involvement in the initial staff recruitment. The rationale for the AC was underpinned by recognition that the OVOWLOW project required the involvement of lived-experience expertise in guiding the project.

To me, that’s the primary function as with many advisory committees, is a whole project steering[...] So, going to this Advisory Committee and getting really kind of application focussed, targeted advice from them on particularly the storytelling workshops and that website in ways that they have enough context and enough information that they feel they can give their advice because these are like really established people. (OVOWLOW project stakeholder).

The composition and role of members was diverse yet united by their shared lived experience. Participation in the AC was recognised as involving and remunerating queer and trans people with disability in leadership and guidance roles, reflecting the project’s overall

commitment to intersectionality and peer-leadership. Members who were involved throughout the life of the project were complimentary of how they perceived their contributions were respected. The valuing of intersectional experience and expertise by the project leads was genuinely embraced by members:

It was very important that the people leading the project self-disclosed that they were also an LGBTQI person with disability because otherwise their right to lead the project would be questioned constantly. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The AC membership was restricted to manageable numbers to operate effectively. The impact of the decision meant that some intersectional identities and experiences were limited to one representative who could feel “token”. At the same time, members were enthusiastic about recruiting new members over time as need arose to meet diversity within the committee. Extending the membership also shared around the work and representation from people who were involved from the start:

I think that the project extension gave us a really good opportunity to re-recruit and re-engage new members, which also allowed us to try and fill some gaps in representation that those groups had from the outset. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Yeah, so when I started, there were only a handful of us that were kind of being in this space and so there was an awareness of needing to collaborate, so we did not exhaust our resource pool. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Over time, some members left, to which the remaining members found challenges in maintaining continuity for progress. Some newer members needed more onboarding than was available, so they could avoid confusion about how their suggestions were implemented:

I feel like strangely like I've come in at a point, and this might just be like the nature of just like my specific on-boarding. So, I don't know about the other folks, but I feel like I came at a point where the program was designed, full stop, and then I'm just like kind of there guiding like what happens from here. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

The AC process achieved its outcomes, including prioritising accessibility requirements and encouraging connection between members. AC members felt supported in their role, in part due to the peer expertise in advocating for the intersectionality of the committee, and the inclusion of respected advocates:

I thought it was incredibly well run. I think there was a lot of effort made to ensure that you know all of our access needs were met and the people running it who also you know would self-disclose their own experiences, also had their own needs met. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

I saw a couple of names that I recognised as well as part of the like calendar invites, and those names I've seen like presented in other spaces and I really respected them, and so I saw this as kind of like a safe and reputable space as well for me to step into. So, that was a very big green flag as well. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

There was just like very, very explicit like empathy, not sympathy and like real peer leadership in that sense. (OVOLOW project stakeholder)

Members voiced a sense of achievement and connection from being part of the advisory process, including opportunities to learn from each other. The process led to the AC being a “safe space”, which further enhanced the sense of fulfillment and connection of the members. The advisory focus of the committee, however, sometimes led members to feel unsure of where and how their recommendations were implemented, thus limiting the sense of ownership over the project:

But it would be ideal, you know, if they came back and instead of me having to chase up because now I'm like, “Where are they? What do they use? What do they look like? What do they say?” [...] The process of getting those videos could be improved a little bit in terms of like, yeah, that is like definitely not a feedback loop closed. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Members felt that the meetings were well facilitated and valued how accessibility requirements were prioritised as part of the ethics of participation. Members felt they were involved in meaningful decision-making on the project overall. At times, members had limited capacity to achieve each meeting’s objectives because of the full agenda and scope of activities. Their participation required a significant time investment, which is not sustainable over the long term. Staff changes hindered effective progress on some tasks the AC took on to cover the gap, such as a social media strategy.

The scope of the AC was clearly defined, and codes of conduct effectively operationalised. They faced a tension between achieving the primary purpose of the group to advise the project within the limited time and budget, and secondary opportunities for advocacy from the unique gathering of peer experts:

I would like to ask, like I want to go deep diving into specific other things where we're generating recommendations and projects and ideas that cannot be heard in other spaces because we have such an awesome intersection of people that is not found anywhere else. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the AC were clear links, support and planning between parts of the project by the staff and convenor; induction for new members; and ways to extend the impact beyond the project:

So, I think the Advisory Committee could have benefited in retrospect from opportunities for more holistic and high-level steering. (OVOLOW project stakeholder).

Working with external contractors

Two external contractors were contracted to create the infrastructure and content for the online training website and workshops. The contractors worked separately because they had different responsibilities. The project staff and contractors spent time establishing good working relationships by listening to and refining the objectives and outcomes. This practice facilitated a broad licence to the contractors to respond to priorities, such as applying a trauma-informed lens and pitching content in accessible ways to a variety of needs. The steps to develop content were for the contractors to design a framework, the project to contribute, review and approve, then the contractors fill in the details. The contractors valued

the contributions from the peers (project staff, advice from the groups and facilitators), so that content was guided by lived experience.

The process for refining the rationale and objectives influenced the results. It meant, for instance, reviews conducted by the contractors on the first project scope compared to the approved final version shows significant shifts. Changes included the shift from in-person to online, from filmmaking training to user-led digital content, and from individual skills training to collective capacity building. Each change involved negotiation over scope and direction changes. This iterative progress required longer engagement, which the contractors accommodated, including an increase in the scope of their work. These processes were transparent between the contractors and project staff, and between the CDG and staff, but this two-step mediation meant “some content decisions that may not have been supported by the CDG”. Suggestions were to plan more time in the final phase for revisions on the website and workshop process and content.

Project management

LHA and NEDA were responsible for different aspects of the OVOLOW project. LHA designed and delivered the online training workshops and the online training modules, with advice from the Co-Design Group (CDG). NEDA managed the Advisory Committee (AC) and Community of Practice (CoP).

The intersectional initiative faced challenges about the allocation of responsibilities and the collaboration between the parts of the governance structure, including the organisations and stakeholder groups (CDG and AC). For example, the AC regularly sought further information on the overall context in which their guidance was sought, while the CDG expressed interest in working with contractors directly to implement their designs. Another challenge was formalising the recognition of complementary expertise in intersectional partnerships, which required prioritising respect and accountability for the specific knowledge, expertise, lived experience, and standing of the peak representative organisations. For DPOs, especially, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for project staff was integral to fostering ‘good working relationships’ in intersectional contexts.

Additional challenges were experienced in the logistics of managing cross-organisation collaboration (e.g., sharing permissions, management processes, and clarity around lines of reporting in each organisation), as well as broader issues such as maintaining the roles in the partnership and managing the dynamics (i.e., which organisation is responsible for leading the project and delivering on outputs, contingency plans in case of staff changes; managing specialist expertise), and decision-making processes across complementary expertise.

Suggestions were that ambitious intersectional governance required several considerations, at the outset and throughout the life of the project. These included steps to establish processes to form good working relations, followed by steps to review, refine and monitor information sharing between the structures, people and parts of the project. Intentional and transparent processes for this goal were considered crucial in the context of online communication and inevitable staff changes over a prolonged project. Examples were to share and review preferred ways of working, organisational norms and reporting expectations. Having a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was one suggestion to

supplement the partnership contract. A MoU can establish recognition of expertise in decision-making in intersectional partnerships and provide a good-faith outline of how organisations will work to deliver their obligations in the contract, as well as containing a process for resolving challenges, which can be referred to when they arise.

Both LHA and NEDA benefited from the collaboration. The opportunities from the project increased their capacity for consumer advocacy with an intersectional focus. They drew collectively on the lived-experience expertise of staff and peers in the various governance structures to effect change. Project staff said the project expanded their domains of expertise, which could be shared with member organisations as a potential model for creating “intersectional partnerships”. Potentially, this model provides future guidelines for project management across the domains of expertise; in effect creating an “intersectional space” for organisations to engage.

7 Implications for future initiatives

The project has implications for similar projects.

1. Success of the process and outcomes relied on a commitment to and adoption of key principles to underpin project work, including inclusivity and accessibility, embedding lived-experience expertise, prioritising peer leadership, and processes of co-development and co-design throughout.
2. Opportunities for intersectional partnerships serve as a model for project management across multiple domains of expertise; in effect creating an “intersectional space” for organisations to engage with each other, their stakeholders, and LGBTIQ+ people with disability. Future projects would benefit from focusing on the strengths brought to an intersectional space and embedding protocols in project management that make use of the expertise of staff and representative organisations in the intersectional partnership.
3. Effective intersectional governance requires steps to establish processes to form good working relations, followed by steps to review, refine and monitor information sharing between the structures, people and parts of the project. Transparent processes for this goal are important for online projects and inevitable staff changes in a long project.
4. Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of LGBTIQ+ people with disability involves synthesis between the intended outcomes (producing a digital story) and the process of designing and receiving training (learning about effective storytelling processes). Relying solely on intended project outputs (e.g. digital stories) as a measure of success can obscure the value and benefits of the process of participation in design and activities.
5. Training people in storytelling requires a careful balance of content that could engage beginners and content that furthers the skills of people already involved in storytelling. This means that content needs to be tailored to the person, which is difficult to achieve in an online group context. This balance may require clear messages to orient participants’ expectations who may have had prior experiences of in-person, hands-on workshop formats. Practical knowledge dissemination and upskilling were viewed as more relevant than aspirational or motivating content.
6. Timely feedback is essential to the regularly refine project processes and activities, which includes ‘closing the loop’ on feedback provided by project stakeholders, to ensure continued commitment and engagement. Ensuring regular communication and engagement between various stakeholders contributes to an overall sense of ownership over the project and to stakeholder satisfaction.
7. Web-based resources relevant to LGBTIQ+ people with disability are an effective method to share information and build connections and capacity of people, communities and organisations. Processes to support updating the content of websites and the communities who use them need investment to stay current and relevant.

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Appendix A Evaluation questions and methods

The evaluation adopted a mixed-method design, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis. It was guided by four key questions.

1. How well did the project develop and implement digital storytelling for increasing people's confidence and community empowerment?
2. How was the shift from face to face to online delivery experienced owing to COVID-19 and its impact on the process and outcomes of the project?
3. What was the role and impact of the Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group and Community of Practice in increasing participation and contribution to community?
4. How effective was the training in strengthening knowledge, confidence, skills and capacity of participants?

While the evaluation was designed around these four evaluation questions, additional themes relating to project governance were identified (see Table 1).

Table 1 Data collection methods mapped to OVOLOW project objectives

	Workshops data	Interviews	Digital stories and Vodcasts*	Website and social media	Observant - participation
How well the project developed and implemented digital storytelling for increasing people's confidence and community empowerment.	X	X	X	X	X
How the shift from face to face to online delivery was experienced owing to COVID-19 and its impact on the process and outcomes of the project.	X	X		X	X
Understanding the role and impact of the Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group and Community of Practice in increasing participation and contribution to community.		X			
Effectiveness of training in strengthening knowledge, confidence, skills and capacity of participants.	X	X	X		X

* As no digital stories were available at the time of data collection, vodcasts produced by LHA with LGBTIQ+ people with disability were used to illustrate moments of significant change in storytelling as a form of advocacy for self and others.

Qualitative data

Qualitative interviews

Individual and group interviews were conducted with OVOWLOW participants, including workshop participants, and OVOWLOW project stakeholders, including members of the Advisory Committee, Co-Design Group, and Community of Practice, and the staff and contractors involved in the project (see Appendix 0 for the interview guides used). Thirteen interviews were conducted with 21 people (one contractor organisation did not reply to repeated invitations to participate in any interview). Written or verbal consent was obtained from each interview participant. Interviews were conducted between November 2023 and January 2024, and ranged from 35 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes in length.

Case studies

The OVOWLOW project created three vodcasts where people with lived experience were interviewed about their journey of speaking out and becoming advocates for LGBTQ+ people with disability. For the research, the team listened to the stories, summarised the content using the person's own words in a case study format to create illustrative examples of change in people's lives through the processes of storytelling. The case studies are included in the Appendix D Stories of Change and were reviewed as part of the qualitative data for this report, but could not be used to evaluate or measure change arising from the online training workshops.

Observant-participation

This is a method of data collection where a peer researcher participates in the activity to observe what participation feels like to the researcher (also referred to as participant-observation). The strength of participant-observation is its ability to describe participatory experiences firsthand and in depth because the researcher becomes a part of the group they are studying in order to collect data and understand a social phenomenon more fully. In this case, a peer researcher who met the workshop eligibility criteria (LGBTQ+ person with disability) will participate in a digital storytelling workshop, with permission from other workshop participants. Following the principles guiding the evaluation approach similarly guided the design of this method, including that the evaluation methodology, recruitment and data collection does not deter potential participants from engaging with or participating in the storytelling workshops, and that the evaluation is 'light touch' and avoid burdening project staff and stakeholders. The researcher documented their own experiences of participation by way of detailed fieldnotes, followed by a recorded de-briefing session with other evaluation team members. Data collected through this method was then triangulated with other data sources.

Quantitative data

Pre-workshop enrolment data

NEDA/LHA collected workshop participant demographic data through an online survey at the time of registration. Deidentified data was transferred to SPRC for analysis (see 0 for a copy of the survey).

Post-workshop satisfaction data

Workshop conveners collected satisfaction data from participants after the workshop through a brief survey (no more than 5 minutes to complete). Deidentified data was transferred to SPRC for analysis (Appendix B survey).

Website data

Data from the OVOWLOW website and Resource Hub (site traffic, views, etc.) collected by LHA/NEDA were transferred to SPRC for analysis.

Social media data

Data from the social media campaign to promote the digital hub collected by LHA/NEDA were transferred to SPRC for analysis.

Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using Excel. All individual and group interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed in full. Qualitative data (case studies, and interview transcripts) were analysed through an open and inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2021). Where appropriate, the analysis involved triangulation and synthesis of data from the different methods to address the key evaluation questions.

Ethics

The research was approved by UNSW Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC No. 220313).

Additional ethics approval was sought for the method of observant-participation, and approval granted by UNSW's Human Ethics Review Committee in July 2023. Other participants in the nominated online training workshop gave their consent for the researcher to be present (consent was obtained by LHA project leads).

Limitations

The data available for the evaluation were constrained by the project budget, which was addressed through the mixed method design. The project continued after the evaluation data collection, so changes to the project have continued, which are not captured in this analysis.

Appendix B Data collection tools

Pre-workshop questions

1. *What is your age? (select one only)*
 - 18-24 years
 - 25-34 years
 - 35-44 years
 - 45-54 years
 - 55-64 years
 - 65-74 years
 - 75 years or older

2. *Which state or territory do you live in? (select one only)*
 - New South Wales
 - Victoria
 - Queensland
 - Northern Territory
 - Western Australia
 - South Australia
 - Australian Capital Territory
 - Tasmania

3. Do you live in an urban, regional/rural or remote area of that state or territory? (select one only)
 - Urban – this may include a city or suburban areas near a large city or town
 - Regional/rural – this may include areas near a small town (not near a large city)
 - Remote – this may include areas that are located away from populated areas

4. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (select one only)
 - No
 - Yes, Aboriginal
 - Yes, Torres Strait Islander
 - Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

5. Are you from a Culturally and Linguistically diverse (CALD) background, a migrant or a refugee? Please select as many as applicable. We use the term 'CALD' to include any person who belongs or identifies as being from a different cultural or ethnic

background, language, country of birth, religion, ancestry/heritage and race. This term does not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

- No
 - Yes, CALD background
 - Yes, migrant
 - Yes, refugee
 - Prefer not to say
6. Apart from English, which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things or prefer to use?
- English only
 - Auslan
 - Other language, please specify:
7. *What was your sex recorded at birth? (select one only)*
- Male*
 - Female*
 - Prefer not to say*
 - Another term (please specify)*
8. *Please tell us about your disability if you feel comfortable (open field)* _____
9. *Do you have any access needs to participate in the workshop? (open field)* _____
10. How do you describe your gender? Gender refers to current gender, which may be different to sex recorded at birth and may be different to what is indicated on legal documents. (select one only)
- Woman or female*
 - Man or male*
 - Sistergirl or Brotherboy*
 - Non-binary*
 - Prefer not to say*
 - I use a different term (please specify)*
11. Were you born with a variation of sex characteristics (sometimes called 'intersex' or 'DSD' - this means you were born with sex characteristics that do not fit society's ideas of female or male bodies)? (select one only)
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know

- Prefer not to say

12. How do you describe your sexuality?

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Straight /heterosexual
- Questioning or unsure
- Prefer not to say
- I use a different term (please specify)

13. Are you an NDIS participant? (select one only)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say

Post-workshop survey

Satisfaction questions:

1. What did you like best about the workshop?
2. How could the workshop be improved?

Impact questions:

3. What will you do based on what you learned at the workshop?

Interview guide for participants

What worked well and why

1. Please tell me about how you participated in the project

Prompts:

- Workshop, Digital story, Digital hub
- When, why, what
- Diversity and access

2. Which parts of participating did you find most useful and why?

Prompts:

- See impact prompts below

3. Did you have any difficulties participating in the project? How were you able to resolve them?

Prompts:

- Covid, online
- Timing, topic, process, access

4. What could be done to improve the project?

Impact

5. What have you changed since participating?

Prompts:

- Social connections, visibility, peer support
- Storytelling and self-advocacy
- Community engagement
- Online engagement
- Knowledge, confidence, skills, capacity

6. Do you have any other suggestions for the project or similar projects?

Interview guide for stakeholders

Questions for staff, contractors, Co-design Group, Advisory Committee, other stakeholders

What works well and why

1. What is your role in the project

Prompts:

- Staff, contractor, Co-design, Advisory Committee, other stakeholder
- Project design, project activities, links to organisations
- Workshops, digital stories, digital hubs, Community of Practice, clearinghouse

2. Which parts of your role in the project worked well and why?

3. How did these parts of the project make a difference to LGBTIQ+ people with disability?
4. What difficulties did you face in the project? How did you resolve them?

Prompts:

- Covid, online
- Timing, co-design

5. What could be done to keep improving the project?

Impact on LGBTIQ+ people with disability

6. What have you observed about how the project has contributed to changes in people LGBTIQ+ with disability?

Prompts:

- Social connections, visibility, peer support
- Storytelling and self-advocacy
- Community engagement
- Online engagement
- Knowledge, confidence, skills, capacity

7. Do you have any other suggestions for the project or similar projects?

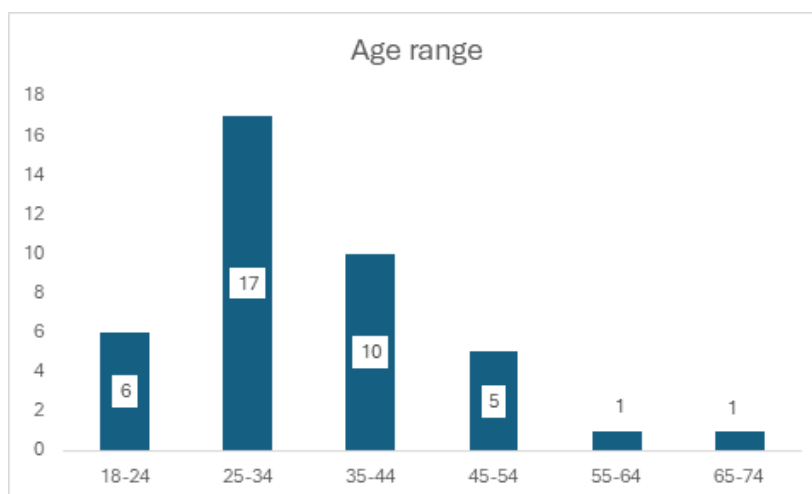
Appendix C Workshop registrations

Forty people completed a demographic survey when registering to attend the OVOWLOW workshops.

Demographic data

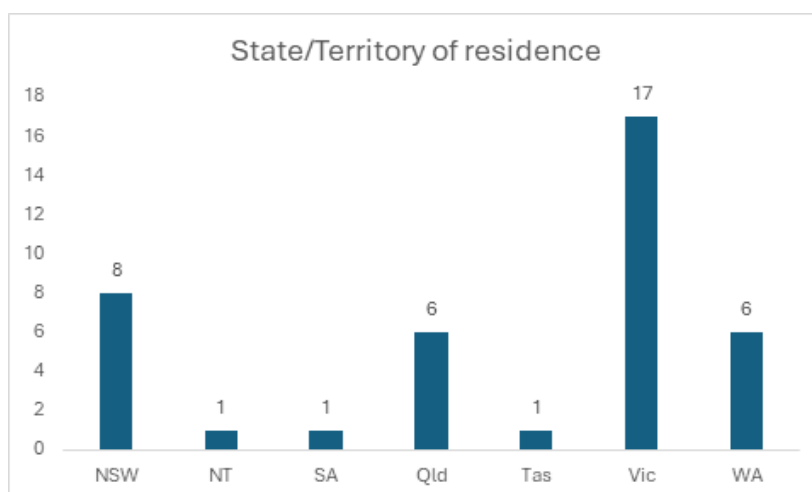
Just under half of the workshop participants (n=17) were in the 25-34 year age range, 10 were in the 35-44 year age range. There were 6 in the 18-24 year age range, 5 in the 45-54 year age range and one each in the 55-64 year age range and 65-74 year age range.

Figure 3: Age range of workshop participants



The majority of workshop participants (n=17) were from Victoria, 8 were from NSW and 6 were each from Queensland and Western Australia. There was one registrant each from the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania. There were none from ACT.

Figure 4: State/territory of residence of workshop participants



The majority of workshop participants lived in urban areas (n=38) with just two from regional/rural areas. One workshop registrant identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and one identified as Aboriginal. Six workshop participants identified as culturally and linguistically diverse. The majority of workshop participants (n=31) said that their sex recorded at birth was female, 5 preferred not to say and 4 said that their sex recorded at birth was male.

Workshop participants were asked how they described their gender. Thirteen described themselves as non-binary, 12 as woman or female, nine said they used a different term, five described themselves as man or male and one preferred not to say. The terms used by the nine participants who said they used a different term included variations of trans identity (eg. trans-masc, trans xenic) and gender identity (e.g. gender fluid, gender queer, nonbinary, all genders). One registrant noted that they were “agnostic”.

Six workshop participants did not know if they were born with a variation of sex characteristics, one said they were and one preferred not to say.

Workshop participants were asked to describe their sexuality and could select all response options that applied. The majority of workshop participants (n=29) described themselves as queer, followed by bisexual (n=12), pansexual (n=8), asexual (n=8), lesbian (n=7), gay (n=5), questioning or unsure (n=5), use a different term (n=4) and straight/heterosexual (n=3). Of the four participants that used a different term, two described themselves as demisexual and one as sapiosexual.

The majority of workshop participants (n=25) were not NDIS participants, 11 were, 2 preferred not to say and one did not know.

Workshop participants were invited to describe their disability in an open-ended comment and all but three added a response. Responses described a range of diagnoses covering physical and mental health conditions. Most people described having several conditions. A sample of responses is included in the table below.

Table 2: Workshop participants’ self-described disability

Adult diagnosed ADHD and AUTISM, 3 years ago. Was a professional with a masters, have been burnt out for 1.5 year in recovery and mapping new pathway forward

Autism, Chronically Ill

I have a congenital difference with my left hand. I also have difficulty with hearing, and im neurodivergent.

Autistic, ADHD, DPDR (with dissociative amnesia)

Hearing impaired neurodivergant

Endometriosis, ADHD,

Multiple chronic illnesses and mental health conditions

Traumatic Brain Injury, Bipolar, cPTSD

Autistic ADHDer with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Autism and adhd

Neurodivergent. Complex and various mental health diagnoses. Chronic psychological disability. Acquired brain injury.

Too many mental illnesses, particularly affected by OCD and BPD; Non Verbal Learning Disorder and Adhd; suspected autism; fibro; heds; tremor and muscle spasms, that include occasional falls.

In response to the question about which of the three workshop/s they were interested in attending, *Developing Advocacy and Storytelling* was the most popular (n=40), followed by *Discovering your Voice* (n=36) and *Getting started in Advocacy* (n=32).

Figure 5: Workshop participants' interest in attending specific workshops



Half of the participants (n=20) had accessibility requirements. These included a need for live captions, breaks, Auslan interpreters, clear audio functionality, the option to have cameras off, reminders about the upcoming workshops, materials to be provided before the workshop sessions and recordings/slides/notes after the workshop sessions.

Appendix D Stories of change

The following are composite stories of change derived from Vodcast content made available to the evaluation team. As much as possible, stories are created by using the spoken words of Vodcast participants. These analyses replace the original evaluation method of analysing the digital stories produced by workshop participants on completion of the storytelling training. These composite stories are used for illustrative purposes in the report, rather than to measure outputs or outcomes.

Karan

I am 37 years old; I work as a disability advocate. I love spending time with my husband and my two dogs, I am a homebody. I live with a degenerative disability causing hearing and vision impairment. I love to be out in my neighbourhood, but as a blind person, I am weary of where I go, it can be stressful. I love staying at home, working with graphic design, video, and montage, for a blind guy I am constantly on my phone!

When I told people I was gay, people did not believe me, because I wasn't out there, you know, with glitter or colourful hair, clubbing. I was just the normal gay guy, I had to explain myself. Coming out as a blind person meant that I had to educate, I had to explain myself to other people, "Blindness is a spectrum", I am vision impaired. People often think in stereotypes, you are blind, "Oh you've got to have white cloudy eyes, use glasses or have a guide dog". None of these stereotypes apply to me.

I learnt I had to convince people around me, that yes, I am indeed blind, explain what my condition is, what I can and cannot see. It felt like coming out of the "blind closet" was harder, because of the convincing I had to do. Also, I heard lots of judgments, I was lazy, not wanting to work, and so on. So, it is difficult if you have an invisible disability, there can be more judgment.

This is why I am so passionate about being *out there*, having a presence on Instagram and other platforms, it is like a Pride March and activism, letting people know, "I am here, I am queer, I am blind, these are the things I do in my life". I love video and media design; I use film editing software for my media posts. It is sometimes hard to do, but I do not want to be dependent on certain applications.

Most people in the community won't meet a blind person in their life, have a social interaction with them. If you are blind, that makes you feel alone. Growing up I lived with a lot of shame about my disability, I didn't know any vision impaired peers, I felt alone. When I 'came out of the closet', I proudly said that I am blind, I felt a strong sense of relief, I no longer had to 'hide' my disability, try and fit in, I felt empowered. Starting to talk about my disability, also through my work as an advocate, was a way to heal myself.

I had lots of encouragement from my peers, people who said they were worried about the stigma of 'disclosing' their vision impairment in social or work contexts. I have done this [work as an advocate and social media posting] for two years now. This is one of the things I am proud of in my life. When I look at what I have done on social media to raise awareness, because every day, I get messages [from peers], saying, "Thank you! Because of you today I had the courage to tell my manager I am going blind as well". It is important to me, it is a way to connect with others, and give other people the strength and

confidence that they need to deal with something that's really hard going blind is scary. People feel lonely and scared, [blindness] is not talked about in the media, or not positively.

Through my work and online presence, I want to show people, you can be blind and have a decent job, you can be blind and be the funniest guy in the room, you can be blind and be married. Having a disability is not a choice but how you live with it is.

In the future, I would like to "keep being me" and do what I do, the goal is for blind people to feel less alone, and to raise awareness in the community.

Margherita

I am 63 years old, have an Italian background, I am short, I live with a form of dwarfism. I have worked as an artist and disability queer advocate for over 20 years. On any given morning, I must come out of three closets, I come out as a person with a disability, I come out about my sexuality, I am a lesbian, I come out about my cultural background.

In the 1970s, 80s into the 90s, the disability community had to fight back against a charity and medical model of disability to move closer towards a human rights framework. But not only disability rights, this goes across an intersectional lens. People with disabilities have become more vocal. We are saying, we need to be at the table in policy, co-designing, and leading by example, instead of others making decisions on our behalf. We are still fighting for proper representation. It is also important for people with disability with other intersectionalities to have spaces and places to meet, celebrate, to connect and feel, 'I am not the only one'.

Over the years I have shared a lot about my experiences, I have learned when I talk about past traumas and difficult experiences, I get to heal through the process of sharing. I was raised in an institution and because of my disability I wasn't allowed to be adopted. When the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse was on, I chose to speak to the commission about my experiences of abuse in a private hearing. One of the powerful things that came out of that was, I started to heal, I started letting go some of that trauma. After that I started going into other parts of myself I had denied, like my cultural background. I even went back to Italy to the place where my mother came from. Connecting to my cultural heritage, being welcomed in Sicily, people there embraced me for who I am, they invited me to come back anytime, it was a sense of 'I am home'. Today, I can speak about my whole self, be comfortable who I am, be comfortable in my body.

In 2018, People with Disability Australia put in a request to hold a side hearing at the United Nations annual meeting under General comment Number 7, it was around people with disability from LGBTIQ+ communities. I was part of that meeting. I presented an artwork of myself being nude. It was the first time in the history of the CRPD at the UN that LGBTIQ+ queer, disabled people's voices were heard. Some of the standout moments from that event for me were how queer people with disability have been left out, not only from the queer community but also from the disability community. These meetings and initiative gave practical steps around how to include, how to create space for diversity and intersectionality. Now there are legal requirements within the CRPD that civil societies,

state parties must consult with queer people with disability, we are included in policy and planning.

There is great grass-roots stuff happening, collectives for queer people with disabilities, for example, I am part of *Inclusive Rainbow Voices*. We use arts to bring people together, we also do advocacy work with other organisations led by people with disability on a national level to raise the voices and visibility of queer people with disability, with intersectionalities.

Appendix E OVOLOW program logic model

Rationale/aim	Stakeholders	Inputs	Processes	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>LGBTIQ+ people with disability require knowledge, skills and confidence in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community participation self-advocacy to achieve greater social, political and economic inclusion. 	<p>LGBTIQ+ people with disability</p> <p>Peers</p> <p>Funders - ILC</p> <p>LHA</p> <p>NEDA</p> <p>Contractors</p> <p>Associated organisations through MOUs</p> <p>COP Chair and members</p> <p>Evaluation team</p>	<p>ILC funding (plus rules and reportables).</p> <p>Research evidence on best practice for peer support and mentoring models (literature review).</p> <p>National needs assessment (survey findings).</p> <p>Lived-experience expertise embedded throughout the project.</p> <p>Digital contractor to design and develop digital infrastructure.</p> <p>Storytelling contractor to design and deliver storytelling training.</p>	<p>Advisory Committee – LGBTIQ+ people with disability – project guidance and advice on project.</p> <p>Co-design Group – LGBTIQ+ people with disability – project co-development of training and workshop content, using strengths-based and trauma-informed processes.</p> <p>Pivoting from face to face to online content, including process of generating digital outputs.</p> <p>Development of local and national linkages among LGBTIQ+ people with disability and organisations, through ToRs and MOUs.</p>	<p><i>Produce workshop structure and content</i>, including involvement of peers in design.</p> <p><i>Conduct storytelling workshops</i> to enable participants to develop their own story in a purposeful way, delivered by peers to support mentorship building.</p> <p><i>Produce digital stories</i> through workshop participation.</p> <p><i>Create digital online training</i>, including animations on rights and advocacy, videos for storytelling tips, user generated content, and written resources to promote self-advocacy skills.</p> <p><i>Co-create a website</i> for holding resources.</p>	<p><i>Storytelling workshops</i> that can be successfully co-led by peers.</p> <p><i>Digital stories</i> produced by workshop participants that can be included in the OVOLOW website.</p> <p><i>OVOLOW website</i> that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accessible, in plain English allows flexible engagement <p><i>Community of Practice</i> that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National in scope Regional/remote reach Sustainable beyond life of project. Resourced for sharing information 	<p>Increased social connections, visibility and peer support, among LGBTIQ+ people with disability.</p> <p>Successful development of LGBTIQ+ people with disability self-advocacy skills.</p> <p>Enhanced community engagement of LGBTIQ+ people with disability, including peer support.</p> <p>Successful shift from face to face to online delivery and engagement.</p>