

Foundational Supports Recommendations

July 2025, National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO)

Definition and Rationale for Foundational Supports

The [Department of Social Services \(2025\)](#) defines Foundational Supports are services and activities provided **outside of the NDIS** to help people with disability, their families, and carers **live better lives and promote inclusion**. They come in two categories:

- **General Supports:** Such as information, peer support, and general capacity building
- **Targeted Supports:** For people with higher needs who do not require an NDIS plan

What needs to be done

To effectively implement Foundational Supports that contribute to an inclusive Australia for people with disabilities, NACBO recommends the following delivery principles, practices and implementation framework.

Core content of foundational supports

To create change, NACBO highly recommends that Foundational Supports are more than a delivery model or referral to services - they must foster authentic social and economic inclusion for people with disabilities. This means **content** must be:

- Transformative, generated and sustained over time from within communities - going beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes in isolation ([United Nations](#)). This means shifting outdated, segregated mindsets toward authentic inclusion in the community.
- Demonstrate the importance of stories that illustrate genuine inclusion in the community to support people to imagine what is possible.
- Person-centred, grounded in the motivations and preferences of the individual
- Grounded in the rights and opportunities of people with disability as equal citizens
- Focused on harnessing the natural pathways and connections that already exist in communities and strengthen informal and community supports
- Reducing the reliance on traditional services
- Directed at increasing capacity, leadership, and social and economic participation of people with disabilities
- Aimed at developing and **strengthening** the skills, instincts, contributions, processes and resources that people with disabilities and their informal supporters need to thrive.

What content matters?

Creating an inclusive Australia requires more than effective delivery methods such as workshops, peer groups and referral to mainstream and/or disability services. It demands building **content** that empowers people with disabilities and families. It must also shift mindsets away from outdated, segregated approaches and toward genuine social and economic inclusion. The quality and relevance of information and capacity-building content are critical to achieving this transformation.

To that end, NACBO recommends **content** that supports people with disabilities to:

- Live an inclusive, meaningful life in the community with equal rights
- Develop and maintain, future-focused personal visions driven by individual strengths and preferences
- Participate and contribute to mainstream schools, clubs, neighbourhoods, businesses
- Contribute to valued vocational opportunities e.g. inclusive employment, micro-businesses, volunteering etc
- Meet their needs through a range of informal and formal supports
- Reduce loneliness and isolation through the intentional development of informal supports e.g. friends, family, neighbours
- Live in individualised home living arrangements
- Have a say over their life through supported decision-making and self-management
- Personalise supports
- Explore alternatives to restrictive forms of safeguarding such as guardianship (e.g. Circles of Support, Microboards, support with decision making, wills, trusts)
- Develop their leadership together with the leadership of their families/carers to create change

Why does it matter?

People with disability continue to experience significant exclusion and segregation in Australia (Goggin & Newell, 2005; Shut Out Report, 2009; Bigby & Fyffe, 2010; Gooding et al., 2017; Crosbie, 2018; Emerson et al., 2021)). They are twice as likely to face social isolation (AIHW, 2022), and loneliness is a known driver of poor wellbeing (Emerson et al., 2021). Promoting full participation in community life remains a core priority of the National Disability Strategy.

Potential capacity building methods

To meet diverse learning needs, implementation should use a mix of approaches, including:

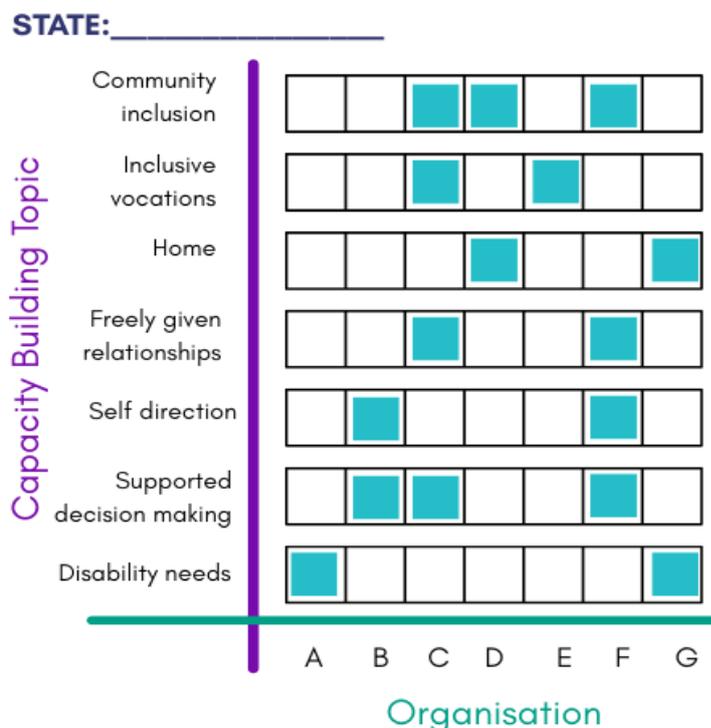
- **Information:** Websites, publications, videos
- **Learning opportunities:** Webinars, workshops, conferences
- **Guidance and mentoring:** One-on-one collaborative coaching to achieve goals
- **Peer support:** Peer groups and mentoring
- **Leadership development:** Co-design, storytelling, and advocacy roles

Foundational Supports must go beyond passive information sharing and referral to services. The **content delivered must align with the goal of building a truly inclusive society**—socially, economically, and culturally.

Implementation priorities

- **Focused on authentic inclusion:** Content and topics are focused on building knowledge and skills to create change and enable authentic social and economic inclusion
- **Led by lived experience:** Delivered by organisations led by people with disabilities and their families/carers.
- **Cohort focused:** Target those most vulnerable to exclusion—people with intellectual disability, complex needs, and CALD backgrounds.
- **Delivered by trusted locals:** Provided by local, non-service provider organisations with trusted relationships in the community to avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Broadly accessible:** Available to people with and without NDIS plans. Mechanisms must be in place to identify and reach those without plans—clear qualifying criteria are required.
- **National coherence with local relevance:** A topic-based matrix approach (see below) could be used across states to ensure national consistency in information and equitable access, while allowing local delivery.

Topic based matrix



Who is NACBO?

The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) proudly embodies a values-driven national framework of six dedicated not-for-profit member organisations.

With more than ten years of collaborative experience, NACBO has effectively launched transformative initiatives that champion inclusion and significantly empower individuals with disability, along with their families and communities

NACBO is united by a shared vision and a principled, values-driven approach. We believe that all people with disabilities are valued citizens who have the right to participate fully in social and economic life through valued roles. This includes equitable access to opportunities, pathways, and decision-making—on the same basis as other members of the community.

Our approach is underpinned by the following core beliefs:

- People with disability become **valued citizens** when they pursue and hold valued roles
- Everyone must have the opportunity to engage in fulfilling societal contributions
- Inclusion is best supported through:
 - **Education:** Raising expectations and deepening understanding
 - **Follow-up Assistance:** Providing personalised mentoring and sustained peer support
 - **Leadership Development:** Empowering people with disability and their families to lead and influence change

NACBO's work is grounded in long-standing relationships with individuals, families, and communities, and aims to foster inclusive, person-led practices that build capacity and shift systems.

In 2023, NACBO was [evaluated by the Social Policy Research Centre](#). The evaluation found “People with disability experienced positive outcomes across a broad range of life domains. Outcomes in one area of life were often connected to outcomes in other areas, creating a more holistic impact and good life in the community. Where people with disability and families connected with NACBO, outcomes were achieved in five main areas:

1. Educational inclusion outcomes
2. Greater say, self-direction and leadership in daily life
3. Connections, belonging and community, own home
4. Economic and social contributions
5. Planning and safeguarding for the future” p. iv

The evaluation also recommended:

“Elements of effective capacity-building for future government policy and organisational practices

1. Principles. The principles and rights to authentic inclusion in the community are embedded in the processes and life outcomes of capacity-building.
2. Person at the centre. Capacity-building prioritises the person’s motivations and preferences, understanding their changing situation, interests and goals.
3. Across the life course. Capacity-building is a lifelong process. It takes time to address new goals and overcome challenges that change over a lifetime. People choose from a range of capacity-building options according to what is most useful at the time.
4. Holistic and interconnected. Capacity-building equips the person and their networks of support (families, allies and friends) to lead change according to the person’s preferences. Information and resources are linked to activity that builds high expectations, follow up, leadership opportunities and networks of peers” (p.v)

NACBO as a strategic advisor in regard to foundational supports

The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) is uniquely positioned to provide insight and advice in regard to Foundational Supports.

As a long-standing alliance of six values-based not-for-profit capacity-building organisations throughout Australia, NACBO has continually empowered people with disabilities and their supporters to challenge barriers and create change in regard to social and economic inclusion.

Each NACBO member operates at a state or regional level and is deeply embedded within local communities. This enables context-sensitive, place-based implementation while maintaining national coherence and shared learning ensuring responsiveness to diverse community needs and cohorts, including those most at risk of exclusion.

NACBO’s delivery history includes successful national and cross-jurisdictional initiatives that have demonstrated outcomes in community engagement, peer support, leadership development, and systems change.

This track record demonstrates its capacity to strategically offer advice on Foundational Supports. NACBO would welcome engagement with government and associated developers of Foundation Supports.

For further information

To discuss this proposal in further detail please contact NACBO C/O

Deb Rouget

CEO, Belonging Matters

Email: deb.rouget@belongingmatters.org

Phone: 03 9739 8333