

From facilitating groups to individual capability building: cancer education delivery that enhances health professional skills

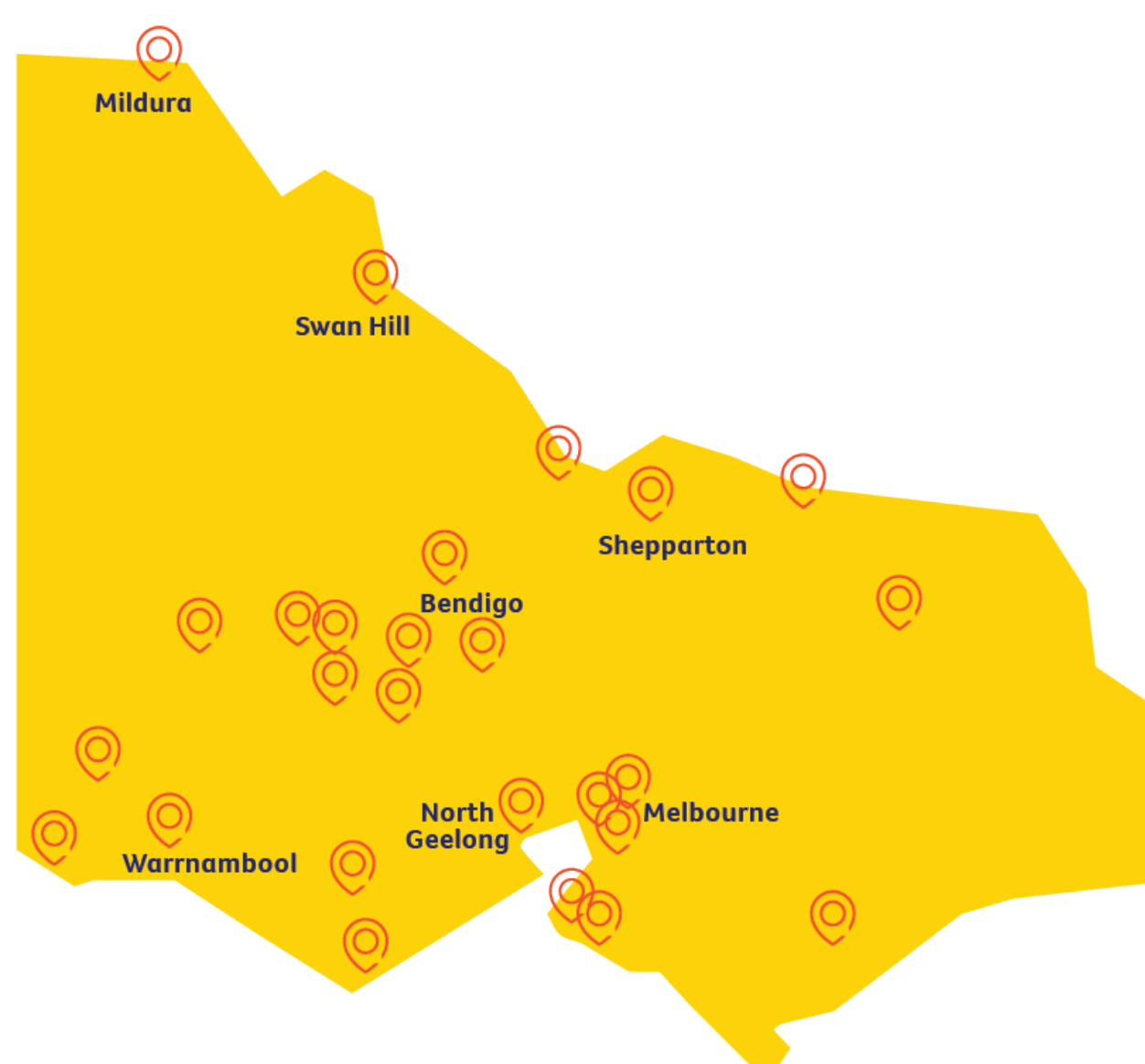
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Introduction

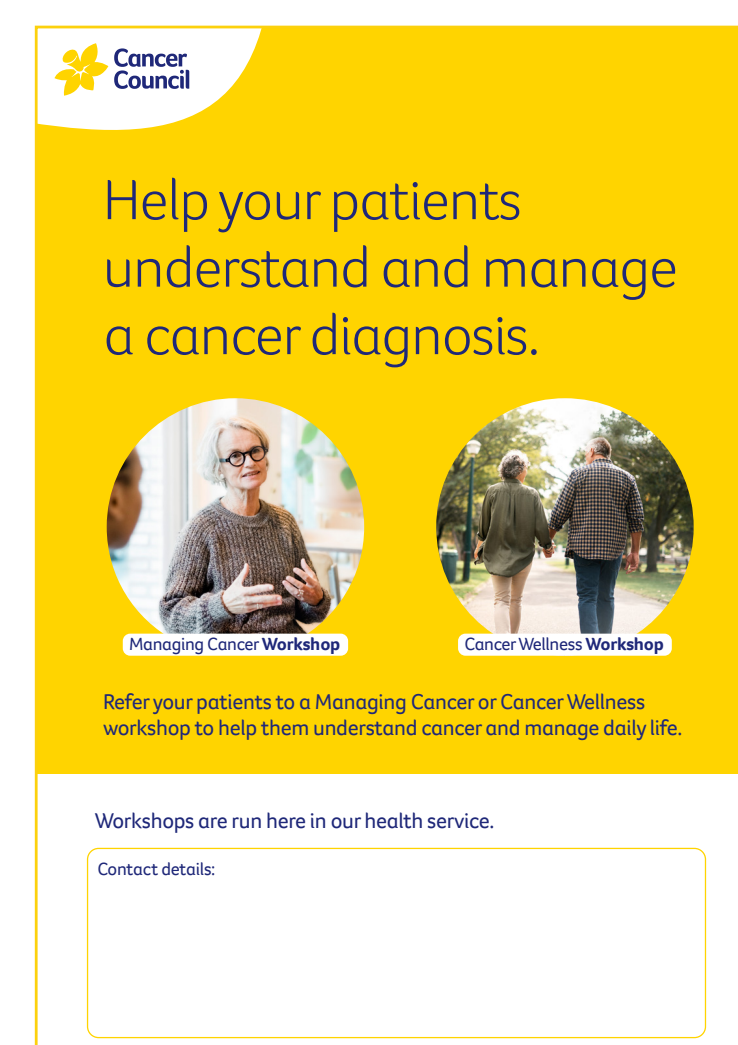
Cancer Education Programs (CEPs) are group-based education workshops for people with cancer, their carers, families and friends. They provide information, practical strategies and opportunities for peer connection.

Developed by Cancer Council Victoria, CEPs are delivered by trained nurses and allied health professionals across Victoria, supporting people at different stages including during and after treatment. Cancer Council Victoria provides facilitator training and program materials to enable local delivery within health services.

2025 Cancer Education Programs locations across Victoria



Health Service internal promotional tool for CEPs



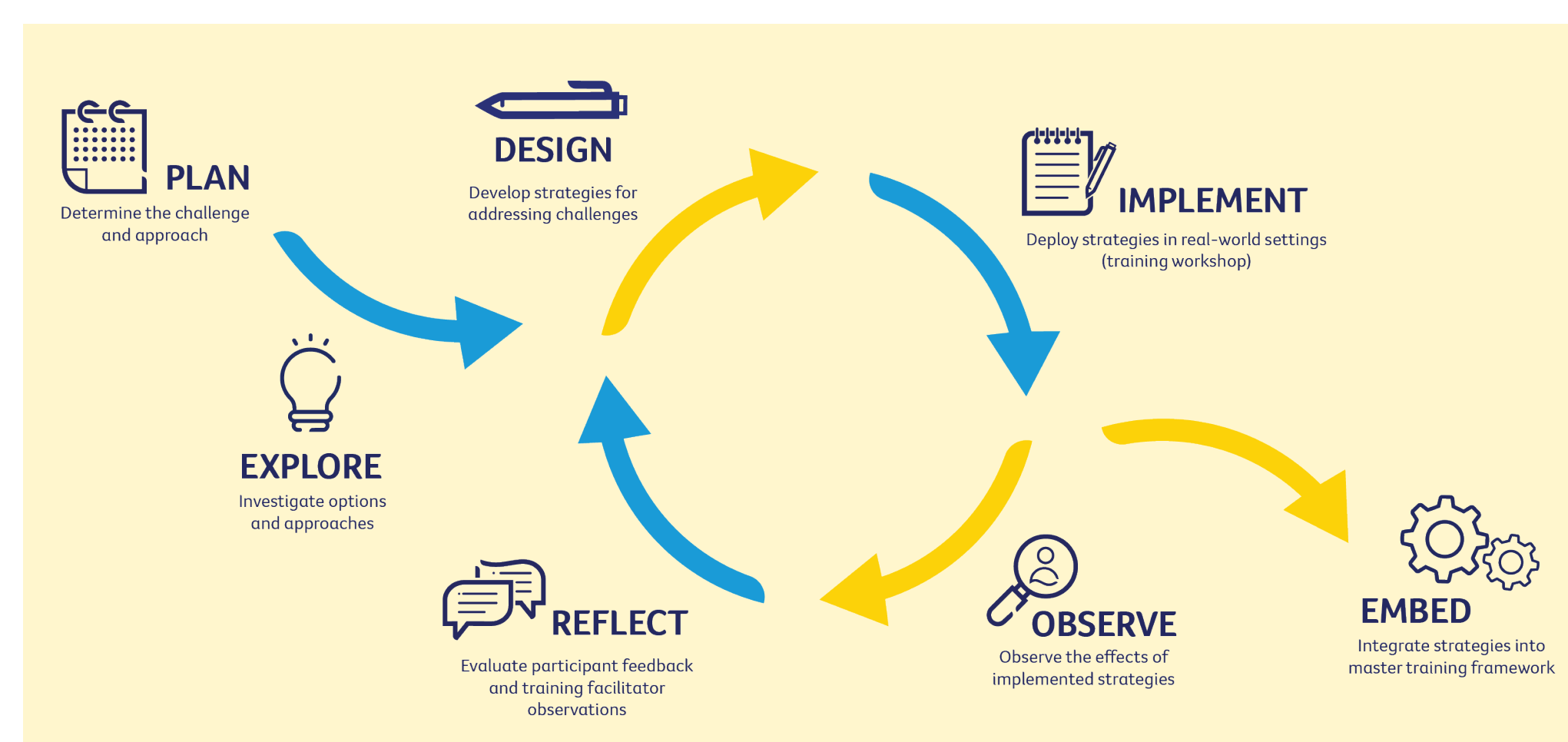
Aim

Post-facilitator training evaluation surveys identified two common challenges in group facilitation: engaging participants and managing group dynamics. In response, our project aimed to upskill health professionals in best-practice facilitation strategies to create a safe and engaging group environment that aligns with adult learning principles.

Challenges CEPs facilitators identified in running group education sessions:

1. Engaging participants in the session
2. Managing group dynamics

Iterative approach to facilitator training redesign



Design / Methods

An iterative Design-Based Research (DBR) approach was used to rework our facilitator training. This involved:

- Exploring options for changing training content and delivery, upskilling ourselves in best practice facilitation strategies
- Implementing new strategies to training material, tailored to CEPs context and needs

- Testing the redesigned training in CEPs facilitator training sessions
- Reflecting on both participant feedback and our observations of what worked and what didn't
- Reworking facilitator training content based on participant feedback and observations
- Retesting again in a facilitator training session

Following each facilitator training workshop, we conducted qualitative surveys with participants to assess training effectiveness, preferences, and suggestions for improvement. Responses (49 total) over the six facilitator training sessions run in 2024 and 2025 informed the changes we made to our CEPs facilitator training workshops.

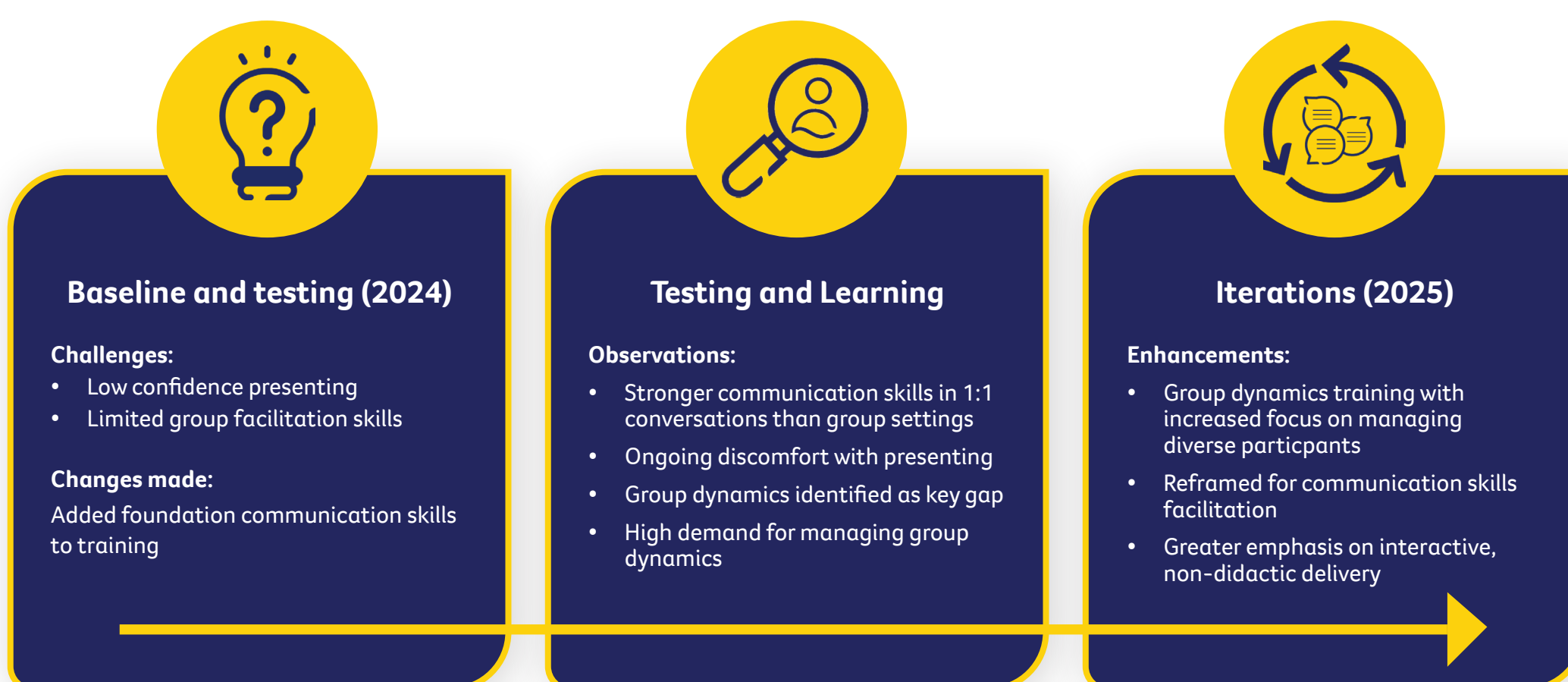
Our refreshed facilitator training included a range of strategies for facilitating groups and offered facilitators advanced training in group facilitation.

Results

Group facilitation involves deep listening, motivating, reading the room and managing dynamics. A facilitator guides the group to ensure inclusion and create a safe environment for sharing experiences and insights. Communication, one of the key principles of the Optimal Care Pathways, is both central to, and the mechanism for, effective facilitation.

Following implementation, survey results indicate that health professionals view facilitation skills as essential for delivering group education and recognize their transferability to broader practice. Communication micro-skills and group management strategies were identified as particularly valuable, with participants noting their relevance across other areas of practice.

How facilitator training evolved



CEPs facilitator training post evaluation responses

"Can't wait to work through the resources - this training will also help in other areas of practice. Very transferable skills."

"It made me think about things I would not normally consider when running groups, such as the use of communication styles and tools, and how to manage participants who may present challenging group dynamics."

Conclusion

Our initiative of strengthening group facilitation skills not only enhances healthcare professionals' delivery of cancer education but is a catalyst for improving broader professional practice by building confidence, leadership and emotional support skills through tailored communication strategies.

Find out more

More information is available on our website



Or contact: cep@cancervic.org.au

References

- Schmalenbach, C., & Ashouri, C. (2025). Design-based research—a framework for participation and action in educational research. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 13(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19408447251387997>
- Cancer Australia. (2023, November). Optimal Care Pathways. Principles of Care. <https://optimalcarepathways.com.au/principles/>