



What makes a thriving Men's Shed?

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Acknowledgement of Country



**What's the #1 Reason to
Become a Shedder?**

**What factors are most
important to ensure a
Shed thrives?**



Are Shedders Thriving?

Yes!*

*On Average

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Project Aims

1. What are the perceptions of Men's Shed leaders and members regarding resources, governance and support, and physical structure of Sheds required for **a thriving shed**?
2. What shed-related, interpersonal, and individual factors are associated with **better mental health and wellbeing, and lower levels of loneliness**?
3. If Men's Shed membership is associated with better wellbeing, **what factors explain the positive impacts of membership**?



Methods

Wave 1

April-July 2022

Survey: 333 members



Interviews: 14 Shed leaders



Actigraphs: 45 members



Wave 2

November-Jan 2022/23

Survey: 168 members

Wave 3

June-July 2023

Survey: 129 members

Informal Yarns

Throughout the project with members and leaders

Wave 1 Survey

April-July 2022

- **Wellbeing**
- **Quality of Life**
- **Loneliness**
- Shed factors
- Member factors
- Behavioural Activation
- Physical activity (self-report & actigraphy)
- Alcohol use
- Help-seeking
- Meaning in life
- Social supports (within and outside of sheds)
- Psychological safety
- Satisfaction with shed

Wave 2 Survey

November-Jan 2022/23

- **Wellbeing**
- **Quality of Life**
- **Loneliness**
- **Depression**
- **Social anxiety**
- New skills
- Changes in relationship status, living situation, health problems
- Importance of different shed activities
- How members discovered their shed
- Difficulties experienced when joining the shed
- Social identity
- Social support
- Leadership
- Group connection

Wave 3 Survey

June-July 2023

- **Wellbeing**
- **Quality of Life**
- **Loneliness**
- **Depression**
- **Social anxiety**
- Meaning in life
- Social supports (within and outside of sheds)
- Psychological safety
- Social identity
- Support giving/receiving
- Group connections
- Leadership
- Examples of:
 - leadership
 - group cohesion,
 - Support giving
 - Inclusion
 - Governance,
 - Connections
 - Diversity



14 Shed Leader Interviews

- Metropolitan: 7
- Large regional towns: 2
- Small regional towns: 5
- Size: 25-250 members
- Age of Shed: 2-16 years

Wave 1 Interview Topics April-July 2022

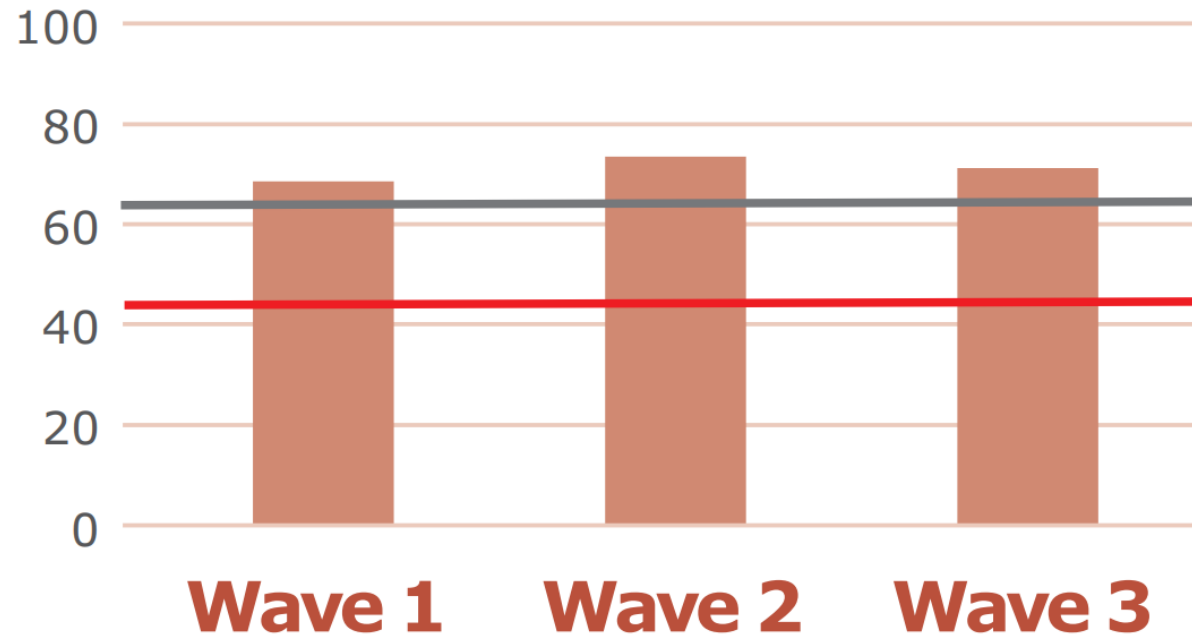
- Physical constraints of buildings
- Recruiting more members to help and volunteer
- Succession planning
- Networks
- Entrepreneurship
- Community Centres
- Supporting members
- Inclusivity



Are Shedders Thriving?

- Wellbeing
- Quality of Life
- Loneliness
- Social anxiety
- Depression

Wellbeing



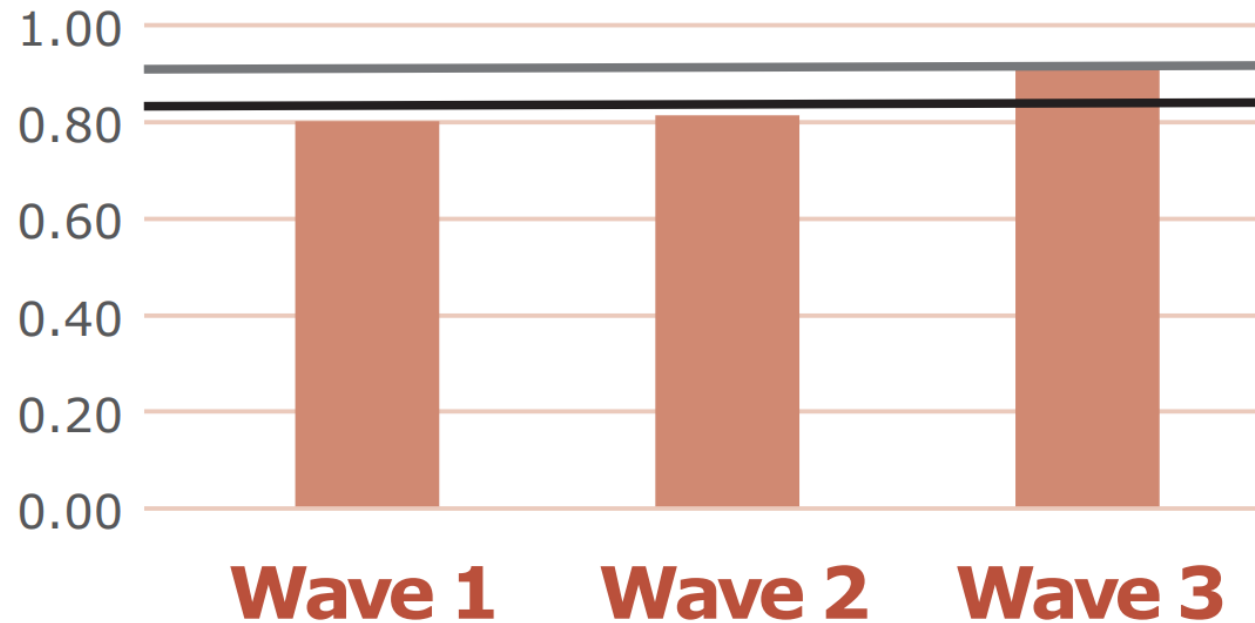
- Cheerful and in good spirits
- Calm and relaxed
- Active and vigorous
- Fresh and rested
- Days are filled with things of interest

Red: Men's Sheds of WA

Grey line: General Population Average

Red line: Depression might be present

Health-Related Quality of Life



Difficulties with

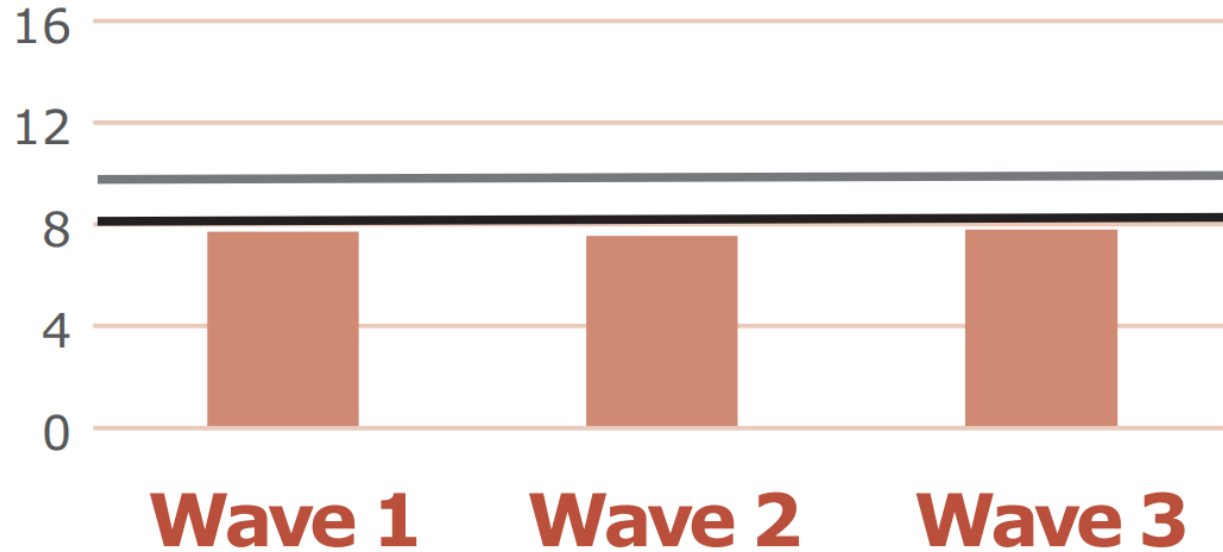
- Mobility
- Self-care
- Usual activities
- Pain/discomfort
- Anxiety/depression

Red bars: Men's Sheds of WA

Grey line: General Population (65-74 years)

Black line: General Population (75+ years)

Loneliness



12.8%

of Shedders feel lonely
'some of the time' or
'often/always'

Red bars: Men's Sheds of WA

Grey line: General Population (20-29 years)

Black line: General Population (60-65 years)

Social Anxiety



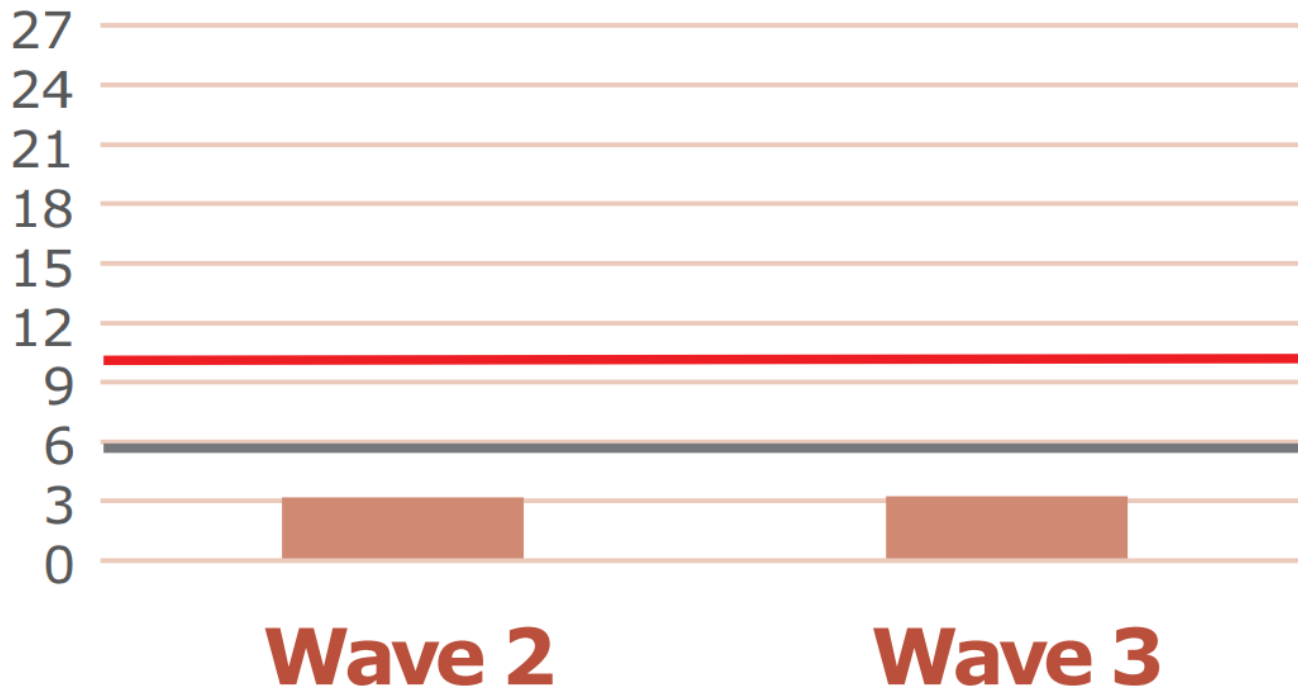
4.7-6.0%
of Shedders scored in the
socially anxious range

Red bars: Men's Sheds of WA

Grey line: General Population

Red line: Problematic

Depression



6.0-7.2%
of Shedders scored in the
depressed range

Red bars = Men's Sheds of WA

Grey line: General Population

Red line: Problematic

What Factors Help Shedders to Thrive?

The Thriving Shed Model



The Thriving Shed Model

Mateship



Mateship

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

'What is the most important reason for being a Men's Shed member?'

1. Mateship
2. Shed activities
3. Supporting others
4. Contributing to the community



Larger network of close friends within the shed



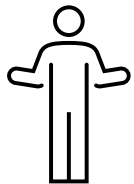
Attend more regularly & for longer
Higher support giving & receiving
Higher wellbeing
Lower loneliness
Lower depression



Greater involvement in Sheds



Higher meaning in life (clear and satisfying purpose)



Shed membership core to who I am (social identity)



Stronger social connections
More support giving & receiving

Mateship

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

Opportunities



Social anxiety can be a barrier (activities, social identity, loneliness):
✓ Additional supports & attention to psychological safety may be required.



Most common way of finding out about sheds is through friends: missing more isolated people?



Only 6% reported being at capacity: there is capacity to grow.

How has your shed promoted mateship?

Mateship

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Quality of Relationships is paramount, particularly for those living alone and with small social networks outside of the Shed.



Members appreciate leaders and members showing interest and listening to them.



Implement strategies for identifying and engaging isolated community members.



Members should be encouraged to get involved in as many activities as possible to build connections.



Socially anxious members might need more support, particularly early on.



Higher support for new members may increase engagement and retention.

The Thriving Shed Model

Safety



Team Psychological Safety

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

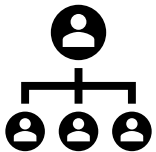
- If you make a mistake, it is not held against you by other shed members.
- Shed members accept people's differences.
- It is easy to ask shed members for help.
- Shed members feel able to bring up problems and tough issues.
- It is safe to take risks in the shed (e.g., by trying something new).
- No-one in the shed deliberately acts in a way that undermines others.
- When working with other shed members, members' unique skills and talents are utilised.



Higher Psychological Safety



- Attend more regularly
- Engage in more Shed activities
- More close Men's Shed friends
- Higher meaning in life, wellbeing, and quality of life
- Lower loneliness



Leaders play a key role in ensuring psychological safety, but *all* members play a role



Members with greater access to health and wellbeing information have happier sheds

Team Psychological Safety

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

Leaders and members of thriving sheds promote a psychologically safe environment by:

- Encouraging members to learn and try new activities.
- Expecting and accepting mistakes as part of learning.
- Encouraging help-seeking and providing positive and encouraging feedback.
- Ensuring friendly and welcome banter does not turn into perceived bullying.
- Ensuring differences between members are respected and appreciated.
- Encouraging members to raise difficult issues with leaders and/or members in safe and supportive ways.
- Encouraging all members to contribute their unique skills and talents to the Shed.



Sheds need clear policies around respectful behaviour and strategies for conflict resolution.



Members who feel valued and supported will be more highly engaged in Shed activities



Mental health challenges sometimes masquerade as irritable behaviour (e.g., depression, cognitive decline)



Thriving sheds make use of the Wellbeing and Health Officer Program

How has your Shed promoted Team Psychological Safety?

CALVIN AND HOBBS

IM IN A VERY CRABBY MOOD, SO EVERYBODY JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! I HATE EVERYONE!!



NOBODY RECOGNIZES MY HINTS TO SMOTHER ME WITH AFFECTION.



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The Thriving Shed Model

Shed Factors



Shed Factors

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Most sheds owned by council/shire, some co-located, and some owned by Men's Shed



Sheds open, on average, 4 days/week and 23+ hours/week

Constraints on activities and growing membership:



Shed Size



Space shared with other organisations (limits times/days)



Storage space

Now this Shed is getting too small again and we have now sought funding from Lotterywest and help from the Shire, and we are going to build another Shed.



How has your Shed increased resources?

Shed Factors

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

Thriving Sheds have facilities that can accommodate a range of diverse activities



Workshop spaces



Presentation spaces

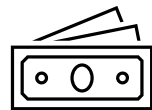


Storage spaces



Meal sharing

Improving Shed space and facilities



Fundraising



Relationships with Councils & other funders



The Thriving Shed Model

Partnerships



Strong Partnerships

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Many sheds report strong partnerships with Council (e.g., grants, land and building lease), other sheds, & community organisations

60% of members are involved in other community organisations



Some sheds work together and support each other

I think that's the most important part for a Shed, is being integrated in that community, known, and if people have a problem they come.



How has your Shed strengthened partnerships?

Strong Partnerships

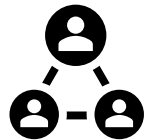
What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Close partnerships with community organisations ensure sustainability and potential for growth



Fundings typically comes from government grants and fund-raising. Sheds may need support to develop diverse sources of funding (e.g., philanthropy, grant writing).



Resources may be able to be pooled or shared with other community organisations.



The Thriving Shed Model

Leadership



Good & Supported Leadership

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

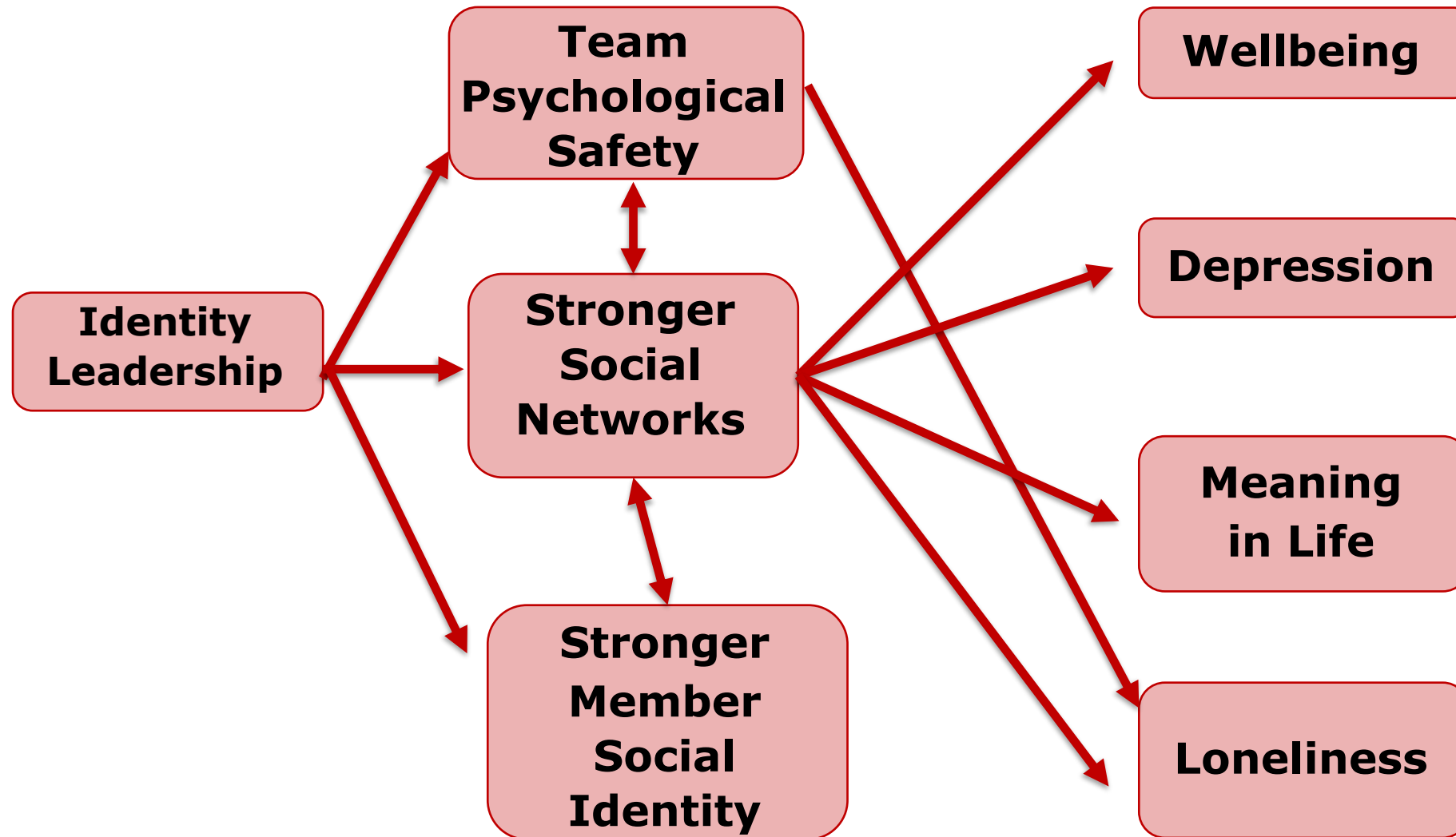
Identity Leadership:
"How well leaders embody and cultivate group identity"

Not about leadership styles, but rather how well leaders promote and affirm a shared group identity among members (Haslam & Reicher, 2016)

- The leaders of my Men's Shed are **model members** of the group (*prototypicality*)
- The leaders of my Men's Shed are **champions** for the group (*advancement*)
- The leaders of my Men's Shed **create a sense of cohesion** within the group (*entrepreneurship*)
- The leaders of my Men's Shed **create structures and activities that are useful** for the group (*impresarioship*)

Good & Supported Leadership

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Good & Supported Leadership

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

Volunteer Leaders' Roles

- **Model the values** of the Shed and promote a cohesive network.
- **Pastoral role:** facilitate and provide emotional and social support for members.
- **Primary liaison** with external groups, other sheds, the general public, the Council and other stakeholders and report back to the Shed.
- **Seek and lead** community projects.
- **Promote** the shed.
- **Actively seek** new members.
- **Encourage** member involvement.
- **Source funding** for shed activities and ensure financial viability.
- **Plan and organise** activities (e.g., talks) on technical and wellbeing matters and encourage participation.
- **Mentor** new members.
- **Ensure safe practices.**
- **Keep the membership informed** of activities and opportunities.
- **Shed governance**
- **Resolve Disputes**
- **Express appreciation**
- **Support a fun and enjoyable experience...and the list goes on!**



Good & Supported Leadership

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

Members' Roles in Supporting Their Leaders

- ✓ **Recognise** their leaders for their dedication to the operational and interpersonal responsibilities.
- ✓ **Express appreciation** to the leaders for their contributions.
- ✓ **Offer to help** with Shed activities to 'lighten the load.'
- ✓ **Behave respectfully** towards leaders and other members **at all times.**
- ✓ **Strive to minimise conflict** and the need for leaders to mediate.
- ✓ **Comply with all Shed policies and procedures.**
- ✓ **Recognise** that the more positive contributions you make to your Shed, the more you get out of your Shed.

How has your Shed supported good leadership?



We're all equal members and we all should know how this, how the shed runs and how a new member is created and where you take them and show them what, what we're all about.

The Thriving Shed Model

Governance



Good Governance

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?

It's a glasshouse,
everybody knows what's
going on, everything.



80% of members are 'somewhat' to 'very' satisfied with their Shed's governance (i.e., how policies and procedures are used)



Members who **felt they had a say** in the running, activities, and governance of their sheds, reported that their **Shed was happier**.



Finding committee members among the membership is challenging for many sheds; succession planning is another challenge, particularly in small communities.



Administrative and operational responsibilities are often **carried by a small proportion of the membership**



Governance tasks are extensive (maintaining records, project management, rostering, maximising income, chairing meetings, minuting, ensuring policies and procedures are followed, managing accommodation, co-ordinating member supports, ensuring safety and first aid are in place, mediation and sanctioning).

Good Governance

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Shared decision-making that involves the membership, but the membership need to be willing to engage and contribute.

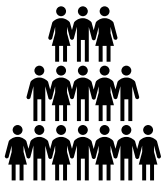


Sheds benefit from clear and comprehensive policies about behaviours that demonstrate respectful and consultative leadership and member behaviour.



Sheds benefit from **policies about respectful behaviour and strategies for conflict resolution** (and sanctions) amongst members.

Members need to consent to these policies being applied as a condition of membership.



Strategies for **increasing the proportion of the membership willing to volunteer** time for leadership or support roles.



Consider the costs/benefits of relatively flat governance structures: burden vs. decision-making

How has your Shed supported good governance?

The Thriving Shed Model

Membership

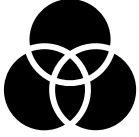


Diverse Membership

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Members report inclusiveness is an important value within their Shed.

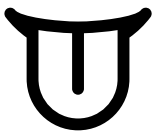


Members are diverse in age, partner status, past/current profession



Members report diversity in their Shed

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members (41%)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse members (54%)
- Members with disabilities (97%)
- LGBTQIA+ members (21%)
- Female members (31%)



Most common languages (after English)

- Italian (23%)
- Afrikaans (15%)
- Spanish (9%)
- Greek (8%)



Diverse Membership

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Members diversity offers many benefits

- ✓ Membership growth
- ✓ New skills and activities
- ✓ New ideas
- ✓ Breaking down of stereotypes and increasing social cohesion
- ✓ Opportunities for mentorship (e.g., older members mentoring younger)
- ✓ Membership benefits a broader cross-section of the community



Level of inclusiveness best determined at the local level: costs/benefits

- ✓ Exclusively male
- ✓ Specific times/days for broader inclusiveness
- ✓ Specific training activities with specific groups
- ✓ Completely open

What is a successful shed? One that's inclusive. And can cater to the differing needs of its members. And give support to the members as they inevitably go through whatever life changes.

How has your Shed achieved membership diversity and growth?

The Thriving Shed Model

Activities



Diverse Activities

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Shedders engage in a diverse array of activities and make a substantial positive contribution to their communities.



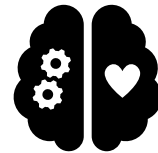
Dedicated physical exercise - only 23%, but on shed days:

- 999 extra steps
- 34 extra minutes of light physical exercise
- 6 more interruptions in sedentary behaviour



Most common activities:

- Woodwork
- Repairs for local community
- Metal work
- Projects requested by council or community
- Social



Mental health activities (55%)



Most Sheds fundraise (95%) and many are involved in charity work (36%)



Members who engage in more Shed activities:

- Higher wellbeing
- Lower loneliness
- Longer membership
- More frequent attendance
- Stronger social identity as a Shedder

Diverse Activities

What Did 'The Thriving Shed Project' Discover?



Engaging in Shed activities is a major contributor to wellbeing outcomes



Sheds should strive to maximise the breadth of activities where possible

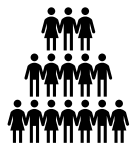
- ✓ Diversify membership (chicken and egg!)
- ✓ Encourage members to use their skills and talents to lead new activities



Social activities are highly valued and need to be a high priority



Different members benefit from different aspects of Shed life: technical skills and social



Advertising the diversity of activities across Sheds to the public may grow membership

How has your Shed diversified activities?

Summary

1. Keep up the great work!
2. You are having an immensely positive impact on your members and community by leading and participating in Men's Sheds.
3. The movement will continue to thrive by carefully and continually attending to the factors in the **Thriving Shed Model**





**MEN'S
SHEDS
OF WA**



Curtin University

QUESTIONS?

PROFESSOR PETER MCEVOY & PROFESSOR KIRSTEN HOLMES

QR Code for
Full Report



<https://mensshedswa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/What-Makes-a-Thriving-Shed-Report-2023.pdf>