12 August 2025

Quote from attendee: If we don’t talk about goals, we’re not putting participants at the centre of the planning process.

What we talked about

Topic 1: Participant goals in New Framework Planning

- The group discussed how the NDIS was originally designed to help people with disability work towards their personal goals, but in practice, goals haven’t always been meaningful in the planning process.
- As part of improving the planning process, there is the chance to look at goals in a new way - to help make the experience better for participants, better reflect what’s important to them, and clearly show how the NDIA will support them.
- The group talked about what goals mean to participants and why they’re important. They looked at how goals can lead to positive, future-focused conversations, and discussed ways the NDIA can help participants set and track their goals.

What we heard

- The word ‘goals’ feels clinical, rigid or transactional to many participants. It doesn’t always reflect how participants think or talk about their lives. There is a need to consider other words when talking about goals such as life directions, aspirations and thinking about the future.
- Participants want to express their goals in their own words. When goals are shaped by the NDIA or forced into formal formats, they can feel inauthentic or disconnected from real life.
- In the current planning process, for participants the link between goals and funding is unclear and often creates confusion for participants. While life goals are encouraged, not all can be funded through NDIS supports, and this isn’t always explained.
- This lack of clarity leads to frustration, unmet expectations, and pressure to shape goals to fit funding rules. Many participants feel they must write goals in a certain way to secure support, which can make the process feel inauthentic and stressful.
- In the new planning framework, participants need clear information about which goals the NDIA can fund support for under the NDIS, and which it cannot**.**
- Separating goal conversations from funding decisions would help participants talk more openly about what matters to them and what support they need, without worrying about losing funding. This would make the Support Needs Assessment feel safer, more respectful, and more meaningful.
- Introduce two levels of goals: personal/life goals and NDIS support related goals. This would help to make sure that the Support Needs Assessment reflects the full context of a person’s

life, while also identifying the supports that are reasonable and necessary under the NDIS.
- Goal setting should not be mandatory. Participants should be supported to explore goals when they feel ready, and only if they want to.
- Early conversations and preparation before a Support Needs Assessment would help participants feel more confident in talking about their goals. Support from trusted people like family, friends, or support workers is essential.
- Goals must be flexible and adaptable. They should be updated regularly to reflect life changes and include both long-term and short-term goals. Participants want the option to update goals in real time, not just during a plan reassessment
- Not all supports should be recorded as goals. Privacy must be respected, especially for sensitive topics like personal care.
- Tools, like templates, drop down lists and goal categories could help make goal setting easier and less intimidating for participants. These resources should be optional and supportive, not prescriptive.
- The NDIA should consider the full context of participants lives, including mental health, relationships and culture. Conversations about goals should be strengths-based, focus on growth potential and what a good life looks like.

What we agreed on

- Continue co-designing the goal-setting process in the new way of planning with participants and the broader disability community.
- Communicate to participants and the boarder disability community how the legislative changes and new framework planning affect the relevance of participants goals, and what that means moving forward.

Next meeting

The next working group meeting is on 16 September 2025.

Who we met with

Participants, Disability Representative and Carer Organisations, Independent Advisory Council and Reference Group members, subject matter experts and NDIA staff.

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