



**Uniting Church
in Australia**

National Child Safe Collaboration Framework 2019



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Purpose

The role of the National Safe Church Unit is to ensure a nationally collaborative approach by the Assembly and the Synods of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) to embed a consistent and robust safe church culture and safe church practices across the Church and its agencies.

This Collaborative Framework is intended to provide a platform to bring together the work and actions of staff and volunteers to drive the required transformation to build and sustain safe culture and practices.

The Principles for a Child Safe Church underpin this framework:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
4. Diversity is respected and equity is promoted
5. Our people are suitable for work with children and committed to values of child safety and wellbeing
6. Child focused complaints processes
7. Our people are provided with ongoing education and training on child safety and wellbeing
8. Physical and online environments promote safety
9. Review and continuous improvement of policy, procedure and practice
10. Policies and procedures document child safety

Scope

This Collaboration Framework is intended to be used by all entities and individuals associated with UCA who engage in child related services or activities. This includes, but is not limited to: Congregations, Presbyteries, Synods, the Assembly, agencies, ministries, childcare services, out-of-home care services, family and community services, disability services, health services, camps and schools.

Supporting and informing documents

- National Child Safe Policy Framework
- National Person of Concern Policy Framework
- Professional Standards and Codes of Conducts for all staff, including Ministry agents and lay staff and volunteers
- UCA consensus decision making approach (Manual for Meetings)

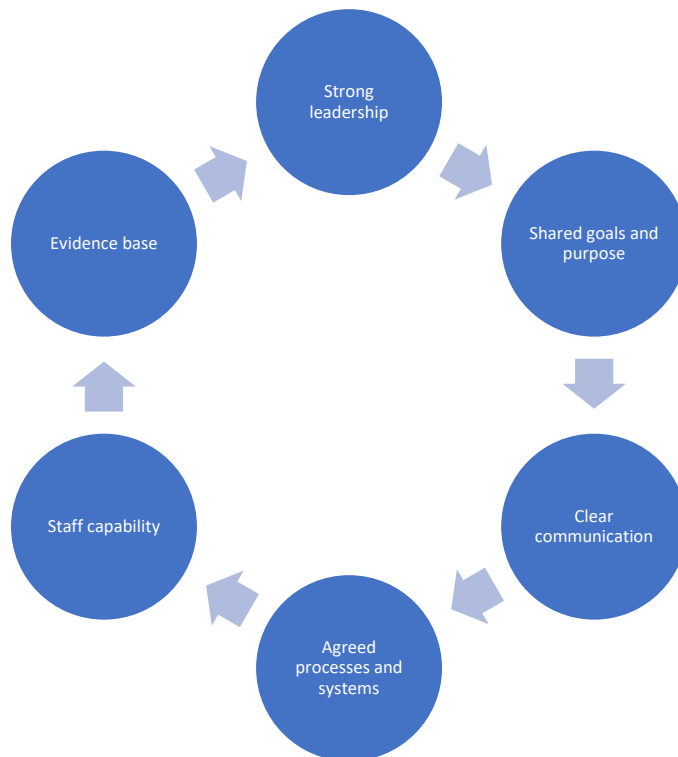
Supporting tools

- Consultation Process (p.6)
- Decision-Making Protocol (p.8)
- Project documentation and review templates (to be developed)

Implementation across the Church

As guided by the National Child Safe Policy Framework, each Synod is required to develop suites of policies, practices, auditing programs and training modules regarding children and vulnerable adults. These are in addition, and should be complementary and clearly linked, to the legislative provisions which some agencies and schools must meet in accordance with their registration and accreditation requirements.

The Collaboration Framework



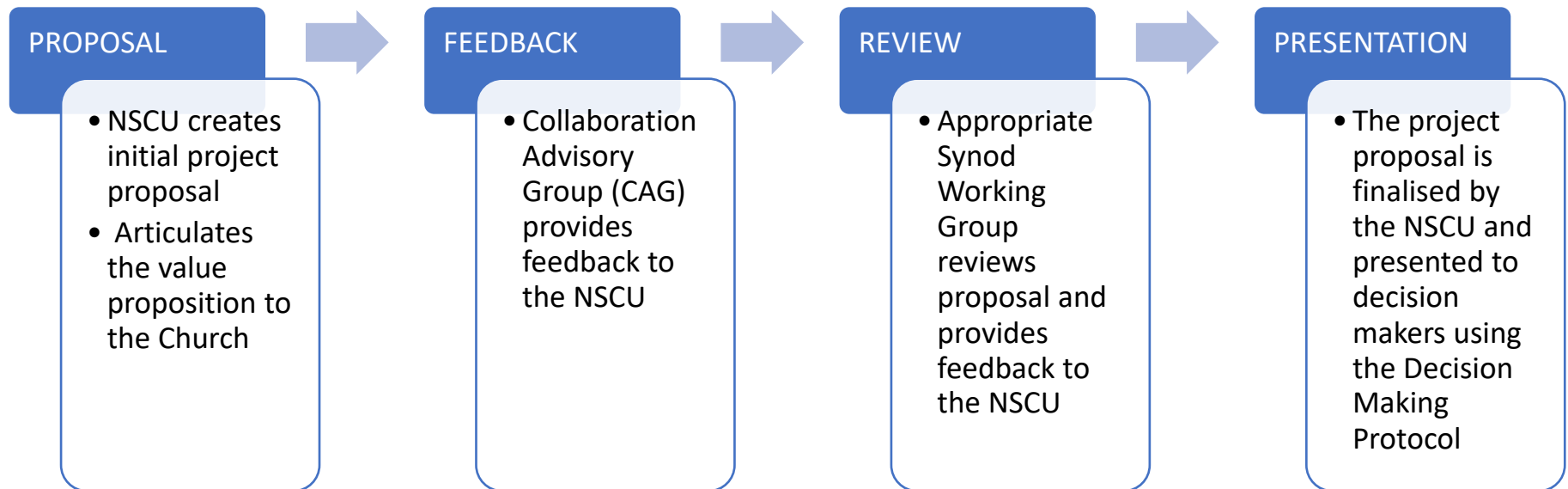
- **Strong leadership** – leaders and senior staff are explicit about the value of collaboration and shared practice. Messaging is consistent across the Church and its entities. Policies and public statements emphasise the benefits of collaboration. Staff are supported to communicate across the Church and with stakeholders and are appropriately resourced to do so.
- **Shared goals and purpose** – there is a shared understanding of why a safe Church culture and safe practices are required; why this is everyone’s responsibility and what actions are required in the daily life of the Church and its entities. Purpose and goals are agreed, understood and reviewed together. Common language and terminology are used and understood.
- **Clear communication** – stakeholders attend regular meetings to share progress and signal emerging issues and solutions. There is regular communication across the Church and with other stakeholders on progress and reinforcing of the continued need for collaboration. The National Safe Church Unit coordinates communications and information sharing to provide consistency and timeliness. Current contact information for the Unit and other key people is readily available to all staff and stakeholders. All entities across the Church are supported to provide feedback to the National Safe Church Unit. The Unit responds promptly to feedback and enquiries in the agreed formats.

- **Agreed processes and systems** (including legislated process and mandatory reporting) – there is an agreed process for consultation to support the development and delivery of projects. The Governance Committee provides oversight. The National Child Safe Policy Framework, Person of Concern procedures and tool provide guidance for sharing and reporting information. The Professional Standards and Codes of Conduct provide guidelines for staff. The Consultation Process guides engagement to develop and approve projects before delivery begins. Project plans provide timing and deliverables. Data collection to measure actions, outputs and impacts will use common/shared existing formats and will inform the annual report against implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Existing or new processes are used to manage disagreement or conflict. This includes employing consensus procedures as agreed by the Church, whereby decisions are not taken simply because one more than 50 percent of members are in favour of a proposal¹. Process improvement is continuous.
- **Staff capability** – working together is emphasised during induction for staff and volunteers. Staff are supported to work collaboratively, regardless of their role, including making contacts and attending meetings. The Church continues to support staff to be culturally competent and inclusive. Policies and processes are inclusive, and consultation is genuine. Role descriptions are clear and identify key stakeholders. Professional development, IT and physical environments support staff to work collaboratively. Good collaborative practice is acknowledged and celebrated.
- **Evidence base** – sustained collaboration requires a culture of continuous improvement. Feedback processes enable the National Safe Church Unit to evaluate and report on whether working collaboratively is progressing the project plan towards agreed goals and to identify relationship gaps.

¹Uniting Church in Australia, *Manual for Meetings*, p.16 <https://resources.uca.org.au/images/MfM2015.pdf> accessed 25 February 2020.

The Consultation Process

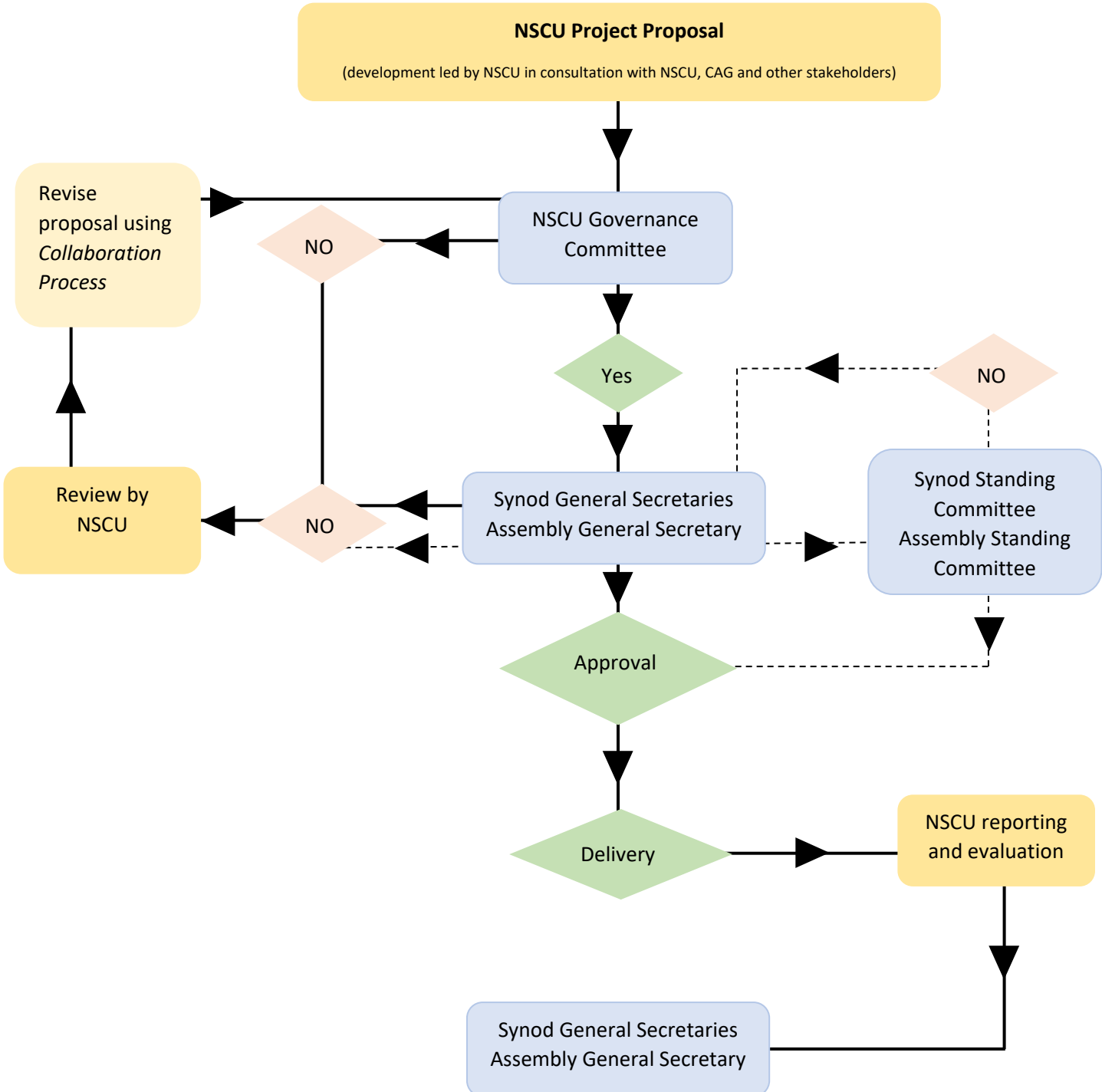
The Consultation process is a tool to guide the National Safe Church Unit's engagement with Synods and agencies across the Church to ensure that projects proposals are developed collaboratively.



The Decision-Making Protocol

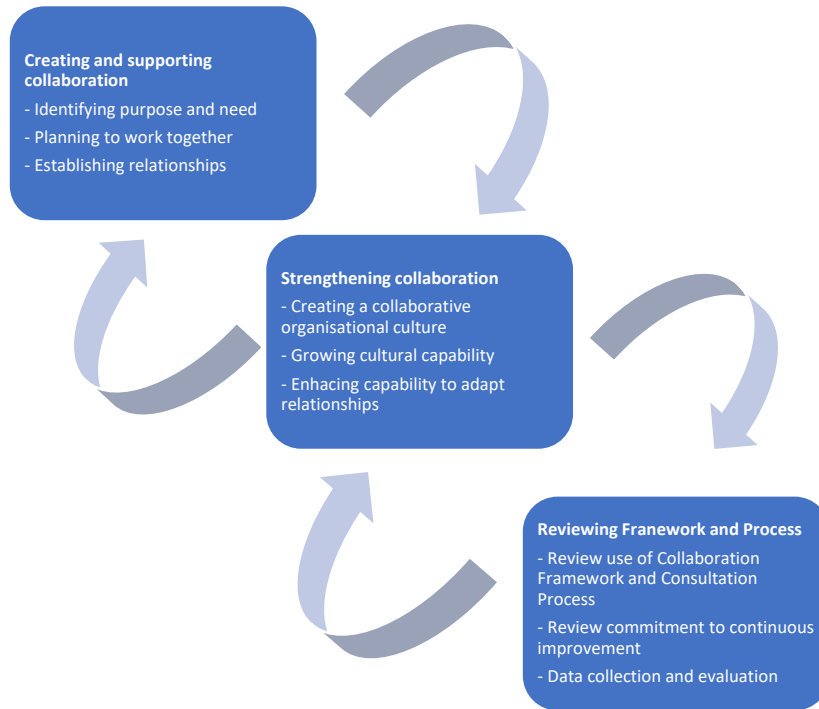
The Decision-making protocol is a tool to ensure that the appropriate approvals are secured before the National Safe Church Unit begins project delivery.

- Decision making pathway
- - - - - Optional decision-making referral. It is recognised that there are some projects that General Secretaries may have authority to endorse and some that they may wish to invite their standing committees to endorse. If the Standing Committee is to be engaged, the optional pathway is utilised.



Reviewing and strengthening collaborative practice

To support and sustain a collaborative culture the National Safe Church Unit will review the impacts and outcomes of adopting the Collaboration Framework and of using the Consultation Process and Decision-Making Protocol. Findings will be reported to the Governance Committee.



Version Control

Version No.	Written by	Approved by	Date approved	Review Date
1	National Safe Church Unit	NSCU Governance Committee	March 2020	March 2021
2	National Safe Church Unit *branding update	National Safe Church Unit	August 2020	March 2021