

Peer Support Networks: Who the network is for, and testing the appetite for it

Introduction

If you are establishing a Peer Support Network in your community, it is probably safe to say that you see a need or desire amongst your peers for the network. This Quick Guide will help you think about who the members will be, and how to test whether your idea will be attractive to them.

Let's make it happen

Who?

Who are the members you want in your group? Think back to why you decided to establish the Network. Did you develop a value proposition? (See Quick Guide: Developing a value proposition) This will give you a good idea about who the group will be for.

If you have a very specific value proposition, you will probably want to target very specific members, and if it is more generally applicable to all people with disability, then you will want to target the whole community of your peers.

For example:

- If the network is for information about the NDIS, because you know people who have low literacy skills, or no internet access, or are very isolated, and have not been able to access information, then those people are the people you will want the network to be for
- If you are establishing a network to campaign for change in your community, then you may want people who are very passionate about the issues, or who want to learn from others about how to bring about change
- If your network is aiming to build people's skills and confidence through learning from each other, you will want a diverse group with different skills and abilities.

How to be sure there is an appetite for the Network?

It's simple - talk to people in your community about the network idea. Talk to your friends, people in other groups you belong to, people you are connected with on Facebook, people who work in organisations, the NDIA, other disability groups, community workers and leaders, local councillors - the list is endless.

When you are having conversations, be sure to listen carefully to feedback. If people in your target group aren't particularly keen, you can ask them more questions:

- ask them what would be more useful and attractive
- ask them if they are available for meetings and when
- ask what they could offer to the network, or what would meet their needs.

Be prepared to shift your thinking if necessary - you want the network to be useful to people, so make sure what you think is needed, is really what IS needed.

For more information see Quick Guide: Finding organisations to assist where necessary with the group (organisations can be very helpful in connecting you with people)

Where you can find more information

The Centre of Excellence for Peer Support (mental health) has some great resources for setting up a peer support group: <http://www.peersupportvic.org/index.php/2014-12-15-22-42-49/2014-12-16-02-22-27>

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