

# How to make sure the first peer support meeting is a success

## Introduction

There are two main goals for the first peer network meeting:

1. People find the meeting helpful – they get information and support about something important to them
2. People want to come to a second meeting

## Let's make it happen

It is important to make the best possible impression:

1. ***Make the meeting about something people are restless about:*** it takes a lot for people to get up and come to a new meeting, so choose a topic that people care about and are restless for something good to happen. Examples include finding an inclusive school, finding paid employment, how best to use the NDIS, how best to influence the local council about accessibility, finding suitable housing, etc. The topic should be as specific as possible, and the invitation flyer/poster/advert should highlight this
2. ***Provide good, relevant information:*** it is important to find out as much as possible about the chosen topic, so that helpful, relevant information can be given to people at the meeting. This might include doing an online search for information about what inclusive schools look like, or effective ways to find employment, or the practices of local city councils that have a strong reputation for access and inclusion, etc. It might also include asking around to find out what other people know.
3. ***Make it as easy as possible for people to take action after the meeting:*** give people something that helps them take action. This might be as simple as a list of 'first steps' that are easy to do: for example, a list of things to ask for at the first meeting with NDIS, or a draft letter that could be sent to their local councillor.
4. ***Give people a reason to come to a second meeting:*** the first meeting will likely throw up opportunities for a second meeting. It might be a second topic strongly related to the first topic, for example where to get help to know about your child's right to go to their local mainstream school. Or it might be interest in getting more information about the first topic, include someone who might be able to come and speak at the second meeting, for example an NDIS professional or NDIS participant with experience to share. Or it might be how to use a second meeting for people to explore possible actions and how they can support each other. Importantly, go with the flow and energy of the people who show up at the meeting; there will be people in the room with good ideas and energy.

## QuickGuide

5. **Make it easy for people to find the meeting:** choose a venue that is easy to get to and is accessible. See the separate Quickguide about this.
6. **Make sure people feel valued:** it takes effort, and sometime courage, for a person to come to a peer meeting for the first time. Make sure every person at the meeting feels that they have been heard, appreciated, and that their experiences are validated

### Where you can find more information

There are lots of online resources about running a successful meeting.

The **Community Tool Box**, From Kansas in the US, has a nice summary about running community meetings. You can read it at this link: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/main>

The **wikiHow** site has a useful summary, covering some of the ideas we have raised in this factsheet. They also have some sample templates for writing up meeting notes, etc This is the link: <http://www.wikihow.com/Run-an-Effective-Meeting>

The **MindTools** website has a downloadable meeting agenda template, which could help you think through what you want your peer meeting to achieve. Here is the link: <https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/RunningMeetings.htm>

Finally, an American public service website GovLeaders has a useful summary of golden rules for good meetings. You can read about it here: <http://govleaders.org/meetings.htm>

### Dept Human Services – Victoria, Australia Peer Support Guide

The guide explains what peer support is and provides ideas about how to do it. The Department of Human Services believes peer support works best if people themselves take control of it. Through this guide, the department recognises the value of peer support and encourage people to give it a go.

The guide is also for disability support providers who would like to do more to empower people with a disability and their carers to share their knowledge and experience with each other.

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/peer-support-guide>

**The Centre of Excellence Peer Support** – Mental Health has great resources about Peer Support. There is a document about setting up a peer support group which you can find in the resources section here:

<http://www.peersupportvic.org/index.php/2014-12-15-22-42-49/2014-12-16-02-22-27/Resources/>