QuickGuide

Sharing the work around within your peer support network

Introduction

When establishing a peer support network, often there is a driving force which comes from a small number of enthusiastic people who have seen the need for a peer support group. However, to ensure longevity and success, it is important to consider how to include as many members as possible in delivering and running your peer support network from its very early days.

Let's make it happen

There are a range of considerations when planning and delivering your peer support network which will impact upon your ability to draw in others who are able to play roles within the network:

1. *What will the structure of your peer support network be?* Will it fit within an existing organisation? If so, what assistance can they provide to cover the costs of group delivery and provision of other people who can share the workload? Can they provide you with staff and/or volunteer management and support? If it will be an independent peer support network, how will you ensure you have sufficient people to successfully deliver your group(s)? What is the plan if a key person becomes unwell or unavailable? Ideally having some 'understudies' for key roles is important.

2. *Determine why you need or want other people to get involved*. Some possibilities may include:
   - As objectives are achieved, the peer support network has chosen to broaden its goals, which will require additional membership support.
   - Those who could benefit most from your effort are not currently participating.
   - The group's membership does not include representation from key sectors or groups.
   - The effort is not publicly visible or supported in the community and expanding the membership base will bring about greater community and/or political support.
   - The organization or group lacks members with specific knowledge, relationships, or experience (e.g., fundraising) needed to accomplish its goals.
   - You do not currently have enough participants to carry out the legwork involved with action planning steps.

   Whatever the reason you want more sharing of roles within your peer network, it is important to consider what new members roles should ideally entail and how you will manage the change in membership such recruitment may bring.

3. ***Who will coordinate/run the group?*** It is important to consider how you want your group to run and who is best suited to do this task. There are several aspects to any peer support network delivery including: spreading word about the group, building membership, setting a schedule, booking (and initially finding) accessible and available venues, selecting topics for discussion (and preparing for them), preparing the room, arranging any food and/or drinks, delivering the group and providing any required support to members outside of the peer support network meetings. Who is best suited within your group to each task? Can you enlist members to undertake some of these roles or a regular or trial basis? If members are taking on roles, how will you provide them with support and any required infrastructure? How will you ensure you meet Office for Volunteers guidelines?

4. ***What about training?*** It is quite often the case in peer support network that you have a lot of people who want to help but they may lack the specific skills and abilities you require. If this is the case, can you explore training opportunities for them? Can they work this into their own NDIS plan as one of their goals?

5. ***What about spreading the news?*** it is important to ensure all members know what network meetings are being held. There are many low cost ways of doing this – from text messages to emails and online free newsletter packages. Who may be able to assist with these roles?

6. ***What about keeping records?*** Budgeting is very important to ensure you can continue to offer your members a peer support network into the future. Is there someone in the group that has skills in budgeting, or has an interest in developing these skills? If so, ensure they are supported and that there is adequate separation of duties to protect your network as well as the person undertaking this task.

7. ***How can you share the funding work around?*** There any many opportunities to gain grants and funding to run a peer support network. The four core sources of funding for any community group are shown below, and each may enable you to bring in additional help in delivering and running the group:

   a. Grants: many local and some federal government and other grants are regularly available for application, though you may need an auspicing agency;

   b. Sponsorship, In-Kind and Other: are there local businesses or organisation to assist?;

   c. Donations: your members, contacts and even strangers may support your idea; and,

   d. Fundraising: can you and your members raise the funds from the huge number of opportunities available, from go-fund-me pages to selling Entertainment Books!

8. ***Could like-minded organisations be able to assist?*** It is surprising how much support like-minded organisations may be willing to provide you with to help share the load of running your peer support network. They may be willing to help you with grant applications, running of groups, spaces to use for meetings, and even help in

knowing how to raise funds for your group. Look for like-minded organisations (perhaps on the peerconnect website), and start having conversations about the roles you would like to share to others.

Overall, running a peer support network is all about people coming together and sharing. You need to plan for this sharing, and ensure your members understand that peer support isn't a one sided approach. The reciprocal nature of peer support allows the peers to benefit from the support whether they are giving or receiving it. Giving back and sharing the tasks provides members with increased levels of self-esteem and in their ability to cope with their own challenges. In other words, sharing the work around help not only the group founders to not burn out, but also brings benefits to all those with roles in the network.

Where you can find more information

There are lots of online resources about peer support, volunteering and funding for community groups and grants.

The **Community Tool Box**, From Kansas in the US, has significant information on increasing participation and you can read it at this link and in related sections: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/increasing-participation-and-membership

The Centre of Excellence Peer Support – Mental Health has great resources about Peer Support. There is information about engaging with volunteers and other stakeholders in the guide available here: http://www.peersupportvic.org/index.php/2014-12-15-22-42-49/2014-12-16-02-22-27/Resources/CEPS-Setting-up-a-Peer-Support-Group/

Government Grants

There are a range of sites that provide current grant information. You can search online for specific local council and state programs (such as SA's site http://www.grantassist.sa.gov.au/community) and also can go to the federal site: https://www.grants.gov.au/ and this will direct you to additional grant opportunities. Finally, the NDIA also offer funding opportunities from time to time, and these are managed via the government's community grants hub - https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/.

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