



SURVIVING UNEXPECTED CHANGE

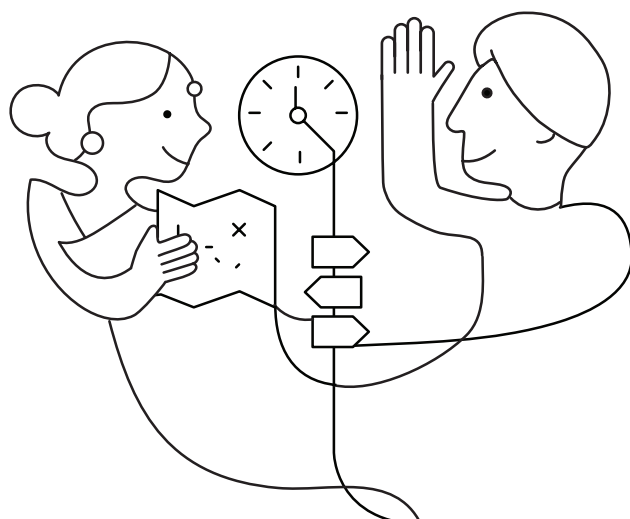
Often, a peer network might rely on a few key people who ‘hold the centre’ for the network, and get things done so that the network is active and strong.

This section will help you think about what to do when a key organising member is no longer part of the network. The loss of someone’s involvement can be difficult for a peer network. This is understandable if that person has brought many good things to the network. It can feel like a heavy loss, and the network members may find it hard to imagine the network being successful without the person. But success is always possible, and this can be a time for the network to discover new possibilities.

Honour the person’s contribution

Things to think about:

- Honouring the contribution of the person who has left. Make sure you include them if possible in some kind of ‘thank you’ or celebration of their contribution. This will demonstrate to both the person and all the peers that contributions are valuable.
- Capturing the knowledge the person holds, and the methods they used in holding a key position in the network. You could ask them to tell the story of the network from their perspective. Ask them to talk about how they went about making their contribution, important lessons they have learned and so on. You could also ask them to mentor someone else.
- Asking them to share any material, documents, contacts, photos etc they may have that the group could use, or are part of the network’s archive.





Opportunity knocks

Now that a key person is no longer involved, what are the new opportunities opening up? What might be possible? Think together about this. Some ideas:

- The person may have always filled a role that another group member can now step into – great opportunity for someone new to build their knowledge, skills and confidence
- A new key person from outside the group may now be available to step in
- Changes to communication, facilitation style, or group guidelines and activities may now be possible - people might even enjoy these changes!
- Sharing the work. A more collaborative approach may now be possible. Often key people do a lot of work. This can now be shared amongst more people who can learn new skills and take on new roles
- Review the tasks and activities the person undertook - are they all needed? Perhaps some of this work isn't necessary. There may be an opportunity to do less with the same results
- Review the tasks and activities the person undertook and see if they can be completed in another way. Can technology help? The person may have always caught up with people in person - would an email work just as well? Take the opportunity to streamline some of the tasks and activities of the network

Be positive. This is a chance to see opportunity instead of disaster. Thinking positively about what is now possible can energise the group and increase commitment and sharing of the work of the group.

Have a look at the **Peer Connect Quick Guide: Sharing the work around, how to get more network members involved:**



<https://www.peerconnect.org.au/setting-and-running-peer-networks/maintaining-network/sharing-work-around-how-get-more-network-members-involved/>

Checklist for when a key member leaves the peer network

- Honour their contribution

- Capture their knowledge

- Ask them to share experience

- Is there an alternative for the role

- Review roles in the group

- Share the work

- Look for opportunity



The sixth orange bead has been threaded on the string.

By following the great ideas above, hopefully your peer network has adjusted to losing a key member and is flourishing again. The orange bead is on the string and the peer network is stronger.

From time to time, you may need to re-visit the other beads on the string: is the purpose still clear and relevant? Do you need to look at recruiting new members? This will help keep your peer network strong, so that it is bringing good things to its members.

But what if you have tried lots of different things, including the ideas in this workbook, but your peer network still has a low energy or remains in struggle. If so, one possibility is that the peer network has come to the end of its journey, and that it's time to finish it.

In the next section we have some ideas on how your peer network can finish well.

