

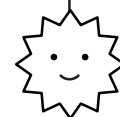


BRINGING MORE ENERGY TO THE NETWORK

There can be times when a peer network loses its momentum and energy.

We have already mentioned the idea of checking your statement of purpose in the blue bead section. Make sure people know about it. This may attract new members, and may also shift existing members' level of commitment. It is important all members are involved in this process. It could be though that you still find the network is low on energy or that people are not as enthusiastic as they once were. Your peer group may need more energy.

As we said before, peer networks have their ups and downs and together we need to make sure that the group has enough energy to make it through the downs. A peer group needs to be nurtured and helped along. Maybe think about the peer network as a flower or plant needing some water and fertiliser.



Seven ideas to try to get that energy flowing into the network

1. Mix up the roles

Talk with existing members in the network about taking on a different role. Or you could establish new roles you never had before in the group. You could have different people do the "Acknowledgement to Country", you could have an official welcomer, someone who greets new people (and 'old' ones). You could have other people facilitate all or some of the meeting.

Mix it up and build and value the different skills and contributions everyone can bring to a peer network.

2. Brainstorm and reflect

Invite the peers to reflect on the past and brainstorm new ideas. When was the network full of energy? What has changed? How can we repeat some of the good energy? What does the group want now? What's missing? How can we mix things up? This will inject fresh energy into the group. Offer an opportunity for people to provide independent and private feedback for example through email.

3. Change your environment

Think about a new venue, meeting time, or meeting structure. A change like that often brings a change in energy levels. Being out and about brings new ideas, doing things differently lets us see things in a new light.

4. Add some new activities

Adding new and interesting activities such as going out for a meal together, having a session where you make posters for the local demo or a banner for your network, learning some songs together, going to a local concert. These ideas may bring a different energy into the group and add novelty and excitement to coming to meetings.



5. Invite new guests

Perhaps you can find peers to be speakers and guests from different parts of your community. They can offer new perspectives and ideas e.g. invite an Indigenous speaker to tell some stories of their culture that offer new perspectives, or ask a leader in the community to talk about their leadership story.

6. Celebrate

Set aside time in a meeting/s to reflect on the achievements and stories of success in the network, and how these can be captured and celebrated. Plan a celebration that all will enjoy. Ask the local paper to write a story about the network's successes. Make a short video of someone's story and post it on Facebook. Celebrating successes can offer the network a sense of pride and may re-energise your commitment to the network. Or maybe just have a party.

7. Seek advice

If you feel a bit like the people in the group can't be motivated you might turn to the network of peer facilitators. Other facilitators can help you and most likely they have similar experiences. Check out the Peer connect website and connect another peer facilitator. Or maybe there are some local facilitators of other groups you know.

For more information

See the **Peer Connect Quick Guide: Sharing the work around: how to get more members involved:**



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

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/>

Checklist for re-energising a peer network

- Review the purpose

- Establish new roles

- Seek advice

- Brainstorm

- Change your environment

- Add some new activities

- Invite new guests

- Reflect

- Celebrate



The indigo bead has now been threaded onto the string along with the green and blue beads.

It may be that during that time of low energy some members of the peer network decided to leave the group or haven't shown up for a while. This means the peer network could recruit new members to help it become strong again. In the next section we look at what is important when inviting new members to join the network.

