

# The Body Corporate

## A training needs analysis of NSW Health funded NGOs in relation to Management and Governance

The NCOSS Health NGO Training Needs Project was concerned with identifying the training needs of both paid managers and board members in relation to their respective roles in managing health NGOs. The project report details the findings of the research in the primary areas of training needs, training issues and management support.

Three key components of capacity building for NGOs are professional development, the strengthening of organisational infrastructure and effective partnerships. The research process for this project was designed to accommodate and acknowledge the specific training needs of both managers and committee members within an organisational context. The process was also designed to consider the role of significant stakeholders, such as health peaks and NSW Health, in supporting the management of health NGOs.

The central research instrument for the project was a customised package of competency standards for the management and governance of NGOs. These standards were integrated into a questionnaire sent to NGOs funded by NSW Health. Both managers and committee member self-assessed their training needs in relation to the competency standards. The competency standards are divided into six unit areas including Human Resource Management, Planning/Evaluation, Policy Development/Systems, Accountability, Leadership/Promotion, and Organisational Development.

### Training Needs

The training needs that exist for both managers and committee members are multiple and complex and will need to be met in a customised and flexible manner. The area of highest need for managers is Human Resource Management and for committee members, Planning and Evaluation.

The degree of need indicated for committee members is consistently much higher than that indicated for managers. This finding should be considered with an understanding of community management as a developmental model. The skill development of volunteers over time, through their involvement in management committees, is a central community development principle for many NGOs.

Competency levels vary significantly for both groups according to the income base of the NGO. NGOs with a smaller income base were more likely to indicate that they 'required training' than those NGOs with larger income bases. Consequently smaller NGOs have specific training needs and committee members of these organisations have particularly high needs in the identified competencies. There was minimal significant variation in competency levels according to the location of the NGO.

### Training Issues

NGO managers were more likely (than committee members), to have received training in the twelve months prior to



completing the questionnaire. The majority of respondents, both managers and committee members, described their current level of training as inadequate. This was pronounced for committee members; 76% of respondents considered their training level to be inadequate.

Multiple and interrelated barriers to training exist for both groups. Many of these relate to inadequate resources. The lack of relevant training and accessibility for NGOs in rural and regional NSW are also significant impediments .

Community training organisations are the preferred providers for both groups and there is a definite preference for quality, accredited and customised courses.

### Management Support

Lack of adequate funding is the overriding management difficulty for NGOs. This factor combined with the increasing complexity of managing NGOs, can adversely affect the recruitment of committee members. The implications for NGOs capacity to effectively manage services within this scenario requires serious consideration. As do strategies to support the volunteer management model that has traditionally enabled consumers to actively contribute to service delivery.

There are insufficient effective management support options for NGOs. Both health peaks and Area Health Services can have a significant impact on the management support needs of NGOs. This will require additional resources, policy development and the strengthening of working partnerships.

## The Way Forward

Community management is currently awkwardly positioned between the impacts of microeconomic reform on human services and the rhetoric of social capital. The complex and often contradictory demands on community management have created substantial additional stresses for NGOs and many of these were evident in this project.

The reports recommendations are concerned with:

- the provision of training to meet the identified needs,
- the development of management support options for NGOs (some of which could be explored by NSW Health as an indepartmental initiative),
- the enhancement of the role of health peaks in the provision of management support to their members
- the direct financial acknowledgment of the management functions and requirements of health NGOs
- specific training for AHS staff to increase awareness and understanding of funded NGOs,
- the development of consistent statewide policies to clarify and strengthen relationships between AHSs and funded NGOs

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

That funding be allocated to enable the development, delivery and evaluation of a statewide training course for health NGOs that is customised to meet the needs identified in this project.

Characteristics of training course;

- that specific courses be developed and delivered for managers and committee members as two distinct groups
- that the training be provided in accessible rural and regional locations
- that the curriculum developed is sensitive to the issues of size and location identified in the research
- that the training course is accredited
- that the training is delivered and evaluated within 24 months to ensue its relevance.

Facilitating participation in training.

- that all participating NGOs be allocated additional specific training funds to cover the costs associated with attendance. This amount should include travel costs, relief wages, and where appropriate, accommodation costs. A formula to assess this allocation should be developed by NSW Health and the health peaks.
- that a co-operative delivery model involving key stakeholders with strategic links to the sector, inform decisions regarding the choice of training provider.

### Recommendation 2

That the establishment of an NGO Management Support Hotline and Website, which includes a comprehensive database of training options, be investigated by NSW Health. This should include the possibility of inter-departmental collaboration and funding for this initiative.

### Recommendation 3

That NSW Health extend its current funding formula for NGOs to include a Management Support Component (MSC). This financial acknowledgment of the costs associated with community management should be tied to explicit expenditure on professional development, management resources and supervision. The formula developed to estimate the MSC should be biased towards NGOs with smaller budgets.

### Recommendation 4

That Area Health Service NGO Liaison Positions and other Area Health Service staff with a contact role with NGOs, receive specific training about NGOs. Training should include the history, philosophy and culture of the NGO sector as well as the different management models adopted by NGOs.

### Recommendation 5

That consistent statewide policies be developed that determine, clarify and enhance the relationship between Area Health Services and NGOs. These policies should be cognisant of the issues raised in this report in relation to management support.

### Recommendation 6

That NSW Health investigate the option of developing a Management Support Unit for NGOs. Such investigation should include inter-departmental and regional options.

### Recommendation 7

That additional resources be allocated to the state health peaks bodies to expand their capacity to meet the management support needs of NGOs and their ability to adequately resource rural and regional NGOs

### Recommendation 8

That additional resources be allocated to NCOSS to resource the management support and resourcing needs of health NGOs without a specialist state peak.

### Recommendation 9

That NSW Health collaborate with other human service agencies to develop streamlined accountability and reporting processes for NGOs across portfolios.

### Recommendation 10

That NSW Health acknowledge the need for distinct management expertise and roles in funded services by explicitly funding Manager positions within small to medium size NGOs.

### Recommendation 11

That an existing (eg the NGO Advisory Committee) or new forum that includes representative from NSW Health, NCOSS and the health peaks, be delegated the responsibility of furthering the implementation of the above recommendations.



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