

Proving the power of peers: Creating a practical toolkit to enable peer/community-led organisations evaluate their work and better understand, demonstrate, and improve their impact

Authors:

Petrina M Hilton¹, Graham Brown^{2,1}, Chris Howard³, Tim Krulic⁴, Jane Dicka⁵ Adam Bourne¹

¹Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, ²Centre for Social Impact, University of NSW, Sydney, Australia, ³Queensland Positive People, ⁴Living Positive Victoria, ⁵Harm Reduction Victoria

Background/Purpose:

The meaningful involvement of communities affected by HIV and their peer organisations is a foundation of effective HIV responses. However, peer organisations face ongoing challenges to demonstrating the depth and value of their insights, and how these contribute to improving both the health of their communities and the effectiveness of the broader health sector and policy environment.

Approach:

For almost 10 years, the What Works and Why (W3) Project has sustained a partnership across Australia with peer-led organisations to take a systems thinking approach to understand their role in their communities and in the health sector and policy environment, and to develop and trial tools and processes that can evaluate their full impact.

Drawing on lessons from this decade-long research, a collaboration of researchers and some 20 peer workers from across 8 national and state peer-led organisations iteratively developed a guide and toolkit for applying the W3 Framework to peer work and built a consensus model of practical and innovative evaluation indicators.

Outcomes/Impact:

Understanding that peer organisations are active participants and drivers within community and policy systems can help clarify their unique and critical role in policy participation and in research.

Adapting methodology to maintain active partnership ensured the resources combined research rigour with practical and conceptual considerations and high community engagement.

The resulting resources can help enhance the way peer responses translate peer insights into organisational knowledge and influence, and demonstrate their role within the National HIV response

Innovation and Significance:

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first peer practitioner resource that takes a systems perspective to help peer-led organisations and programs improve their evaluation processes that explicitly includes converting peer knowledge and insights into useful evidence for the sector and capturing their positive influence within the health sector and policy environment.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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