



Community caring: lessons from the evaluation of a national palliative care program

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Caring Communities Program

- ◆ DoHA - National Palliative Care Strategy
- ◆ \$4.5m over three years
- ◆ 37 diverse projects – not one model
- ◆ Priority areas: Aboriginal health, rural/remote, residential aged care, primary care
- ◆ Building capacity and partnerships

National evaluation

- ◆ Built in to the program
- ◆ Each project allocated 10% of budget
- ◆ Six projects (16%) externally evaluated
- ◆ NET provided support – framework, tools, site visits, evaluability assessments, project planning ...
- ◆ Checklists for sustainability, capacity building and generalisability at three time points

Program evaluation

Framework developed by CHSD:

- ◆ Level 1: Impact on, and outcomes for, consumers
 - patients, families, carers, friends, communities
- ◆ Level 2: Impact on, and outcomes for, providers
 - professionals, volunteers, organisations
- ◆ Level 3: Impact on, and outcomes for, the system
 - structures and processes, networks, relationships
- ◆ Different projects aimed for different impacts and outcomes, some at all 3 levels, some at only 1 or 2

The key evaluation questions

- ◆ What did you do? (PROGRAM & PROJECT DELIVERY)
- ◆ How did it go? (PROGRAM & PROJECT IMPACT)
- ◆ What's been learned? (CAPACITY BUILDING)
- ◆ Will it keep going? (SUSTAINABILITY)
- ◆ Are your lessons useful for someone else? (GENERALISABILITY)
- ◆ Who did you tell? (DISSEMINATION)

Sources of data

Project evaluation

- ◆ Six-monthly progress reports
- ◆ Checklists
- ◆ Workshop presentations
- ◆ Final reports
- ◆ Evaluation reports
- ◆ Exit interviews

Program evaluation

- ◆ Project data plus:
- ◆ Document review
- ◆ Stakeholder interviews
- ◆ Workshop group discussions
- ◆ Personal communication

Project processes – what works?

- ◆ Define the project's scope and purpose
- ◆ Find out what's needed: consult, analyse needs, review the literature
- ◆ Realistic and flexible project planning and management
- ◆ Allow time to engage stakeholders
- ◆ Tread carefully!
- ◆ Provide sufficient resources and support
- ◆ Build evaluation into the project plan

What is the project trying to achieve?

- ◆ Realistic goals
- ◆ Focused on one main outcome – clear sense of direction
- ◆ Shared understandings: host organisation, project officer and DoHA

“The project team saw the funding as a valuable top up to an existing service ...”

Is the project needed?

- ◆ Literature review
- ◆ Focus groups
- ◆ Questionnaires before training or placements
- ◆ Consider what services already exist

“The education that was delivered was based on focus groups to determine needs. As a result of this it was considered to be very relevant by the staff.”

Planning ... and adaptation

“We had some problems engaging GPs in the workshops, but we got around that by changing the model and doing more face-to-face academic detailing work with individuals.”

- ◆ Needs analysis
- ◆ Recruitment and/or community engagement strategies

Engaging stakeholders takes time

“The project provided valuable lessons about taking time to develop relationships of trust and respect (and) building flexibility into the project so that it can respond to community needs. (Also) developing and maintaining networks and lists of key contacts.”

- ◆ Often the major task of the project
- ◆ Need strategies to ‘keep in touch’
- ◆ Steering groups = busy volunteers
- ◆ Staff turnover is disruptive
- ◆ Long-term commitment required in Aboriginal communities

Respect territory

- ◆ Neutral party – not a competitor (a threat)
- ◆ Managing change
- ◆ Tensions hard to detect over the phone or email
- ◆ Find a champion among stakeholders!

“(Health professionals) were trying to handle all of these changes at the same time. It was up to us to show them how it all fitted together ...”

Resources and support

- ◆ Project 'fit' within host organisation
- ◆ Training and consultation available
- ◆ Mutual benefits
- ◆ Part time project officers
- ◆ Remote areas
- ◆ Monitor progress

“Project management should have been included in the project budget as it was found to be very time consuming for the manager.”

Evaluate!

- ◆ Provide feedback, acknowledge success
- ◆ Support further grant applications!
- ◆ Outside expertise is valuable
- ◆ Define the outcomes, consider processes too

“The results from the evaluation also fed back into the development of the project. In this way it was a true action study, with a continuous cycle of improvement.”

Project management - successes

- ◆ Steering or reference groups helped build and sustain networks around the project
- ◆ Host organisations provided practical and 'moral' support to the project officer
- ◆ Project officer had the necessary specialist (research or clinical) and management (e.g., financial, administrative) skills
- ◆ Ongoing internal evaluation or productive interaction with external evaluator
- ◆ Continuous monitoring of progress

Projects' outcomes

- ◆ Understanding needs
- ◆ Protocols for training and managing volunteers
- ◆ Links between providers
- ◆ Professional education through placements, workshops, self-directed learning and face-to-face sessions
- ◆ Resources: videos, books, training manuals and websites
- ◆ Greater community awareness of bereavement and palliative care
- ◆ New practices, referral pathways ...