



CMHDARN SEEDING GRANTS 2017 - 2018

EVALUATION REPORT

JULY 2018



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, member organisations from the Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) and the Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (NADA) were invited to apply for the 2017/18 Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) Research Seeding Grants.

The CMHDARN Research Seeding Grants provided an opportunity for community-based mental health and/or alcohol and other drugs organisations to access one-off grants aimed at building sector and cross sector capacity to undertake research (i.e. to become 'research ready').

CMHDARN awarded seeding grants to nine organisations of up to \$10,000 (excluding GST). Applicants were notified of the outcome of their applications in August 2017.

In their final reports and a recent presentation snapshot of the projects, (which was part of a CMHDARN Symposium program) seeding grant recipients reported that access to grants enabled them to: build their organisation's research capacity; involve consumers in a co-design and development and evaluation research process; and, conceptualise and promote research into practice in a meaningful way. Most recipients demonstrated that they had identified and collaborated with research partners to assist them with their projects.

Seeding grant recipients reported a number of challenges during their projects which included the short time frame especially since it included annual holidays over the Christmas period, more general staffing shortages or backfill difficulties, and delays in ethics approvals. Overall, they responded very positively to the experience with several projects securing future funding, and all reportedly benefiting both personally and from an organisational perspective.

CMHDARN heard loud and clear that more grant opportunities over a longer timeframe would be welcomed especially reflecting cross sectoral opportunities.

CMHDARN PARTNERS

Larry Pearce, CEO, NADA
Rob Stirling, Deputy CEO, NADA

Carmel Tebbutt, CEO, MHCC
Corinne Henderson, Principal Advisor, Policy & legislative Reform, MHCC
Elyse Aird, Research Network Coordinator, CMHDARN

Kerri Lawrence, Manager, Strategic Engagement and Innovation, Mental Health Commission NSW
Karen Rae, Senior Advisor, Strategic Engagement and Innovation, Mental Health Commission NSW

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INTRODUCTION

The Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) is a partnership project between the Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC), the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) and the Mental Health Commission of NSW.

CMHDARN was established in 2010 with the aim of promoting and supporting involvement in practice-based research conducted by community-based mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors. The objective has been to develop the skills and competencies of the two sectors in undertaking community-based research endeavours. This objective also focused on promoting peer led research wherever possible.

The overarching aim of CMHDARN is to:

- improve the quality of service delivery and correspondingly, the outcomes for consumers of community-managed services, and
- promote increased understanding and awareness of co-existing mental health and alcohol and other drugs issues.

CMHDARN aims to support organisations by providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas, to share resources, and network and collaborate with other community organisations and research bodies, including universities and research institutes. This fosters a community of practice, a mechanism for continuous learning that can shape critical thinking, and enable innovative practices and approaches to flourish.

BACKGROUND

In order to support organisations to build the research capacity of the community-based mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors, the Network shares information and engages with members via its website, workshops, forums, symposiums, through reflective practice webinars/webcasts, and other activities.

It also offers ad-hoc opportunities to apply for grants, including the seeding grants that CMHDARN is able to secure to build research capacity as well as more substantial grants to conduct research projects which all contributes to the body of research across the mental health and/or alcohol and other drugs sectors. This Evaluation Report reviews a round of seeding grants which were offered to the sectors in the financial year 2017 - 2018.

SEEDING GRANTS

In May 2017, Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) and the Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (NADA) member organisations were invited to apply for a round of CMHDARN Seeding Grants.

The CMHDARN Research Seeding Grants provided community based mental health and/or alcohol and other drugs (AOD) organisations with access to one-off grants of up to \$10,000 (excluding GST) to build their capacity to undertake research (i.e. to become 'research ready').

The grants were intended to support organisations to develop a research methodology and to identify suitable academic and/or other project partners to collaboratively conduct research. The project proposals could include the development of research questions, explore existing and emerging best practice issue, tools and resources, and undertake preparatory work, including scoping and mapping studies and literature reviews, to apply for larger research funding.

Applications for the seeding grants opened on 1 May 2017 and closed on 23 June 2017. Successful applicants were notified applicants of their outcome by August 2017.

SUCCESSFUL SEEDING GRANT RECIPIENTS

The successful seeding grant recipients were as follows:

Organisation	Project Description
Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre	Power of Programs (PoP): Finding, adapting and implementing evidence-based CALD-client focused evaluation strategies in DAMEC's brief therapeutic and community development programs.
Family Drug Support	Problematic drug use and family coping: Designing a qualitative study to explore long term coping in family members adversely affected by another's drug use.
Flourish Australia Services	Consumer perceptions of health professionals.
Kathleen York House	A review of evidence to inform substance use disorders (SUD) treatment services for pregnant women.
Lyndon Community	Barriers and enablers of ATSI cultural inclusion in a rural mainstream AOD service.
Newtown Neighbourhood Centre	Many boarding house residents have a mental health diagnosis, but few are in receipt of mental health services. Why and what's the best way to reach them?
Peer Work Matters	Exploring the experiences of people who identify as having a lived experience of mental illness and/or drug and alcohol concerns in the mental health workplace settings.
Positive Life NSW	Post Incarceration health needs of the gay, lesbian and trans community in Sydney - a pilot study.
St Vincent De-Paul NSW	Compeer Consumer Focus Group

SUMMARY OF PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS BY ORGANISATION

Grant recipients were asked write a summary of their project and describe its key achievements. The following primarily reflects the responses from each organisation:

Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC)

DAMEC conducts various brief community development, psycho-education and therapeutic programs to enhance wellbeing, health literacy and service access amongst culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The Power of Programs (PoP) research project purpose is to embed evidence-based, locally adapted and piloted evaluation strategies in DAMEC's programs and to enhance staff capacity to implement evidence-based evaluation methods.

The benefits the project provided so far have included:

- A literature review of evaluation methods across a range of different settings and sectors. The review highlighted the importance of utilising tools that are responsive to language needs, the need for broader thinking about who the consumers of a service may be (including family, community associations or elders) and considered ways to ethically evaluate sensitive issues.
- Allowing the organisation to test new ways in which they could conduct evaluation, such as using non-verbal techniques.
- Acquisition of relevant technology to facilitate the collection, storage and use of evaluation data.

Family Drug Support

Problematic drug and alcohol use creates substantial secondary harm for families, but fortunately, affected family members can be supported to cope better. An earlier study demonstrated that completing the Family Drug Support's Stepping Stones Program involved the need to measure coping following course completion, and thereafter at three months follow up.

The CMHDARN grant enabled Family Drug Support to design a qualitative study to investigate the long term coping of affected family members who had completed Stepping Stones five or more years earlier. Success in securing the grant was a great outcome as the organisation had been keen to undertake such a study for a long time; and were ready to commence.

Problematic substance use typically continues for years, if not decades – and Family Drug Support were interested in exploring how family members continue to use what they have learnt in Stepping Stones; how they cope with new challenges; and identify other coping resources they access or would like to access. Ultimately, this study helped and will continue to help Family Drug Support better understand how the Stepping Stones program supports families to cope, and how improvements can be made to support family members who are affected over long periods of time.

Flourish Australia Services

One achievement of the project was to secure the involvement of people who access Flourish Australia's services in the design and implementation sections of the research. This involvement extended to the analysis and reporting stages of the project, which provided a most interesting aspect. Additionally, the budget, with the support of Flourish Australia, allowed for the research to be conducted in regional and outer regional areas - an important factor since the voices of service users in research in these areas are often neglected due to poor access. The researchers also had the time and resources to talk with staff about the research process, in both the regional and urban sites and to hear feedback on what research means to people in those different areas and be informed by this input.

From the perspective of researchers, it was meaningful to be able to visit sites where direct service is provided. From a staff perspective, researchers hope that it was useful to have them visit and listen to the experiences of the people working at the services, as well as hear important feedback from those accessing the services directly who took part in the formal focus groups. Although staff at the sites were inexperienced in conducting qualitative research, solid and appropriate recruitment occurred at most sites reflected in a 100% turnout for the groups at every site. This was a learning process and major achievement and for the person managing recruitment in each site.

A benefit from the project is that it identified areas where attitudes across a diversity of health professionals varied which clearly impacted people with lived experience, and the importance of the opportunity to express their experience of service in their own words. This project has provided some important qualitative information to support future dialogue around quality improvements to service provision in the future.

Kathleen York House

Kathleen York House undertook a desktop review of all residential services in NSW (one in the ACT) that accept pregnant women and/or mothers with children in their care. In this review information such as the aim of the service, type of service offered, and staffing (skills mix) was collected.

The aim of the project was to have all the information 'fact checked'. This was achieved by firstly calling each centre to enquire of the best contact, following which the organisation emailed through a completed template to be checked. Unfortunately, three of the ten services were unable to be contacted after multiple contact attempts via phone and email over a number of weeks. Researchers therefore decided to utilise information that was freely available on their websites. The findings from this desktop review is to be presented in a report that will be disseminated to each of the 10 sites included in the study. Organisations will have the opportunity to respond, add or modify information in the report before it is finalised. This report will provide a useful quick 'go-to-guide' for all people who work in the drug and alcohol fields.

The outcomes of the project are that:

- A review of best practice guidelines was conducted for women who are pregnant and are using substances.
- A database was developed which compares these treatment guidelines from a range of countries and organisations including WHO guidelines, internationally and nationally.
- An abstract has been submitted to present a report which aims to share these findings with participants at the APSAD conference. (This is a yet incomplete but will constitute part of researcher Anna Doab's ongoing PhD research).

- Research skills were enhanced by completing a systematic literature review related to treatment programs for women living with substance use disorders (SUD) who are pregnant and/or have children in their care.
- An endnote library will be collated to identify existing academic literature that explores the treatment experiences of women with SUD who are pregnant or have young children in their care. This particularly will focus on examining the treatment preferences and needs of this group of women. This will be then be presented as an annotated bibliography.

Lyndon Community

Community consultation was conducted to ensure the project aims and methods planned were acceptable to the Aboriginal elders. Their recommendations for a yarning approach to data collection were incorporated into the method and interview schedule.

A project advisory group was established to plan and oversee the research project and two staff members volunteered to conduct the interviews.

The learning from this project can be applied to other projects and provides a rich resource of information to other researchers on how to include Aboriginal people in the design and implementation of research.

A project plan has been developed; and ethics applications have been submitted to Charles Sturt University and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

The project enabled the Boarding House Outreach Service (BHOS) to work closely with NSW Health professionals to identify barriers to client engagement and ways to overcome these. Following the final report, the BHOS service has committed to carrying out in-service presentations to community and hospital-based mental health teams to improve mutual understanding, increase collaboration and encourage client engagement with clinical services.

The outcomes of the project are that:

- It has promoted a review of the BHOS structure with the aim of improving the level of internal clinical governance.
- It has identified a need for additional service provision options within the service model (i.e. introduction of training modules for service users, enhancement of opportunities for individual social connection, and improved transition arrangements from hospital to community).
- It has identified a need for all case managers to capture base-line information and develop a shared understanding of terms used in existing data collection methods. For example some intake clients' mental health status had been recorded as "not applicable". This category is being deleted to ensure improved measures.
- The project has identified current clients as generally satisfied with existing case managers' knowledge of mental health issues, and that external mental health professionals hold the service in high regard.

Peer Work Matters

The aim of this body of research, facilitated by Peer Work Matters, was to explore the experiences of people who identify as having lived/living experience of mental health issues and who are employed or have been employed in mental health workplace settings. The particular focus was on identifying strengths and barriers and the areas the sector needs to develop to ensure safe, supportive workplace cultures that are respectful to and value the use of lived and living experience.

The outcomes of this research project are to be utilised to develop a staged approach for a larger body of research, which will include medical practitioners and nursing staff, and to ultimately author a paper for wide distribution.

The project included a number of face-to-face consultations as well as an online survey conducted with people who have lived/living experience of mental health issues. It sought individual perspectives and satisfaction in areas such as: recruitment processes; inclusion; support mechanisms; accommodation and reasonable adjustments; job security; opportunities and careers progressions; value of lived/living experience voices; attitudes of staff, managers, team leaders and supervisors; workplace interpersonal relationships; and, experience of vicarious trauma.

The findings from the first stage of the research (this project) have captured key focus areas to inform best practice in recruitment processes and management of peers as part of the broader mental health workforce, and develop practices to support organisations, human resources departments, and managers to better identify and respond to supporting the needs of the growing lived/living experience workforce.

Positive Life NSW

Feedback was gathered via the referral system element of this study, which has revealed anecdotal evidence that there are many formerly incarcerated gay, lesbian and trans people who are living with a blood-borne virus in NSW. This has confirmed the view of Positive Life NSW (Positive Life) that this population group exists in large numbers.

Awareness of incarcerated gay, lesbian and trans people who are living with a blood-borne virus has risen in profile since the study began, with organisations across sectors and services reflecting upon how they can best serve such a population to meet their specific needs.

Outcomes of this project include that:

- Through conducting this research project Positive Life has developed and strengthened its capacity to conduct and engage sector partners and community in research.
- Alongside Positive Life's commitment to on-going work in the area, those identified will benefit from more than the increased profile that the study has drawn, i.e., the skills and capacity developed over the course of this research project will continue to benefit Positive Life and the sector partner organisations into the future.

St Vincent De-Paul NSW

Though this research project Compeer has gathered information which can be used to make improvements to program delivery which will lead to a more positive experiences for consumers. These findings are also relevant to other Compeer programs.

The Compeer Program has been licensed in Australia by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Until now the approach to executing the Compeer model has been modified and refined around insights gained from consumers, volunteers, referring health professionals and Compeer employees. This research has enabled us to give focus to consumers of the Program and develop a more robust professional approach to gathering and analysing their input.

This research project very much underlines the growing priority being given to people accessing services as we approach the future. Historically the greatest priority has been focused on managing the welfare of volunteers during their Compeer journey. However, what is now clearly identified is the paramount importance the Program delivers on improving the quality of life, confidence and sociability those we support on their mental health recovery journey.

The focus group research outcomes has enabled Compeer to explore ways in which they can enable the Compeer friendship experience to be as comfortable and life enhancing as possible.

SEEDING GRANTS EVALUATION

AIM

The aim of this evaluation is to determine if the seeding grants met the intended objective in supporting organisations to become 'research ready'. This was to be achieved by awarding seeding grants to community-based organisations to enhance the development of a research methodology and to identify suitable academic and/or other project partners to work with them on conducting the research/project.

FINDINGS

Summary of Project Achievements

When asked to summarise project achievements, the most common achievements listed were: the design and planning of their study; literature reviews; establishment of advisory groups or engagement with possible research partners; improving the skillset of staff; new technology to facilitate data collection and analysis; and, participation and co-design with consumers as partners in the process.

Recipients discussed the benefits of being able to set aside time to dedicate to research through the allocation of specifically allocated funding. Several researchers mentioned that they were able to review their organisation's best practice guidelines as part of the process, and analyse the positives and negatives of the programs they intended to evaluate, which was anticipated to later improve service delivery for clients. There was a focus on consumers being important partners in the research, especially in the context of quality service improvement for the benefit of consumers.

Each grant recipient shared the outcomes of having been a seeding grant recipient to assist their organisation in the area of research. A brief overview of the projects as a whole follows including the experience of conducting research as well as the outcomes of their findings.

Please note: There is some overlap in following questions answered by researchers, and some repetition occurs as their answer applied in a number of contexts.

Research Proposal

a) Have you completed your research proposal?

Overall, six of the recipients completed their research proposal, with one recipient having completed parts of the proposal. Staff shortages or lack of time available to dedicate to the proposal were the main reasons for the proposal not being completed. For one organisation there was an issue surrounding funding in order to complete the proposal. Other organisations who were unable to complete their proposal within the given timeframe indicated that they would complete it at a later time.

b) Are any research outputs attached?

Six of the recipients attached research outputs to their reports. Other recipients stated that staff shortages and timing made this difficult to achieve. Another recipient stated that they had some outputs from focus groups but are yet to analyse other data which will form part of their larger research project.

3.2 Methodology

Were there any changes to your project including those already notified to the Research Network Coordinator?

Four recipients stated that they did not make any changes to their project. Of the other recipients, the main reasons for amendments related to delays in ethics approval, barriers to completing the project with their originally intended research partners, and alteration to data collection methods in their organisations. Of the other changes made, one recipient altered their budget to allow for the purchase of data analysis software, another recipient changed their dissemination method, and another recipient worked with a professional moderator rather than a university as was originally planned.

3.3 Outcomes

Please report against the remaining project outcomes as proposed in your original EOI.

For the majority of projects, recipients had completed their proposed outcomes. Outcomes included literature reviews, establishment of advisory committees, research partnerships, ethics application lodged or ready to lodge, research questions identified, consultations with consumers, and focus groups.

A couple of recipients noted that they experienced difficulties in recruiting participants, but that partnerships with other organisations had helped to resolve this. Many recipients stated their intent to disseminate project outcomes in the future. One recipient noted that there were delays in achieving their project outcomes but planned to continue activities after submitting their report to CMHDARN. It was encouraging to read that many recipients found that the grant had enabled them to build their research capacity as an organisation, and achieved many of the aspects identified as key to setting up a project. Focus groups and consultation groups were used to acquire a good understanding of their research area, and this proved to be invaluable to their project.

3.3 Key Benefits

What have been the key benefits of this project and for whom?

Recipients listed a range of benefits, the most common of which were: building their organisations' research capacity; hearing the voice of consumers; working closely with the community; analysing data more effectively; as well as, enjoying initiating improvements to programs or other functions in their workplace. In relation to building research capacity, recipients reported that their experience had enabled them to investigate different evaluation methods; acquire tools to analyse data; and, enhance the research skills of staff.

One recipient noted the benefit of having experienced the many different elements necessary to conduct a research project, and what that would mean for future research at their organisation. A few recipients stated that their project had helped their organisation to improve service delivery as a result of working closely with consumers, and establishing a better understanding of the needs and goals of people with lived experience working in their organisation or in the workforce more generally. Overall the benefits meant that the organisations are now better equipped and ready to commence their research, or continue to conduct their research.

3.4 Impact on Your Organisation

a) Has the project impacted on your organisation's knowledge and skills in relation to research?

For many organisations, this was the opportunity to gain more knowledge and skills about certain aspects of a research process, for example, quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, data analysis tools, an ethical application process, and recruitment strategies. Many of the organisations reported that it had increased their confidence to conduct research. For some it was the first time they had used research databases or conducted a systematic literature review at their workplace. A few recipients indicated that it was useful to have a research partner to assist them with the ethics process as they had little prior experience in the area. All recipients indicated that it impacted positively on their organisation's knowledge and skills in relation to research.

b) Have you changed your practice in relation to research findings relating to your project?

For many participants they stated that it had changed practice in their organisation, or would change practice in the future through the development of new training and best practice guidelines and resources. Consumer feedback was mentioned by many recipients as a reason for change in practice as a result of their project. A few mentioned that they would be sure to involve consumers again in future research, given the positive experience of involving them in the current project. Other recipients shared that they had not changed practice but anticipated that there would be some practice improvement in the future once more of the research has been conducted. Some recipients stated that they are looking to conduct more research in the future and increase research skills in their organisation.

c) How has the project impacted on your organisation's consumers?

Projects described different levels of involvement of consumers: from participation only in interviews, to involvement and co-design throughout the entire research process. Many organisations stated that they intend to involve consumers more in research in the future. One recipient shared that it was of particular benefit because participation in the interviews meant that consumers felt like they were being 'heard'. Other organisations said that there were sometimes barriers to consumers' participation but that it has taught them how best to engage with their consumers for future research. Meaningful participation of consumers in the research process was reported as influencing project outcomes and therefore of benefit service users in regards to improved practice as a result of the research.

d) What have been the unexpected outcomes of the project?

Recipients reported a variety of unexpected outcomes. Of those outcomes relating to data analysis, one organisation reported that they gained a better understanding of data analysis, whilst another said that the purchase of software to analyse data was unexpected. Some organisations reported that outcomes related to consumers included the fact that their cohort were quite concealed, whilst another organisation shared the strength and resilience of participants and depth of discussion.

Regarding the unexpected results found, one organisation shared that they received suggested improvements to their services outside of their research questions, another reported that there were high rate of people who identified stigma and discrimination in their workplace, yet another organisation said that the project highlighted the lack of research conducted in the research topic. Lastly, one organisation reported that they were surprised by the support they received when conducting the project.

e) Do you think the project has impacted on the culture of your organisation in relation to research?

Many recipients stated that it gave them a renewed focus on research and allowed them to think more broadly in regards to the potentially different aspects of conducting a research project. It helped organisations to give staff the opportunity to design and lead the research which they otherwise would not have had. This led to increased skills and confidence demonstrated in the area of research. A few recipients indicated that involving consumers in research was a valued part of the process and that was something that would be built into all future research projects at their organisation. On the other hand, one organisation said they already placed a high value on research prior to receiving this grant, and one organisation said that it had not impacted the culture but did not state why.

3.5 Consumer Participation

Please outline the ways in which consumers were involved in the project's development and implementation.

For some organisations, consumers were involved throughout the whole process, from design phase through to making recommendations from the results of the project. For other organisations, consumers represented some of the interview participants, or were involved in focus groups. The majority of organisations involved consumers in many aspects of the research process, including, the design of the project, interviews and focus groups, reading and reviewing reports, making recommendations, and dissemination of the project outcomes. A high value was placed by recipients on the involvement of consumers.

3.6 Key Challenges

a) What have been the key challenges for your organisation in undertaking this project?

The main challenges listed by organisations were staff shortages, staff leave over the Christmas period, delays in ethics approvals, and timing. Given the short time frame to complete the project, any delays meant that adhering to the deadline was a challenge. One organisation also said that the recruitment process was difficult. The small funding meant that some organisations did not employ an extra person to complete the project but one of their staff added the project to other existing workload. This meant that staff could not spend as much time on the project as they would have liked, and this meant less time for their regular workload. Other challenges included smaller community participation than originally anticipated, and hard to reach their target cohort due to the nature of mental health or alcohol and other drug use in and of itself.

b) Please describe any strategies that you developed in order to address these challenges.

In order to overcome these challenges, organisations reported a variety of strategies that were put in place. In regards to ethics processes, some organisations engaged with more experienced professionals to assist them with the process, or applied for an extension in order to complete the project. Ethics delays are, as one recipient reported, unavoidable at times so next time they would not plan a project that requires milestones over the Christmas period.

A few of organisations hired another staff member or sought assistance from university students to help with various parts of the project. Other organisations reported using a timeline, communication strategies amongst the team, and meetings via Skype when staff were not located in the same place. Budget constraints were harder to resolve, but some organisations were able to engage with academic researchers in a private capacity, or seek assistance from research partners.

4.1 Research Partner

a) Briefly describe the relationship with the research partner, including processes that were put in place to sustain the partnership and any benefits over the length of the research project.

Some recipients had worked with their research partner prior to this seeding grant project, while others established the relationship for the purpose of conducting their project. To sustain the relationship, some recipients made contracts outlining the expectation of both parties. Many recipients noted that they expect the partnership to be ongoing, or have already agreed to continue working together. Benefits from working with their research partner included assistance with the scope of their project, ongoing advice and mentoring throughout the duration of the project, and the input of knowledge and skills from their partner. Some recipients noted that the research partnership may help their organisation to secure further funding in the future.

b) What role did your research partner play during the project?

The majority of recipients noted that their research partner assisted with the project design, including research methodology, research questions, and other research advice. Other support included assistance with their ethics application and submission, analysis of data, access to data analysis software, and report development. Recipients noted that it was useful to have a partner in the project design process as the partner helped them to ensure issues that needed to be investigated were included in the research.

c) Briefly describe any challenges that were experienced in finding or working with the research partner and how these were addressed.

The main challenges found by recipients in working with their research partners were competing priorities, limited budget, short timeframe to complete the project, and staff leave during the Christmas period. Recipients found that having a research partner was a strength to the project, however partners had other priorities and busy schedules and therefore were not always available to assist as much as recipients would have liked. One recipient noted that their research partner had a 'relaxed' attitude towards communication, however the organisation was able to resolve this by communicating the expected communication timelines. Another recipient stated that there were differences in understandings of originally agreed costs to complete the project with their research partner, and the fee invoiced meant that the project was unable to complete the development of the research proposal.

4.2 Other Partners

Briefly identify and describe the relationship with other project partners and any benefits and/or challenges relating to working with the partner/s.

A few recipients had advisory reference groups or consumer advisory groups to assist with their projects. For other recipients, they had partnerships with universities or other professionals to provide supervisory support. Benefits of working with these groups was that they provided assistance in identifying and contacting their clients or cohorts. One recipient said that their partnership helped them to further identify other partners. Challenges of working with their partners included issues with ethical processes, for example the partner's preference for the project to go through their own ethics process above the recipient's ethics process, and working with partners within the short timeframe of the project.

5. Matters Related to Ethics in Research

Please provide comment on useful approaches, impediments or concerns with matters related to your consideration of ethical issues.

The short timeframe of the seeding grant, and the fact that the timing occurred over the Christmas period proved problematic for several recipients in regards to ethics approval. Some recipients had already completed the ethics process or would wait to lodge until they received further funding. However, for other organisations this was an area of learning. Many recipients indicated that the ethics process caused delays and two recipients stated that they intend to focus more on this area in the future and were considering training for their staff.

6. Dissemination of Project Outcomes

Have you undertaken activities to promote awareness of your Seeding Grants project or do you plan any in the future?

All but one of the recipients indicated that they have undertaken activities to promote awareness of their seeding grants project, or would do so in the future. Some of the activities included staff development or training, presentations at meetings, publication of research project in articles or distribution via newsletters and websites, social media, emails to members etc. Many had already shared internally to staff and at other stakeholder meetings. Other activities such as newsletters and the submission of abstracts to conferences will occur in the near future. One comment was made in relation to informing others about the benefits and scope of future seeding grants, which CMHDARN could help to facilitate.

7. Additional Comments

Are there any other comments that you would like to make with regard to this research project that by useful to CMHDARN/MHCC/NADA/NSW Mental Health Commission

“It has given us the capacity to develop a good research proposal and a study that is ready to be commenced.”

“Thank you for the grant and the opportunity to undertake such an important research project.”

Some recipients expressed their appreciation for the grant and highlighted that it enabled them to build their organisation’s research capacity.

For some recipients, they made particular reference to the benefit of involving consumers in their research projects. A few indicated that the project highlighted the need for further research.

There was one suggestion that it would have been good to meet other agencies engaged with the project and perhaps have a Q&A session before funding commenced or during the application process.

Final comments

For the most part, the seeding grants have proved beneficial to recipients and those they support in services. They were able to build their organisation’s research capacity, involve consumers in the research process, and most were able to identify research partners to assist them with the research. There were, however, challenges with the short time frame, staffing shortages, delays in ethics approvals, and staff leave over the Christmas period.

All but one of the recipients indicated that they have undertaken activities to promote awareness of their seeding grants project, or would do so in the future. Recipients expressed their gratitude for the grant and highlighted that it enabled them to build their organisation's research capacity.

For future seeding grants rounds, consideration should be given to allow for more time for projects, especially if the Christmas period occurs within the allocated timeframe. Overall, seeding grant recipients expressed gratitude for the grant and opportunity to conduct their projects.

CMHDARN congratulates all the research participants for their sterling efforts and wishes them all the best in conducting future research projects which have begun with such promising outcomes.