**Victoria ALIVE Project Advisory Group**

**Overview & Summary**

**The Victoria ALIVE project**

The Victoria ALIVE project was an activity of the 2018-19 Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Transition Grant Stream, within the community awareness and capacity building activity area. It was delivered in partnership with Volunteering Victoria and Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, and with the support of the Victorian Government.

The Victoria ALIVE project aimed to increase the involvement of people with a disability in the Victorian community sector through volunteering over the course of 2019. The project aimed to achieve this by developing materials and training to build the capacity of community sector and volunteering organisations to more actively involve and engage with people with disabilities. This included research, community events, online and face-to face training, guides & resources, videos and a social media campaign

The Victoria ALIVE project was committed to including and prioritising the lived experience of people with disability and their carers, in each stage of the project and throughout the development and implementation of the project activities.

**Project Advisory Group**

A key component of the development and implementation of the Victoria ALIVE project and its activities was a Project Advisory Group (PAG) comprised of ten members with either live experience of disability or carers of people with disability.

The objectives of the PAG were to:

* Provide insights, perspectives and advice on how organisations can become more inclusive for people with disability.
* Identify issues and barriers people with disabilities face when volunteering
* Identify values, attitudes and behaviours that are important to people with lived experience with disability.
* Provide advice and guidance on the implementation of the project.
* Give feedback on the development of resources, videos and social media content.

Advise from the PAG would be utilised to support the project team in developing and delivering the project activities. Advise from the PAG would also be fed back to the Project Governance Group (PGG) to inform their thinking and decision-making on key aspects of the project.

**Recruitment process**

Positions in the PAG were advertised at the start of the project through the Volunteering Victoria and Neighbourhood Houses Victoria newsletters, as well as the networks of members the project partners and project delivery team. The advertisement was also distributed to disability peak bodies and other relevant organisations. The advertisement asked for expressions of interest from people with disability or people with experiencing caring for someone with disability. It identified that the project was seeking a range of experiences / disabilities including experience of mental illness.

Applicants completed an online Expression of Interest form (on Survey Monkey) asking about their motivation and experience in advocacy and volunteering (***Attachment 1 – Expression of Interest***). Shortlisted applicants were contacted by phone and a short phone interview completed.

Successful applications were then sent a copy of the PAG Terms of Reference (***Attachment 2 – Terms of Reference***), PAG Communication Pathways (***Attachment 3 – Communication Pathways***) and a Letter of Offer (***Attachment 4 – Letter of Offer***) to sign and return. Positions were offered on a voluntary basis for the term of the duration of the project.

**Meetings**

The PAG met every 6 weeks at a time negotiated with the group. Attendance at the meetings was excellent with most PAG members attending more than 80% of meetings. The final group included people with a broad range of disabilities and two people with carer experience.

Meetings were held at a central and accessible location in the Melbourne CBD. The venue was chosen based on its physical accessibility, proximity to public transport and availability of meeting rooms. PAG members could also utilise video or teleconferencing facilities if they were unable to attend the meetings in person. Catering was provided at each meeting.

The first meeting of the PAG focused on introductions, team building and time to review and ask questions about the project, PAG Terms of Reference and Communication Pathways.

The PAG was convened by a member of the project team, who acted as a central point of contact for the PAG members. All members of the project team attended meetings when available to consult with the PAG. An agenda and any relevant documents were provided one week prior to the meeting. Minutes were distributed in the following month. All documents were provided in an accessible format.

**Additional opportunities of feedback or participation**

PAG members were asked to contribute feedback or participate in the project in various other ways if they felt able to contribute more time. This included:

* As a panelist at five community forums held around the state
* As a panelist at the Disability Inclusion in Volunteer Management training
* Providing case studies or in-depth feedback for the online micro credential training
* Providing in-depth feedback on the micro credential development or drafting of fact sheets and guides for organisations
* A steering committee for the development of the Victoria ALIVE videos.

**End of project feedback**

At the closing of the project, the project team met with each PAG member individually to provide an opportunity to give feedback on the project, project activities and their involvement in the PAG. PAG members who were unable to attend in person, were provided with the questions (***Attachment 5 – End of Project Questions***) and opportunity to give feedback via email.

In relation to participation in the PAG, members identified the following benefits from being involved:

* Learning about other people’s experience which may be different from their own
* The opportunity to contribute to discussion, their own ideas and experiences
* Increased confidence, both generally and in relation to the value of their own experience, perspective and expertise
* The opportunity to connect, meet with like-minded people and work as a group
* Recognition that their experience and perspective could be helpful and valuable for others
* Emphasised the importance of being open minded

PAG members also provided the following feedback on how the project team could improve the experience of being involved in the PAG and/or make it more inclusive:

* Being given longer timelines for the optional project feedback activities
* Having an opportunity to connect in person with the Project Governance Group
* Having introductions at start of each meeting to support those with a vision impairment to familiarise with voices and names
* Including organisational representatives on the PAG to broaden perspective (given they were the target of many project activities)
* More regular meetings and opportunities for team building activities
* Disappointment at the project ending and the sense that the work (on disability inclusion in volunteering) was “just starting”; clearer idea of where the project outcomes might lead.

**Summary**

The Victoria ALIVE Project Advisory Group provided invaluable advice to the project team and PGG, actively informing the development of the project’s key messages and activities. This provided guidance to the project team and ensured that the project’s activities were aligned with the values and issues experienced by people with disability. On several occasions the direction of activities was reviewed and realigned based on this feedback. The group were considered a pivotal part of the project and responsible for the success of its implementation.

**Related Documents**

1. Attachment – PAG Expression of Interest
2. Attachment – PAG Terms of Reference
3. Attachment – PAG Communication Pathways
4. Attachment – Letter of Offer template
5. Attachment – End of Project feedback questions

**Victoria ALIVE Project Advisory Group**

The Victoria ALIVE project team would like to thank the members of the PAG for their time and commitment to the project and their invaluable contribution and feedback.

* Julyne Ainsley
* Lisa Bartkus
* Samantha Buis
* Melanie Edge
* Michael French
* Mark Glascodine
* Jason Heagerty
* Judy Ingram
* Tasmin Jowett
* Ali Street