coalition of communityboards
Sunshine Coast

Discussion Notes from Developing Policies for your Community Organisation

Session 1 - 28 May 2020

Session 2 - 5 June 2020

Q- Why are community organisations important? What principles underpin the way we work in these organisations.

- Bring community together
- Represent the community
- Help to get things done, with one another
- Gives us the power rather than having to rely / defer to government / bureaucrats
- Aligns with us interests and hobbies
- Local people getting together

Other comments put forth during the discussion around the benefits of policies-

- Policies give everyone in your group a shared understanding, even an agreement about how we do our business together.
- They can also provide work Instructions to help with breaking down work tasks
- We develop policies then guidelines for consistent application of the policies - especially across a number of regions / sites, helps ensure equity and efficiency - support tools
- If something goes wrong and you unfortunately end up in court, having policies, even if they aren't the best they could be better than not having anything in place to guide how things happen
- Risk Management tools
- using a template is a great way to start. adapt it to your own situation
- Policies offer continuity of thinking and capture the learnings and experience of your group
- Good idea to have sunset or review clauses in policies so they can be revisited to ensure they are still current
- Its fine to have aspirational elements incorporated into policies
- Tip – sometimes reading out aloud a policy can give some insight if it's still current or needs updating.
- It's OK for policies be works in progress based on best available information and continue to develop them as reviews occur. Waiting to have the policy 100% perfect may not always, (or even often) be realistic. Something is better than not having anything, they can be fine tuned along the way but get them out
- Add 'reading the policies' to the meeting agenda
- Policies should not need much discussion as they should reflect the key values that hold your group together.
- We group our policies as 'service delivery' and 'service management', or put another way 'what we do externally' and 'what we do internally".
- I was involved in a smaller group where we had maximum term of service for each role outlined in our policy so that helped us avoid having strong clusters of members

- also use sub-committees for actions required (including around developing a policy) stipulating, to be completed by who and when
- Useful to have a review process for your policies – a document and records maintenance process.

Q- moving a committee forward with its policies if it is reluctant to 'change' and develop new policies?

Suggestions

- take it slowly one step at a time
- Make committee aware of their legal responsibilities
- Modern day Risk and WHSO environment demands a certain level of policies to protect the organisation and its participants
- I have had that experience and reached a point of "implement or I leave"
- We do need to be aware of current regulations. I have used the argument in the past that we need to meet the requirements of 21st century regulations
- Work to change your committee if they don't get to a point of understanding the importance and the risk that exists for everyone, luck will only get you so far.

Break out groups discussion - Process for developing a policy

Group 2 - Example = **Developing a policy around members of your organisation**

1. Issue is identified, in this case defining exactly who is a member, what are their entitlements and responsibilities etc.
2. Create a sub committee to research issue
3. Subcommittee looks at options, what is currently working, what is not currently working, the possible impacts of options and then develops up a draft policy
4. If required draft is communicated with relevant stakeholders
5. Revised draft is brought to committee for discussion and to be ratified.

Its Ok to learn as we go – together we can come up with answers and work our structure and our direction

Resources to access for Policy samples and templates

Our Community, help sheets relating to policy - https://communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/policymaking

The Institute of Community Directors provides a free, online policy bank - https://communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/policy-bank

QCOSS Community Door – (many of the policy templates offered here have a HSQF slant to them, this is a government compliance system for state funded community organisations, nonetheless many of the policies are still applicable to non-funded community groups) https://communitydoor.org.au/quality-assurance/policy-templates-and-supporting-documents

Suggestion put forth that - Volunteer Qld are a great resource for volunteer management resources including policies.