



## **NGO Management Support Unit**

In 1999, the Council of Social Service NSW secured funding from NSW Health to undertake a study of Health NGO Training Needs. The study concerned itself with identifying the training needs of both paid managers and board members in relation to their respective roles in managing health NGOs

The training needs identified in the final report for both managers and committee members, were many and complex, and it became obvious that they needed to be met in a customised and flexible manner. The area of highest need for managers was *Human Resource Management* and for committee members, *Planning and Evaluation*. The degree of need indicated for committee members was consistently much higher than that indicated for managers. This finding should be considered with an understanding of community management as a developmental model. The skill development of volunteers over time, through their involvement in management committees, is a central community development principle for many NGOs.

Competency levels varied significantly for both groups according to the income base of the NGO. NGOs with a smaller income base indicated that they 'required training' more than those NGOs with larger income bases. This was to be expected. Interestingly enough however, there was minimal significant variation in competency levels according to the location of the NGO.

The study showed that NGO managers were more likely than committee members, to have received training in the past twelve months. The majority of respondents, both managers and committee members, described their current level of training as inadequate and this was pronounced for committee members, 76% of whom considered their training level to be inadequate.

The final report found that multiple and interrelated barriers to training exist for both groups. Many of these relate to inadequate resources, the lack of relevant training and accessibility for NGOs in rural and regional NSW and the time available to attend external courses.

As a result of this study, NCOSS has established a Management Support Unit (MSU) to facilitate access to training and resources on management & governance for NSW Health funded NGOs.

MHCC is represented on the Advisory Committee for the Unit and will keep members informed of services and opportunities as they arise in addition to representing member's interests.

The MSU will assist Health NGOs with:

- the provision of training to meet identified needs
- the development of management support options for NGOs
- the enhancement of the role of health peak bodies in the provision of management support to their members, and
- the development of statewide policies that will strengthen the relationship between Area Health Services and funded NGOs

In the first instance, the MSU has established a variety of resources and information on training programs and also current issues relevant to the management of NGOs on the NCOSS website. Topics covered include accountability, leadership and promotion, planning and evaluation and human resource management.

Elizabeth Priestley, Project Officer for the MSU is keen to hear from anyone with suggestions on other relevant issues not previously mentioned. Or you may know of training programs that were particularly beneficial in improving skills in management or governance. You can contact Elizabeth Priestley at NCOSS on 02 9211 2599 or by email [liz@ncoss.org.au](mailto:liz@ncoss.org.au).

Don't forget to look up the website at [www.ncoss.org.au/msu](http://www.ncoss.org.au/msu)

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