

# HOW TO START A SUPPORT GROUP |

## a ConnectGroups Fact Sheet



### What is a Support Group?

A group of people who share the same experience or concern who come together to focus on needs or growth through mutual encouragement with a person allocated as the facilitator.

## STEPS TO STARTING A SUPPORT GROUP

### DEVELOP YOUR FOUNDATION

Vision

Purpose

Governance

### VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement is a one sentence statement describing the clear and inspirational long-term desired change resulting from your work.

A vision statement is a quick and easy way to tell people what your group is about and what you stand for; it provides direction to current and future members of your group and enables them to focus their efforts on achieving the vision.

The following vision statements are examples from not-for-profit organisations:

#### ConnectGroups

Connected Thriving Communities.

#### Mission Australia

To reduce homelessness and strengthen communities across Australia.

### How To Create Your Vision Statement

Take some time to answer the following questions:

- What will your Support Group look like in five years' time?
- What is your Support Group hoping to accomplish?
- What is the main aim of starting your Support Group?
- When your group succeeds, what would be its accomplishments?

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of an organisation provides a clear direction and defines what a Support Group is, why it exists and its reasons for being.

The following Purpose Statements are examples from not-for-profit organisations:

ConnectGroups: Connecting the community through building Support Groups that aim to combat isolation and give hope for the future.

Red Cross: We support and empower people and communities in times of vulnerability. Our purpose is to reduce suffering across Australia and internationally through mobilising the power of humanity.

### How to create your purpose statement

Take some time to answer the following questions:

- What does your Support Group do? (describe)
- Who are you developing this Support Group for? (your target market)
- Why are you doing what you do?

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## **Why do we need a Vision and a Purpose statement?**

They are the backbone of the promotional and engagement strategy for your Support Group. If your Group can articulate a clear purpose and vision, you can actively engage the right people to your Support Group.

Your marketing 'pitch' will come from your Vision and Purpose statement.

## **What is a pitch?**

It's a short and sharp message that tells someone or others what you do. The initial pitch may only be 60 seconds – if you then have their attention – you go into more depth where you can provide stats, stories etc. If they continue to ask questions, you either make a time to meet and/or have a longer conversation. However, do not stray from your key messages that lie in your Vision and Purpose statement.

How your conversation will progress will depend on:

1. Is the person you are talking to a potential new member?
2. Is the person you are talking to a potential new committee member?
3. Is the person you are talking to a potential funder/sponsor?
4. Is the person you are talking to an influencer?

## **GOVERNANCE**

Governance is a structure of rules, practices and processes used to direct and manage your Support Group. Good Governance ensures that the Group remains accountable, responsive, inclusive and efficient. Good Governance for a Support Group means having processes such as:

- A committee
- A Facilitator(s)
- A Support Group Meeting Agenda
- A Code of Conduct
- Clarity around roles and responsibilities

## **FIND A LOCAL CHAMPION**

Local councils, schools, businesses, sporting groups, and health professionals are all places to find your champions. You know what is needed and are best placed to find out who those champions are.

Remember! Don't try and do everything at once, just concentrate on one thing at a time. When you get your foundations right, everything else will fall into place. It is essential that when establishing your Support Group you have a group of at least 4 or 5 committed individuals that are willing to be part of the establishment of the Group. Support Groups can take up to two years to be fully functioning with a good membership base. Do not become discouraged stay focused on WHY you established it and HOW to keep it viable.

For more information on starting a Support Group contact ConnectGroups on 9364 6909 or email [info@connectgroups.org.au](mailto:info@connectgroups.org.au). Intensive Support to help you achieve your Support Group goals is available either face to face or over the telephone.