



## **Positive Body Image Small Grants 2007 – Feedback and Review Report**

**Conducted by Ms Danielle Kent and the  
Office for Youth**

### Aim

The key aim of the Feedback and Review project for the first round of the Positive Body Image Small Grants was to hear feedback on the 2007 funded projects to understand what worked well, what the challenges were and how it could be improved for round two in 2008.

### Objectives

The main objectives of the Feedback and Review project for first round of the Positive Body Image Small Grants in 2007 were to:

- Gain wisdom from young people's experience
- Identify early learning from this first-of-its kind initiative
- Hear what could be done better/made easier next time
- Understand how activities have linked in local places (youth, health, education, recreation)
- Understand if/how opportunities have been further created in local communities
- Gain insight into the impact on service capacity (what headaches may have been created)
- Better understand what works for communities
- Make a contribution to future planning and community development
- Ensure we learn about creative solutions

### Methodology

The project had 4 stages:

Stage 1 – Preparation and telephone conversations

Stage 2 – Face to Face project visits

Stage 3 – PBI workshops

Stage 4 – Final Report with recommendations for Round 2

### Context/Background

In line with the whole of Government 'Go for your life' funded Positive Body Image (PBI) Strategy, 34 community organisations across Victoria have been funded up to \$5,000 to deliver projects to promote healthy lifestyle choices and build self esteem and confidence in young people.

The aim of the first round of grants was to:

- Increase awareness of healthy weight and positive body image.

- Enable practical support for young people to gain better understanding of positive body image messages.

The knowledge gained through this project will assist in:

- Priority setting (eg. To inform the Community Advisory Committee on Body Image).
- Advising the Minister (practical and high level knowledge).
- Involving young people (individuals, groups, members).

## Key Findings

### **What is Body Image?**

Projects shared a wide and varied definition of body image, its influences and factors that promote and strengthen positive body image for young people.

Feedback indicated that the most common influence on young people and their body image was peers. Peer influence was cited in different forms such as peer pressure, concern about what other people think, friends comments, support, judgement and negative peer relationships.

Parents and family was then the other most popular cited influence on young people in the form of support and reinforcement, however family culture and role modelling were included.

Media was regularly identified as a major influence on young people and body image in the form of advertising, fashion, celebrities, music clips and magazines, in relation to expectations of what people should look like and the media portrayal of normal and beautiful.

Similarly to the influences, the most common positive factors identified related to peers and family. Peer support, caring friends and family, feeling loved, family values and positive messages were all common ways that young people had an increased self esteem and confidence about who they were and what they looked like.

A comprehensive list of strengthening skills that the young people explored and developed during the projects also helped define how positive body image can be achieved. These ranged from very practical strategies such as physical activity, healthy lifestyles and diet, and relaxation and meditation to self confidence building strategies such as giving and accepting compliments, support and discussion, achieving things that make you feel good about yourself, focussing on talents and abilities, having interests, positive thinking, self respect and pride.

### **General Key Activities**

Feedback from the projects indicated there was a varied range of key activities that were undertaken to promote positive body image.

The forums were a good opportunity to share ideas and experiences about the different ways in which projects were implemented. Whilst there were common themes throughout the activities of the projects there was also some very creative and interesting ways in which body image was promoted which other organisations were very keen to learn about for their own future projects.

The use of technology, radio, animation, websites and DVD recording were very popular methods to engage young people in a way that they could learn new skills that they felt were interesting and relevant.

Activities that were project based or working towards an event or the production of something were also popular ways to engage young people because it provided a focus for the project.

Expertise from key organisations and resources were often outsourced to implement a project such as BodyThink, Blue Earth, culturally trained facilitators, Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria, nutritionists and dietitians and art based therapists or professionals.

Gender specific projects were very popular and the majority of projects were delivered to adolescent females. Organisations believed that a gender specific approach provided an environment for young people to talk about issues that were gender based and similar, which often resulted in building trust and camaraderie between groups.

Cultural based projects were delivered on the same basis of discussing issues that were familiar to participants using a culturally suitable approach. In both cases, it was important to have facilitators that were trained appropriately in order to engage the target group effectively.

The age group for the projects were commonly 13 – 16 years although there was strong feedback from organisations for the need to deliver programs to primary school aged children as young as 10 to educate and develop positive body image learning and habits.

### **Youth Engagement**

Young people were engaged in the projects in a variety of ways based on their skills and capacity, level of interest and the organisations ability to understand and apply a youth participation approach to the project.

There were different strategies taken to engage young people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects, which often influenced its overall success as well as increased skills for the young people involved. In most cases, when the young people were fully participating throughout the entire project or only a particular task or activity, the outcome was engaging, creative and successful.

### ***Planning***

Whilst some projects did engage young people in its initial planning using youth committees to advise and assist in the application process, feedback from organisations also indicated that this process is often resource intensive and therefore unrealistic to have young people involved prior to funding availability. Once the funding was granted and young people started to get involved in the planning, the original project description most often changed according to the interest and decisions of the participants. If an organisation was engaging the young people successfully, the ideas, resources, energy and momentum of the project often grew larger and achieved greater outcomes than expected.

Understanding that young people are a very transient group, organisations reported that the groups and networks of young people can change and move within a short time of 6 months. Therefore, the

projects were sometimes dictated by the interests and motivation of the young people who were in that place at that time. As a result of this, organisations identified the need to be flexible in the implementation of their projects.

It was agreed that the key to engaging young people in the planning stage is to create a social and trusting atmosphere with clear expectations and boundaries from the start. Young people needed to feel valued and respected, not patronised or used if organisations wanted their involvement.

### ***Implementation***

In the implementation stage organisations reported that they needed to create a social atmosphere, use the right language, provide transport, a comfortable facility and food, target a particular age or cultural group at the most appropriate time in order to get young people to attend. Promoting projects via school networks, popular hang outs, using posters, wrist bands and electronic flyers seemed popular strategies amongst the projects.

The implementation stage of the projects was where young people were most commonly engaged in a variety of roles and developed the most individual skills. Activities that were youth-decided and led, diverse in skill and had a team approach included digital storytelling, art and media based projects, peer mentoring, youth ambassador training, youth committees, peer facilitation forums and team based recreation.

### ***Celebration***

The celebration stage of the project is often where the greatest youth participation would take place. This may be due to the time taken to engage the young people and the trust built between the facilitator and peers, or that there was a sense of completion and achievement in the project, or the young people's desire for recognition from the broader community, or that the celebration was an opportunity to do something fun without the pressure of having to learn or achieve an outcome.

Projects shared their celebration activities with each other at the forum which was a beneficial way to get different ideas about how creative the celebrations can be. Celebration activities can often be overlooked or scaled down due to budget requirements, but they are a useful closure strategy for the young people involved to feel recognised and appreciated for their contribution throughout the project. Organisations worked from the basis that a good youth participation experience will encourage and motivate participants to continue to be involved in other community projects or activities.

### **Partnerships – School and Community**

Partnerships between different organisations in the planning and implementation of the projects proved vital in their success. The partnerships between the projects were varied and crossed government, non-government and private sectors depending on what was trying to be achieved.

Common indicators of success in a partnership approach to projects:

- Organisations with strong existing networks seemed to quickly identify and develop partnerships.

- Regional and rural areas had better partnerships in place and stronger expectations that projects would take a partnership approach.
- Regular networking between organisations built relationships and trust.
- Good partnerships grow over time.
- Organisations needed to be clear and honest about their role, contributions and expectations to the partnership.
- Partnerships often relied heavily on the interest, motivation and contribution of a single worker.
- Partnerships promote the cross fertilisation of similar programs which can increase value, resources and outcomes.
- Organisations in a partnership need to be nurtured, recognised and appreciated for their contribution.

### ***Secondary Schools***

Secondary Schools were instrumental in being involved in most projects as a lead agency or contributing partner. Organisations partnering with secondary schools had some particular feedback about successfully engaging a school and the challenges they present.

Secondary Schools have the benefit of direct access to young people and their broader networks including family and friends. They also have useful resources such as infrastructure, transport, schools nurses, counsellors and teachers. The secondary schools involved in the projects indicated that the prospect of having an external program or facilitator delivering the project worked well because the young people were exposed to a different environment or personality that wasn't their teacher.

However, co-ordinating programs and logistics within school timetables seemed to be the most popular feedback when discussing the challenges of working with secondary schools. Secondary Schools are limited in time to co-ordinate and administer grants, and teachers were often working out of hours to deliver the projects. Secondary school principals were cited as an important person to gather support for the project to ensure the school will co-operate in its implementation.

### **Outcomes**

The outcomes for each project were determined and assessed by the projects using the Positive Body Image Grants 2007 Guidelines in the "What will it achieve" section. Projects were asked to: demonstrate an increase in young people's skills and understanding of the importance of positive body image; and demonstrate the number and way in which young people participate in the activities that promote positive body image.

In the feedback and review of the program it became evident that the outcomes of the projects were often focussed on young people's skills and understanding of what influences body image and how to improve positive body image; along with tangible outcomes eg a resource produced during

the project, ongoing involvement such as employment, volunteering or mentoring in their community. Most prominent of the outcomes were the subtle anecdotes and individual case studies, as told by project facilitators, demonstrating the increased skills, self esteem and confidence of a young person.

Organisations also indicated that asking to identify “numbers” put pressure on the project to deliver to a large number of young people. However, feedback from the projects suggests that where there was a smaller group of young people, the outcomes were more significant because there was greater trust and opportunity for everyone to contribute in a meaningful way as opposed to token attendance. Limited funding also limited an organisations ability to deliver to a large number of young people.

### **Application and Guidelines and Reporting Process**

In general, feedback from the application process was positive with most organisations indicating that it was easy to understand, straightforward and well supported using prompt questions. Organisations were usually informed of the grant through an online network in the health or youth sector or from their local member.

Some of the common feedback comments in the application process were in relation to the re-phrasing and definition of the words in the eligibility and outcomes sections. Organisations commented that it was unclear about whether one category had more priority over another and whether the assessment was more favourable to deliver projects to minority groups of young people.

In the reporting section of the process, the main feedback was the report template boxes were too confusing to understand and tick and organisations ended up ticking them all to be safe. There was suggestion to place more emphasis on the case study as a measure of success and to actively promote the case studies using the internet. Interpretation of the photo consent form also caused confusion amongst the projects with most organisations using their own consent form as a “safe” alternative.

One particular issue was the expected involvement from Office for Youth of young people in the application and reporting process and the need for a user friendly format of the guidelines, application and reporting forms. Office for Youth may need to take more careful consideration in their skill expectation of young people, recognising different numeracy and literacy levels if their intention is for young people to complete the application and reporting forms. Using plain English and alternative forms of grant application and reporting could be explored.

### **Opportunities**

Based on the results of the review and feedback process, the following opportunities to enhance the current small grant program were identified using the following strategies:

- Communication strategy and support to projects.

A comprehensive communication strategy for the small grants program would increase the promotion of funded projects at a state and local level and would inform the

broader community of the importance of the body image issue through awareness of local projects. Ongoing support to funded projects in the form of media release templates and 'Go for your life' brand awareness would also assist organisations to self promote their projects.

- Induction/planning workshop.

A workshop for the project workers from all funded organisations at the start of the funding period would be an ideal induction into the program to address administrative requirements and provide program support and resources. A planning component in the workshop would allow for shared ideas and networking and may quickly identify any action research opportunities or troubleshoot any issues or challenges amongst the projects. There is potential for young people to be included in this workshop as part of their planning skill development.

- Cross fertilisation of Office for Youth and other Government programs.

To increase the resources available to organisations delivering programs and projects that share similar objectives, Office for Youth could encourage cross fertilisation of programs. This could leverage a small amount of funding to achieve better outcomes. In some cases, organisations are aware of these like programs but sometimes they are not aware of what they are “allowed” to do or how to approach this program cross fertilisation strategy.

The Positive Body Image Small Grants Guidelines could outline the acceptance or encouragement of this program cross fertilisation approach in the “what will be funded” section. In addition, the funded projects could be informed of other possible opportunities to leverage their own program in both the induction/planning workshop and regular e-bulletins.

- Regular e-bulletins

Regular group emails monthly or quarterly could be a simple and effective component of the communications strategy. This ongoing communication between Office for Youth and funded organisations could troubleshoot any administrative responsibilities or notifications as they arise during the funding period. It also builds a good network to promote body image projects as well as other Office for Youth programs and youth participation opportunities. The contact list for this group email could be consolidated at the induction/planning workshop.

- Media promotions

Media coverage would increase the promotion of the projects and body image issue at a local and state level. This strategy could form part of the broader communications strategy of the small grants program.

A calendar of important dates or milestones would need to be co-ordinated across funded projects at the beginning of the funding period. The planning/induction workshop and regular e-bulletin could be an effective way to remind organisations of strategies to engage local media to profile their project and organisation.

- Critical friends group to advise/support project. Eg. BodyThink, Blue Earth

Office for Youth could explore the possibility of strengthening its relationship with other key organisations that have expertise in the area of promoting self esteem and positive body image using health promotion strategies and programs. These include BodyThink, Blue Earth, Beyond Blue, Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria and VicHealth. This could specifically support the delivery of the small grants program.

- Local level exchange of stories and case studies

There is an opportunity for projects funded within the same local government area or State Government region to network locally throughout the duration of the funding period to provide each other with ongoing support and resources. These links could be identified during the planning/induction workshop by Office for Youth and possibly supported throughout the funding period by the Department for Planning and Community Development Local Teams.

## Conclusion

The Feedback and Review project for the first round of the Positive Body Image Small Grants provided invaluable insight into the experience of organisations in their delivery of an assortment of projects with a wide range of target audiences and varied activities. In every funded project, young people were engaged and developed a better understanding of positive body image, the factors that influence body image and how to build personal self esteem and confidence.

The organisations involved were extremely motivated to address the issue of body image in young people and actively contribute to the feedback and review process in order to network and learn from others, strengthen the delivery of the program and improve the overall awareness of the issue in the community.

The Feedback and Review process was a valuable exercise for the Office for Youth to strengthen relationships with the funded organisations and openly recognising the knowledge and contribution the community makes to achieve important outcomes for young people. Organisations genuinely appreciated the opportunity to discuss their successes and challenges in project delivery to someone in person as opposed to a reporting writing format.

In conclusion, the Positive Body Image Small Grants achieved significant success in its first year of implementation; however there are continuous improvement opportunities in all areas of program delivery that could enhance the outcomes for organisations in the promotion of positive body image to young people.