

Sample Summary for Ideas Fund Grant Application

Quality of Life as a Lens for Training & Evaluating Knowledge Development in Community Disability Services

Background

Quality of Life is emerging as a central, guiding construct in the evaluation of outcomes of community supports to people with developmental disabilities. It has long been evidenced in practice and in the literature that individuals with developmental disabilities experience severe challenges with respect to achieving the kinds of lives that the average citizen would expect for him or herself. The over-arching goal of supports to this population ought to be to work in ways that enhance life quality for service recipients.

Although this seems to be self-evident, there is a conspicuous absence of training protocols or packages for staff in our sector that focus clearly on Quality of Life as a guiding construct. This represents one of the most serious problems facing our sector today. The workforce in our sector is extremely diverse in terms of cultural, generational, and experiential demographics. Another critical factor in appreciating the importance of QOL as a guiding construct in the training of sector staff is the power it holds to unite an incredibly diverse workforce with a clear vision of what Quality of Life means and how it can guide both their understanding of the people they support and the critical evaluation of their own support work.

Objective(s)

The intention of this project is to develop, deliver, and evaluate the learning outcomes of a 2 day *Train the Trainer* course on Quality of Life.

Approach

The conceptual model developed by the University of Toronto's Quality of Life Research Unit will be the predominant model utilized. This model defines Quality of Life as "the degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his or her life", and constructs QOL out of three broad domains – Being, Belonging, and Becoming. Please see <http://www.utoronto.ca/qol/> for further information about this model. We have chosen this particular model over some others, because of its holistic and broad perspective, and the intuitive understanding of it that people from many walks of life seem to demonstrate when exposed to it.

Training will be delivered to a group of key leaders (i.e., all staff in formal leadership roles = managers and team leaders) within our organization using powerful images that illuminate both the underlying theory and the practice approaches that roll out from that theory, conversational approaches that acknowledge varying literacy levels and the oral tradition of many cultures, and will engage and value the individual and collective wisdom that exists in our diverse workforce.

Initial measurement will look at the learning outcomes of the newly trained trainers. The outcomes we will be looking for relate to understanding the QOL construct and how to implement support strategies that promote enhanced QOL for our clientele. Throughout the term of the project we will be refining our ideas and sharing our learning with the partners identified

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below. Participants will leave with a comprehensive package of training material that will equip them to provide the training to the direct care support staff that report up to them.

Data collected will include content of guided conversations in focus groups, conducted pre and post training. We will also collect individual data through questionnaires that each participant will complete. The data will be examined for themes, and key learnings, and the results and recommendations will be compiled into a report. Among other ways we will employ and share the findings, we will bring the participants back together as a group and present to them.

Partners

Alberta Council of Disability Services

Grant MacEwan University, Disability Studies: Leadership & Community

Conclusions

At our organization, this training will become mandatory for personnel in leadership positions in the organization. Our hope is that the product we develop will be incorporated into the coursework at Grant MacEwan University and the On-Line Foundations Training available through ACDS. We will incorporate the recently developed Quality of Life Survey that is being used by Edmonton Region PDD to assist organizations with continuous improvement. Our hope is that this training will be found to support the work that has been done on this survey tool.

This work connects to the CRGI domain of Independent Living: Supports and Barriers as it focuses on supporting independent living for persons with developmental disabilities. We anticipate that the results from our project will inform areas for future research around how to best teach workers or students in disability services to support individuals to achieve better life quality. We also anticipate finding relevant knowledge in the area of supporting persons with disabilities to achieve quality of life indicators.