

An evaluation framework and evaluation tools for peer-based youth programs

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1 September 2010



Aims

1. Describe development of an evaluation framework and evaluation tools for peer-based youth programs using an action research approach
2. Reflect on the experiences of practitioners in a range of settings who have used the framework and tools
3. Discuss implications of findings

Contents

- What are peer-based programs?
- The case for improved evaluation
- Research participants and methodology
- Evaluation framework and tools
- Supporting theories and models
- Practitioners' experiences
- Where to next?

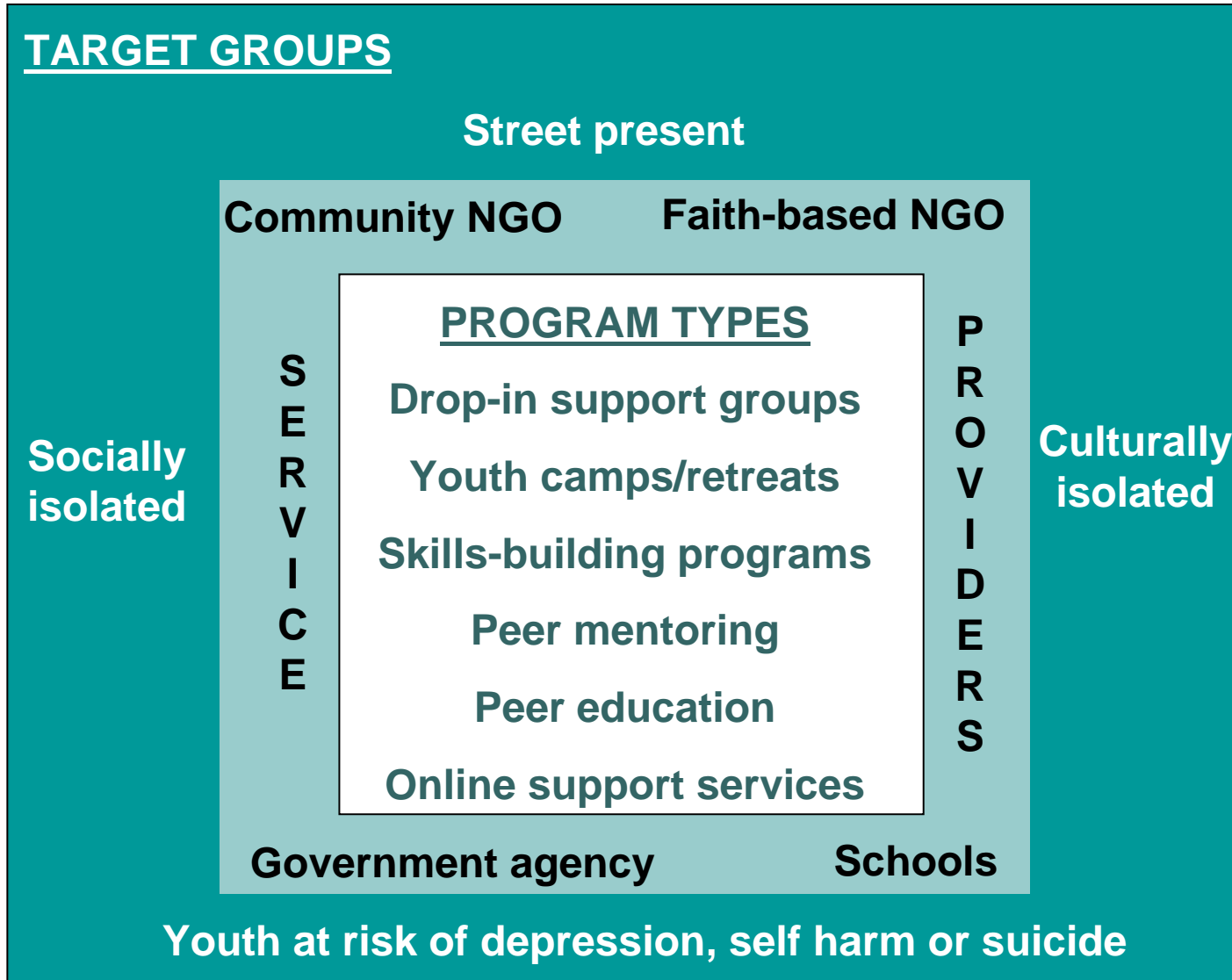
What are peer-based programs?

- Early intervention services
- Small-scale
- Hard to reach groups
- Active involvement of young people
- Use peer and social influence to deliver outcomes

*“If it wasn't for this program I
wouldn't be here”*

Program participant

Huge program diversity



The case for improved evaluation

Limited
evaluation
capacity



Barriers to
evaluation



Limited
evidence



Inadequate
funding

Evidence-based,
mainstream youth

Inputs/outputs,
non-experimental

Limited theory, unclear objectives, at risk youth,
high attrition, small numbers, ethical issues

Lack of evaluation skills, knowledge, tools and scarce resources

“We know we're doing something right ... we need to be able to say what and why”

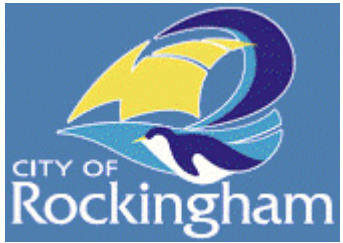
Youth service provider

Research questions

- How should peer-based programs be evaluated?
- What are realistic impacts and outcomes for peer-based programs?
- What should programs monitor?
- What evaluation approaches work in peer-based program settings?

Research participants

- 4 x Community NGOs
- 2 x Local government youth services
- 1 x TAFE
- 3 x research centres
- 12 x peer-based programs



Methodology

- Participatory action research
- Grounded in practice and theory
- Partnership and collaboration
 - Service providers
 - Research centres
 - Interest group (n=34)
 - Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia
 - Involvement of young people (n=75)

Project stages

2008

**STAGE 1: Environmental Audit
and Analysis of Literature**



**Conceptual model for evaluating peer-
based youth programs**

2009


**STAGE 2: Participatory Action
Research**



**Evaluation framework and evaluation
approaches for peer-based youth programs**

2010

**STAGE 3: Consolidation of
findings**



**Implications for policy, practice
and future research**

Key features of evaluation framework

- Provides a common language
- Planning and evaluation tool
- Trouble-shooting guide
- Field-tested
- Theory-based
- Based on common objectives for peer-based programs

Common program objectives

- Safe space
- Positive adult role models
- Increased skills and knowledge
- Increased social connectedness
- Positive self concept/raised self esteem
- Early intervention
- Improved confidence/social skills
- Optimism
- Improved help-seeking

Supporting theories and models

Most relevant theories and models	Other relevant theories and models
Social cognitive theory	Social integration theory
Social identity theory	Role theory
Diffusion of innovations	Hope theory
Alternative education model	Resilience theory
Attachment theory	Positive youth development
	Ecological theory
	Youth empowerment model

Components of evaluation framework

ATTRIBUTES OF YOUTH MOST AT RISK

Lonely or isolated; Abused or victimised; Poor help-seeking skills; Poor coping skills; Lack social skills; Risk taking; Lack positive adult or peer role models

MODERATING FACTORS

Personal; Equity; Connectedness; Other health promoting influences

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Funding; Host organisation; Community

Decoding the 'black box'

PEER-BASED YOUTH PROGRAM

**ENVIRONMENT
FACTORS**



**PEER GROUP
FACTORS**



Normative
socialisation



**PROGRAM
FACTORS**

Safe space e.g. boundary management; ethical practice;

Positive peer influences; peer support; group rules/norms; group cohesion; group dynamics; youth engagement

Strengths-based; positive role modeling; flexibility; youth friendly; youth participation

Program impacts and outcomes

SHORT TERM IMPACTS ON INDIVIDUAL

e.g. Increased social connectedness; Increased self esteem; Increased confidence; Improved social skills;

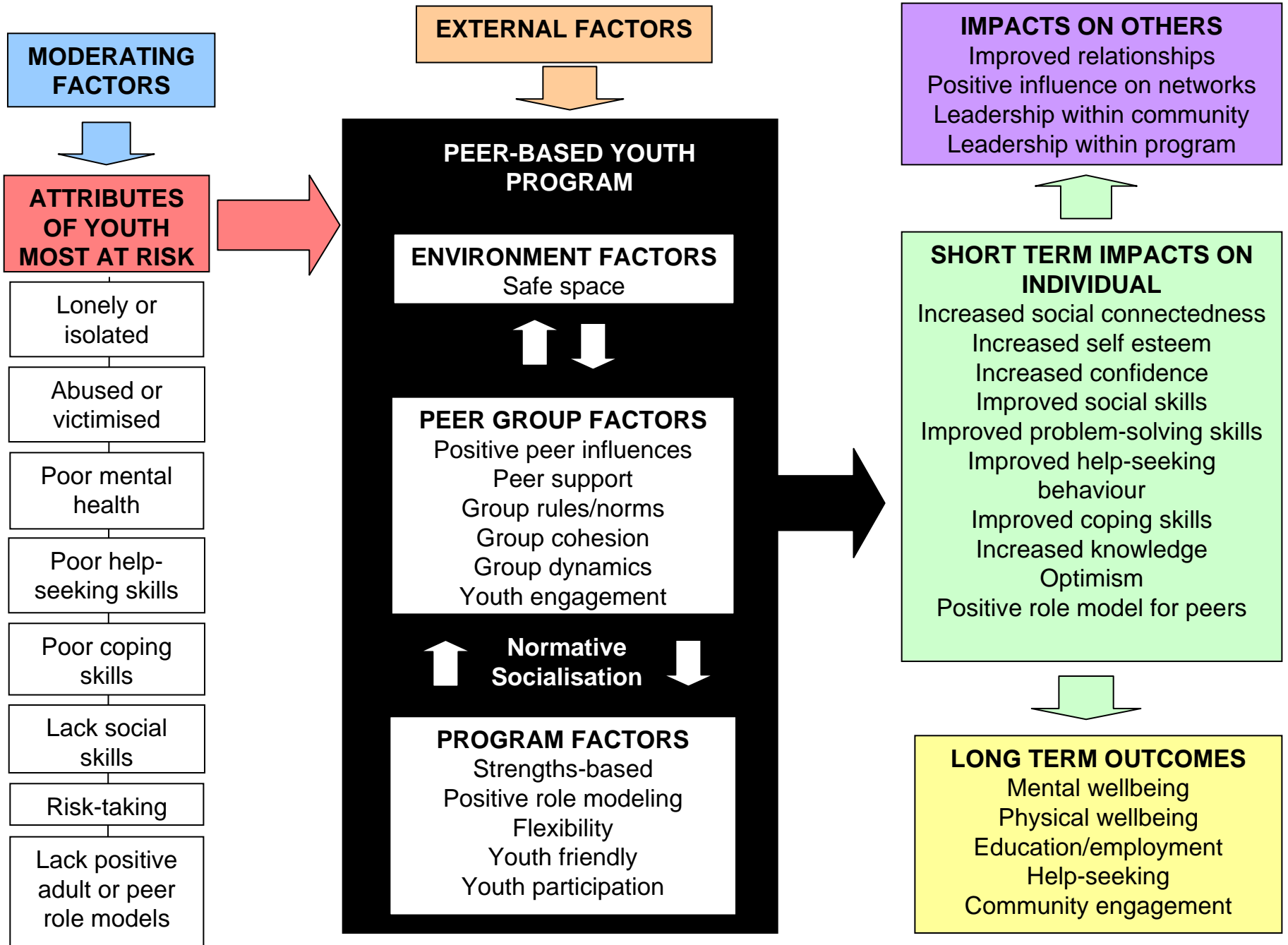
IMPACTS ON OTHERS

e.g. Positive influence on networks; Improved relationships

LONG TERM OUTCOMES

e.g. Mental wellbeing; Physical wellbeing; Help-seeking

Evaluation framework for peer-based youth programs



Detailed framework

Component	Description	Example Indicators
SHORT TERM IMPACTS ON INDIVIDUAL The immediate or short term changes seen in young people as a result of participating in the program		
Increased social connectedness		
Not feeling alone with issues	Young people are able to put perspective on similar or more critical issues. Young people become less self-focused and less isolated by interacting with their peers more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) - Young people engage in sport, leisure or social activities - Support from at least 1 close friend - Support from 2 or more non-family adults - Young people share coping strategies - Young people put perspective on similar or more critical issues - Young people are less self focused
Sense of belonging/ connectedness	Young people feel a sense of belonging and acceptance with other participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good communication skills - Assertive language and behaviour - Caring relationships with peers - Increased level of self care - Raised self esteem - Reduced risk behaviours - Young people show excitement and pride in group members' achievements - Unity/cohesiveness of group

Component

Example indicators

Description

Sub-component

Developing evaluation tools

- Existing tools search
 - 65 tools identified, 13 potentially suitable
- Qualitative and quantitative tools developed
- Three action research cycles
 - Cycle 1: 4 agencies testing 10 evaluation tools
 - Cycle 2: 3 agencies testing 13 evaluation tools
 - Cycle 3: 3 agencies testing evaluation framework
- Evaluation resources database

Action research questions

- Which types of evaluation tools are suitable for the program settings?
- Can the tools be used by young people?
- What time/resources/skills are needed by staff to use the tools?
- How useful is the data collected? How can it be used?
- What changes would we need to make to the tools to improve them?

Findings from cycle 1

- Difficulties with observation tools and individual assessment tools
- Implementation/data analysis requirements – key concern
- Customisation options desirable
- Online tools time efficient and appealing to youth
- Triangulation of data challenging with limited resources

Cycle 2 Case study: YPAVE



Action research at YPAVE

- Group artwork
- My support map
- What if...? scenarios
- Digital story

Group artwork



Reflections on YPAVE evaluation

- Chaotic environment – evaluation must be simple, quick, engaging
- Small numbers, access patterns differ, low literacy levels – hard to use survey tools
- Process of evaluation as important as results – engaging youth, setting clear objectives
- Sense of pride in doing things as a group – ownership of final product, increased sense of belonging

Findings from cycle 2

- Creative strategies can increase youth engagement and participation
- Less formal tools suit informal program context
- Language and literacy an issue
- Confidentiality and consent – key concerns
- Evaluation activities that can be integrated into program activities most successful
- Involvement of peer research assistants invaluable

Findings from cycle 3

Positives

Very comprehensive

Easy to navigate

Flexibility at organisation level

Good discussion tool for planning and reviewing programs

High credibility - developed with practitioners

Challenges

Some academic language

Lengthy document

Acceptance of framework by funding bodies and youth sector

Limited planning and evaluation skills within the sector

Under-resourced sector

Accessing the framework and tools



MY-PEER toolkit ^[1.0]

mypeer.org.au

a free online resource for
peer-based youth programs





You are here: My-Peer Toolkit » Tools

Tool Index

Uncategorized on March 27th, 2010 No Comments

- [Camp Evaluation Questionnaire](#)
- [Camp Feedback Tool](#)
- [Camp Participant Monitoring Tool](#)
- [Collaborator Feedback Tool](#)
- [Constructing a Program Logic Model](#)
- [Content Analysis Guide \(Online Settings\)](#)
- [Decision Tree for Selecting a Peer-Based Program](#)
- [Drop-in Session Log Sheet](#)
- [Evaluation Discussion Threads \(Online Settings\)](#)
- [Evaluation Framework](#)
- [Group Artwork](#)
- [Journal Writing Guide](#)
- [Long Term Outcomes Tool](#)
- [My Support Map](#)
- [Program Monitoring Tool](#)
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Search the My-Peer Toolkit

Search

Tags/Keywords

Activity **Cross-sectional**
Longitudinal
 Observation Online Qualitative
Quantitative Survey

Categories

Case Studies

Guides

Participant Evaluation Tools

Planning Tools

Program Evaluation Tools



MY-PEER USER GUIDE

toolkit™

WEEKLY MONITORING TOOL



Summary

The *Weekly Monitoring Tool* is designed to monitor the progress and development of each participant. Areas include communication and problem solving skills, confidence, self esteem, peer support, healthy relationships, knowledge, self efficacy, positive thinking and positive self concept.



Keywords

Observation tool
Cross sectional data (snapshot)
Longitudinal data (trend analysis)
Quantitative data (frequency data)
Monitoring
Reporting
Communication



Staff/Volunteer Use



Participant Evaluation



Resources

Paper-based
1-3 x staff members/volunteers
No training/support or external resources needed
No costs associated



Individual Activity



Time

Set up: N/A
Implementation and analysis: 15-30 min per session



Frequency of use

Ongoing (weekly)

Implications of findings

- Stronger funding submissions
- Increased evaluation capacity
- Increased evidence base
- Improved program sustainability

However...

- Capacity building challenging
 - high burnout of youth workers
 - lack of evaluation ‘culture’
- Action research needs to continue
- Other applications of framework and tools still to be understood
- Lack of standardised outcome measures

Reflections on action research

- Flexibility is key
- Educational
- Morale boosting
- Led by practice not research – increased ownership, potentially longer timeframes
- Very difficult to write up!

Where to next?

Usability

**Further
testing**

Advocacy

**Standard
measures**

Thank you

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