

Addressing Mental Health



Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Men



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Project Summary

- Trained twelve volunteers in principles of coaching that is based in compassion, trauma, and gender-informed practice.
- Recruited seven new volunteers for our coaching program, developed volunteer agreements and program specific documents necessary for ethical practice.
- Implemented a coaching program that provides personalized and structured one-on-one support for our clients.
- Integrate coaching program with our intake system and website to promote our program within our organization to our clients.

Reflections

During this project I discovered many strengths in myself. The first would be resilience. When I faced a big challenge of changing leadership and a delay in having a new executive director, I found ways to keep the program going and keep the volunteers engaged to continue with our organization. Second strength I found in myself was leadership skills. During the period where there was no executive director I rose to the occasion, stepping up to act as a leader. I guided and reassured the volunteers that the program will continue despite the delay. I planned meetings during this time to ensure they felt they were part of the team and were filled in on the progress.

The strengths I found in the community was compassion and patience. Although I initially had a few more volunteers who were interested in volunteering with us, not everyone ended up sticking through till the end. But the volunteers that did, they were extremely compassionate to the circumstances our organization was in and were understanding of any delays in the program implementation. The clients that were looking forward to the program were also very patient and offered words of encouragement and trust in the organization.

Community Impact

The program that has been implemented with the community grant will continue even after the grant ends. It has been planned that the program will be continued to be offered. I will also continue to remain supporting the program as the program coordinator in charge of the volunteer meetings, check-ins, and setting up intake of clients to be connected with one of our coaches. The volunteers that we trained using the grant will also all remain as volunteers for the coaching program.

Student Learning

My original learning objectives for the project were:

- By the end of week 6, recruit ten passionate volunteers who share our goals and provide adequate and effective training for the volunteers through a professional coach.
- By the end of week 5, create a firm guideline for the volunteers to follow during their role as a coach, collaborating with various team members who have previous experience.
- Throughout the program, support volunteers in their role through monthly discussion groups to allow for connection between the volunteers and gain support from each other.
- By the beginning of week 6, promote the new program during intake processes, reach out to previous clients who showed interest in one-on-one support, and create social media campaigns to endorse the program.
- By the end of week 20, create anonymous feedback forms for participants to share their experiences and progress through the program, incentivized through a prize draw of a gift card for participation.

Overall, I did fulfill my objectives just in a more delayed timeline due unexpected road bumps in the process.

My personal learning objectives, although not stated in my initial application, were to deliver these objectives while developing new skills and adapting skills I already had. Some new skills I wanted to learn were project coordination, grant funding management, and volunteer recruitment. Skills like project coordination I learned through trial and error during the implementation of my project. Other skills like funding management and recruitment, I was able to learn from meetings with the UBC grant managers and having a good mentor in the organization I was working with.

How I demonstrated the learning is that I was able to apply these skills throughout the project facing different and novel challenges. And overcoming these challenges, applying new skills I learned allowed me to successfully implement and integrate the program in the organization.

The main challenge I faced during this project was a change in leadership during the implementation stages which led to a massive delay in the timeline. The executive director I had been initially working with had resigned and the stake holders were looking for a new person to

fill this role. This took longer than expected and I was told to wait until the new executive director was hired to officially begin the programming. This was a significant roadblock as the volunteers that attended the training had been put on hold without a firm date on when they could officially begin volunteering. It was a difficult situation to be put in as some volunteers lost interest during this phase and decided to leave the organization. I tried my best to support the volunteers through consistent communication and updates and most volunteers stayed committed to the program until a new director was hired. I also organized for every other aspect of the program ready to go before the new director had been hired so the program could be implemented as soon as possible after they started their role. In the end, the program was able to be added into our organization with no issues when the new executive director was hired and moved smoothly due to the work I had done in advance.

I believe this experience has allowed me to learn and gain many valuable experiences for future projects and personal endeavours. One of the most valuable lessons I learned was becoming comfortable taking initiative. Having a supportive environment from the grant manager and organization's director allowed me to learn the necessary skills such as project coordination to take more initiatives in the future. This skill will prove to be useful in future professional endeavours to help me be more confident in taking up leadership roles and lead initiatives that I believe in while asking for support. This skill has also made me more passionate about community involvement and not fear applying for other grants to support different projects in the community.

Future of the Project

The coaching program developed using the grant will continue to be offered by the organization I collaborated with (Canadian Centre for Men and Families) and I will continue my involvement with the program by providing administrative support. After implementing the program into the organization's directory, clients showed great interest in the program, and we were forced to create a waiting list as our program was full. Due to this I am working with the executive director to recruit more volunteers for the program and facilitate a future training and onboarding of these new volunteers. Furthermore, after many discussions with current volunteers, we concluded that the program would also benefit from further specialized training in topics such as suicide prevention. These extra trainings will be offered in the future, the organization is currently trying to gather more information of what types of trainings would be most beneficial for everyone involved.