

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Community Organisations Success

Dr Michael Houlbrook and Associate Professor Rosemary Leonard from the Social Justice and Social Change Research Group, together with Western Sydney Community Forum (WSCF), have been awarded a UWS Research Partnership grant to identify and assess processes that contribute to the successes of small community organisations.

'While community organisations are expected to be accountable for the *outcomes* of their programs, there is increasing concerns that *processes* can be rendered invisible' says Dr Houlbrook. 'In many cases the significant aspect of a service is more about the relationships that are formed and the processes that build such relationships. Community development is as much about relationships and their formative processes as about "measurable", outcomes. Relationships are not easily accounted for and are less easy to pinpoint. This project aims to find ways of making such things visible.'

This research will involve staff, volunteers and clients of four 'small' community managed organisations in Greater Western Sydney. The research team will document a day-in-the-life of the community organisation through observation, short interviews and photographic images of participants. Staff or volunteers from the organisation will be invited to engage in a more in-depth interview as to why and how they are involved in the organisation. Staff will be trained to identify, evaluate and record processes. Regular providers of services will be asked to record (via voice recorder and voice recognition software) the events of the day occurring in community organisations over a space of two weeks.



The outcomes of this research will assist not-for-profit and non-government organisations to better identify the strengths of their grassroots support systems, their community work and their advocacy role. In an age where larger organisations are often more effective in gaining tenders, small organisations need a body of evidence to demonstrate that they have particular attributes that strengthen their value to local communities and individuals.

Project Title: UWS WSCF SONG – Identifying, evaluating and recording the importance of process in small community organisation
Funding has been set at: \$15,000
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For more information on UWS Research Partnership Program, check:
http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/funding_opportunities/internal_research_grants