

Issue # 1, March 2004

The LDC Newsletter

Welcome to the first issue of the LDC Quarterly, an electronic newsletter emailed quarterly to individuals and organizations on our email list. The newsletter provides information about LDC, projects we are working on and discusses issues affecting organisation management and service provision.

We have many subjects that we hope to write about over the coming months and in the future such as: *working with consultants, change management approaches, research and evaluation methods, community consultation processes, financial management issues for small community organizations, services for community members with diverse cultural backgrounds, and management models and practices*, to name a few. If you are interested in a particular subject that you would like us to discuss, please email us. If we consider that we can competently discuss the subject then we will provide an article in the newsletter.



Liz Dimitriadis
LDC Director

This Issue

This first issue of the LDC newsletter reports on a component of a project currently being completed by LDC for Leisure Link Up (Options Vic), and its application in addressing community participation and engagement issues. We discuss how we have designed and developed a Microsoft Access database and used it as a tool for managing large amounts of quantitative and qualitative data to research community participation issues.

Community Participation and Engagement

Community participation and community engagement have increasingly become areas of interest for many community support services and organizations. For example, the Victorian Local Government Association's and the Municipal Association of Victoria's Code of Good Governance states that

Local governments must seek community understanding and involvement in governance through effective communication with their communities. They must disseminate information, seek input, stimulate debate and be an effective advocate for their communities. They have a responsibility to develop a range of

communication and participation methods.

Similar directives are also promoted by Federal and State government departments concerned with community health and well being. Engaging local communities so that they can participate meaningfully in shaping their community, including the development of support services, social networks, facilities and infrastructure, can be very challenging. Reaching and involving community members who are marginalised, isolated or members of minority groups, can be even more difficult.

Consulting to government departments and community support services, we understand that comprehensive discussion about community participation and engagement needs to be much more detailed than we can present in this issue. For this issue we will report on an evolving tool that we are using to obtain a snapshot of community participation issues affecting people with a disability in sport, leisure and recreation activities.

The Leisure Link Up (Options Vic) Project

Leisure Link Up (Options Vic) applies the aims of the Access for All Abilities (AAA) Program within the Cities of Greater Dandenong,

Kingston, Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula Shire. The organization has had a history of linking people with a disability into mainstream sport and recreation activities and has developed a stronger emphasis over time on building relationships and facilitating partnerships within the sport and recreation industry.

Leisure Link Up (Options Vic) commissioned LDC in December 2003 to undertake research and develop a five-year strategic plan. The intention of the plan is for Leisure Link Up (Options Vic) and the Cities of Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Kingston and the Mornington Peninsula Shire, to build community partnerships and to identify resources and action required for achieving increased participation in sport and recreation for people with disabilities.

The Database

To enable us to obtain a snapshot of 'the situation' of people with a disability taking part in sport, leisure and recreation activities, one of our strategies was to design and develop a database using Microsoft Access that would manage information about clubs and sport and recreation providers, that we could then analyse. The database we designed has the following

information obtained from surveying clubs/providers:

1. contact details of providers/clubs
2. details about their individual programs/activities
3. a profile of the participants/members, including people with a disability
4. information about how the programs/activities can cater for people with a disability
5. support and resources needed to facilitate the involvement of more people with a disability
6. identified issues that prevent or make it difficult for people with a disability to participate
7. experiences that clubs/providers have had with people with a disability
8. initiatives by providers/clubs for including people with a disability
9. ideas and suggestions about what could be done to enable people with a disability to become involved

The database has been designed to generate cross tabulated field reports for each local government area. Supported also by community consultations, the database enables us to provide an analysis that includes quantitative and qualitative dimensions and a snapshot of:

- (a) how people with a disability are participating in local activities
- (b) how clubs/providers are responding to people with a disability

In this way the database is used as one of the tools that assist us to monitor the participation of people with a disability in community sport, recreation and leisure activities.

The project team

This project is due to be completed end of May 2004. Our project team includes a group of multitalented individuals.

Liz Dimitriadis

B.A. Grad. Dip. Bus. (Org. Change & Dev)., M.B.M (Research)

Liz is the Director of LDC and the Project Manager for this project. Liz has over 20 years experience in the human services sector and has consulted to government departments and human service organisations for over 10 years.

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Judith Freidin

B.Com., B.A (Honours)., M.Ed

Judith is a skilled social researcher and financial analyst. Judith has undertaken analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, community consultations and financial organisational evaluations on a number of consultancies.

Greg Fatouros

Dip. Bus. (Computer Programming)

Greg has extensive experience in the development of databases. He has developed tailored databases for corporations and community sector projects.

Mark Lyall

B.A., Dip. Film & T.V., Grad. Dip. Film & T.V

Mark works as a research assistant and is currently a PhD candidate in media studies as Latrobe University.

Judith Freidin
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financial analyst,
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The next issue of the LDC Quarterly will be distributed late June 2004.

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