Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women Projects

**Family Violence/Gender Equity eLearning Module**

**Port Phillip City Council**

**Project Process:**

The City of Port Phillip was the lead Council for this project. This work was undertaken by Natasha Moshinsky, the Community Health and Development (Family Violence) Project Officer at the City of Port Phillip. Her role was to coordinate and chair meetings, document the storyboard in conjunction with the project working group, liaise with Liberate ELearning (the digital provider), and the project working group, oversee the budget, liaise with the MAV and ensure the project timelines are kept on track. This role required a commitment of approximately 2 days per week.

The project working group comprised of all participating Councils, Women’s Health in the South East and the Southern Metropolitan Primary Care Partnership (SMPCP). Meetings were held to identify and engage a suitable digital design provider and develop aims and objectives of the module. This included developing a story board sequence for the module with specific themes, data and information that should be included. The working group also reviewed the content, design and functionality of the eLearning module and explored consultation strategies and evaluation methods. Meetings were held regularly with a strict timeline based on the different developmental stages of the module (i.e. screen design layout, storyboard, and review of module). Decisions were made via an in-depth discussion on key issues and consensus by majority. Some meetings also included teleconferencing with the digital provider (Liberate eLearning) in order to ensure that the working group had opportunities to relay their ideas directly to the design team.

The project working group were required to review content prior to each meeting (distributed via email) which was then discussed during meetings. Some decisions and correspondence also occurred electronically.

Several Councils and the SMPCP also agreed to contribute additional funds to the project should this be required.

**Project achievements and successes:**

This project has generated a number of key achievements. This includes strengthened partnerships between all project partners, including the working group as well as the Southern Metropolitan Primary Care Partnership who has received regular updates throughout the planning process. These relationships will improve the implementation phase of the project as the module has received considerable exposure to a range of partners through regular updates, promotion and engagement opportunities.

The benefits of working with multiple partners on the project were the sharing of a broad range of ideas, viewpoints and knowledge. This provided depth to the work that has increased its application to a number of different audiences. At times it was challenging engaging all partners to provide feedback as the timelines for the project were extremely tight. Email correspondence and regular meetings were used as methods to increase opportunities for input from all partners, despite restrictive deadlines.

The eLearning module has also provided a platform to advocate to senior leadership to incorporate PVAW work in to Council business. Participating Councils and partners on the project working group have held discussions with the Executive Leadership Teams throughout the development process to keep them up to date and on board with the roll out of the module. This has not only increased exposure of the module but has also cemented PVAW as being a priority area that Executive Leadership are committed to actioning.

The eLearning module has also opened up conversations with Council Organisational Development teams through reinforcing the importance of all staff having strong foundation knowledge on gender equity and family violence. It has also highlighted the role that a broad range of Council departments can have in either preventing or responding to family violence through applying a gendered lens to their core business. This engagement been advantageous as these teams are in an optimal position to ensure that the module is embedded across the organisation.

The eLearning module has also raised opportunities for its application to settings outside of local government. Promotion of the module has led to discussions about its application in neighbourhood houses, community facilities and community grants programs. There is also scope for it to be used and adapted for interstate audiences as well as the corporate sector.

Applying the module to broader settings could provide some challenges however, as some of the content is more aligned to a Victorian local government setting. These challenges have been overcome through adopting principles that can be applied to many workplaces and case studies that are based in both government and non-government settings.

**Project challenges and issues:**

The biggest challenge for this project was operating in a tight timeline. This was largely due to the nature of the project as building the module had several key milestones that needed to be achieved in a timely and sequential manner. The technical nature of the work also meant that we were waiting for edits and production to occur externally and were therefore not in control of when this would happen. The working group were asked to review each stage of the process in a short time frame which often put pressure on the group to respond quickly. There were times when members were not able to respond to these deadlines due to having competing commitments and not enough time. This was anticipated from the outset as being a challenge as the digital design company did present us with a timeline in advance. The lead Council worked closely with the design company to create more realistic timelines that would enable the project working group to have more time to review the content. An extension for the delivery of the final eLearning module was also sought from the MAV in order to allow more time for consultation and tweaking of the module. This has ensured the quality of the final product has not been compromised and is aligned to the working group’s vision.

These short timelines also restricted opportunities for detailed engagement with management teams across Council in the lead up to the roll out of the module. It would have been useful to spend more time with these teams to promote the module and brief them on the advantages of their staff participating in the early phases of the project. This work can, however be done after the module has been finalised rather than in the lead up to its release. If done comprehensively this will still produce the same impact and level of engagement resulting in effective staff engagement.

A period of pre testing with the target audience to ascertain existing knowledge and attitudes towards family violence would have also added value to the project. This was not possible due to the short project timelines.

**Advice for other councils:**

Allow plenty of time for revisions as whilst the content may be straight forward the way it is represented visually can alter its impact and meaning. Several test runs of the module are required in order to ensure that the technical components not only work but also flow and make sense.

 Engage and promote the module prior to its development in order to build momentum and gather feedback from a range of stakeholders. This includes consulting with key stakeholders prior to developing the module in order to assess level of knowledge and attitudes towards family violence and gender equality. This can provide you with valuable information that can inform the content of the module and ensure that it is relevant to it’s audience. The tight timelines for this project meant that pre development consultation was not possible.

Allocate time to promote the eLearning module to Councillors, Executive Leadership and Management teams to promote ownership early on in the development of the module. Ensure that a comprehensive communications plan is in place that targets key stakeholders and sells the module as an important element of staff’s professional development.

Ensure that the module is relatable and engaging. Appeal to an individual’s real life experience rather than just a technical overview of key concepts relating to gender equality and family violence. We attempted to achieve this through providing case studies based on real life events and reported experiences of staff. It is important to reflect the voice of a diverse range of staff through the story you present in the module. The more people can identify with the issues, the more likely they will be able to engage more fully in the content.