Task 1

Handout 1: What is Networking?

Networking is a process of forming relationships through our work. Networking is a deliberate process of establishing and consolidating relationships that can assist us in our work with clients and in our work of ensuring that the service agency we work for achieves its vision and goals.

Networking can be either formal or informal. We can network with people within our organisation or those who work with other organisations and that we meet in the course of our work.

Task 1

Handout 2: The Opportunities Found in Networking

There are many positive opportunities for the community service worker who is committed to networking. For example

- Networking assists workers to exchange information about new services, new developments in established services and changes in government policy. It helps to reduce service duplication.

- Networking also assists in the professional development of workers. By offering opportunities to debrief around current practice and also to assist in the reduction of work related stress.

- Networking provides the opportunity to meet with a range of different workers who may provide role models and new ideas for best practice.

Task 1

Handout 3: Formal and Informal Networks

Formal Networks

Formal Networks include our professional relationships with colleagues, within our agency or our inter-agency network. It also includes relationships with representatives from other organisations who are stakeholders in the work of our service agency.
These include government bureaucrats, referring agencies and other professionals that we meet at inter-agency and other meetings.

**Informal Networks**

Informal Networks are those relationships which are formed through our work contacts but do not have a direct relationship to our work. The people in this network might include former colleagues, people we have become friends through our work, and other people whose views and advice we value. The meetings with such people do not occur in a formal situation but rather in a social context. Such settings could include a chat over the phone, email messages, drinks after work, or coffee on weekends. Informal networks can be invaluable for our work practice. Examples are the isolated worker who can gain great support from a friend who is an experienced community service worker or the worker moving into new areas of community service work who can gain a lot from talking with a friend who has worked in that area for years.

Of course formal and informal networks can overlap as people who work together become friends and make contact after work. These relationships are sustained even after people move to other positions in different agencies. Often workers who are helping colleagues to find external supervisors or nominating people for positions on management committees will recommend friends who they have worked with and who they trust and respect.

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**Task 1**

**Handout 4: What is an Interagency**

Interagencies are formal meetings of community services with common interests. They may meet monthly or less frequently throughout the year. These groups can take different forms including:

1. **Local information Exchanges.**
   These exchanges aim to inform members of new development, meetings will often include a program of guest speakers who discuss issues such as:
   
   - Local service initiatives
   - Changes in: government policy
   - government and non-government programs
   - legislation
   - funding arrangements

2. **Specialist Interagencies**
   This is where agencies who share a common target group meet to:
• Discuss their concerns
• Share information
• Plan collaborative activities

Examples of these interagencies include:

• Family Service Interagencies
• Child Protection Interagencies
• Disability Interagencies
• Mental Health Interagencies

3. Local Social Action Forums and/or Coalitions.
These forums/coalitions are formed when workers, community members and/or other groups share a common goal around social or political change. For example they may work together to prevent the closure of a service that assists their target group.

4. Peak Bodies
Plan a coordinated critique of government policy and represent and/or advocate the concerns of the community sector about state and federal economic, social and political issues; some examples include:

• Youth Affairs Council of Australia
• Australian Council of Social services
• Council for the Single Mother and her Child

Task 1

Handout 5: The Benefits of Developing Strong Networks
There are a number of benefits of developing and maintaining strong networks. These include:

• Opportunities to share information. For example, sharing information about new program developments, changes to current programs and emerging social and political issues in the local area, changes in government policy
• Developing an awareness of other available services in order to make appropriate referrals and to minimising duplication of services
• Mutual support during stressful periods
• More efficient use of resources. For example, pooling resources to share a staff development day or working in partnership to develop a new program that responds to a community need
• Identifying workers and agencies with specialist expertise and developing ways of sharing this expertise with a number of different agencies
• Sharing knowledge of the community and working in a co-ordinated way to develop new programs that respond effectively to the most significant needs of the area.

Task 1

Handout 6: Obstacles to Strong Networks

A number of different factors can prevent the development of strong networks. These can include:

1. Pressures of Work
Community sector workers can be tremendously busy. This means that networking can sometimes be seen as a luxury rather than a necessity. Busy staff may have little time to respond to requests from other services or attend interagency meetings.

2. Differences in Philosophy or Priorities
Where significant differences exist between services, these may discourage staff from initiating and maintaining contact, even where they have common interests.

3. Staff Changes
Where staff change frequently, it can be difficult to maintain effective links.

4. Distance from the Community
Some services, especially large ones, or those whose auspice is not a community based organisation, may remain distant from local issues and services.

5. Confusion About the Purpose of Networking
If employers or management committees aren’t clear about the importance and purpose of networking, they may feel attendance by staff at meetings that foster networking a waste of time. Their view may be that staff members should stay on the site of their program as much as possible and that the only time they are really working is when they are at their agency.
Handout 7: Ways of Encouraging Networking

Ways to encourage networking include;

- Attend formal networking opportunities such as inter-agencies.
- Target particular people with similar positions or interests and actively maintaining contact.
- Identify concrete benefits of networking in reports to management committees.
- Respect people’s differences, but look for common ground. In the process of working together, you may learn from the other party at the same time as they are learning from you.
- Locate formal meetings at the agencies where it is hardest for staff to leave their site.
- Take the initiative in contacting new staff.
- Any other forms of encouragement?

Handout 8: The Do’s and Don’ts of Networking

DO

- Carry a business card. Have at least 20 and keep additional cards in your bag, wallet, or car. This is a great way to ensure that people remember you and also know how to contact you
- Always keep your diary handy so if you are invited to other meetings or networking functions you can say yes or no immediately. This increases your ability to take advantage of the opportunities which may present themselves at these meetings
- Always carry a pen or two so that you can write down the details of new contacts
- Look out for people who are at their first networking meeting Try to make these people feel welcome the contact may prove to be a productive one for you and your agency
- Book and prepay for any functions you are going to attend. If you can’t attend send someone in your place or if this is not possible make sure phone and let the organisers know of your inability to attend
- Prepare a short introduction that clearly explain who you are, where you are from and what you’re hoping to gain from the network
- Turn off your mobile. If you are expecting an urgent call at least turn off the tone so that when the call comes through you can discreetly leave the room without disturbing others
• Do some research on the network meeting your attending – what is its history, its vision, its current activities
• Introduce yourself to strangers this is perfectly acceptable in a networking setting
• Attend some groups regularly so you develop a trusting relationship with workers from other organisations
• Arrive on time
• Make eye contact when talking to people and listen attentively
• Offer to help the meeting organiser
• Read the local paper and attend to state and national affairs It can be helpful to have extra things to talk to people about and it can also help you to establish if you share similar values and attitudes
• Move out of your comfort zone – don’t be afraid to speak up or contribute to the activities of the networking meeting

DON’T
• Monopolise the conversation – networking is about sharing ideas
• Don’t work the room – you don’t need to speak to everyone just ensure you have quality conversations with a few
• Don’t leave early unless you have to some of the best opportunities occur before the meeting and after it
• Don’t name drop its boring
• Don’t gossip – the sector is small and your words are likely to come back to haunt you
• If alcohol is served don’t drink too much it doesn’t look good and you can’t think as clearly
• Don’t boast about yourself or your organisation it can leave a negative impression
• Don’t bad mouth your service remember you are there to represent your organisation

Remember issues of confidentiality – it is important that you do not mention the names or any other identifying information about clients. Make sure you do not mention any critical information that should not go beyond your organisation.
Task 1  Introduction

Handout 9: The Structure of the Community Services Industry

Structure of the Community Services Industry

- **Services for People from CALD Backgrounds**
  - Migrant Resource Services
  - Interpreter services

- **LEGAL CORRECTIVE SERVICES**
  - Prisons
  - Courts
  - Police
  - Community Corrections
  - Community Service Orders

- **HEALTH SERVICES**
  - Hospitals
  - Community Health Centres
  - Women's Health Centres
  - Youth Health Centres

- **SOCIAL SECURITY SERVICES**
  - Centrelink

- **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**
  - Childcare Centres
  - Child Protection Services

- **FAMILY SERVICES**
  - State Govt Child Protection Agency
  - Family Support Services

- **AGED SERVICES**
  - HACC Services
  - Nursing Homes
  - Community Transport

- **GENERALIST COMMUNITY SERVICES**
  - Neighbourhood centres
  - Community Centres
  - Council Community Centres

- **YOUTH SERVICES**
  - Peak Organisations
  - Youth Centres
  - Refuges
  - Juvenile Justice

- **ABORIGINAL SERVICES**
  - Aboriginal Lands Council
  - Aboriginal Medical Services
  - Aboriginal Legal Services
  - ATSIC

- **ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUG SERVICES**
  - Detox
  - Rehabilitation
  - Methadone Program
Task 1

Handout 10: Getting to know the Community Services Industry

The broad range of Community Services provide a wide range of direct face-to-face services by:

- filling the gap in programs not met through government intervention
- carrying out government social welfare policies and programs.

Services may be targeted to a particular group of people. Some of these groups are:

- women
- men
- people with disabilities
- aged
- young people
- children
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- people of culturally and linguistically diverse background
- people with HIV/AIDS related conditions
- homosexual men and women
- low income earners
- rural dwellers

They may be identified by the type of service they provide. There are six broad areas of service delivery:

- family/child support
- social/home support
- community action/development
- residential accommodation
- community health
- labour market programs.

Within each of these areas, a range of programs would include (but are not limited to):

- **Family/child support.** The areas in this category would include:
  - child protection
  - pre-school and day care centres
  - vacation care
  - early childhood projects
  - childcare assistance for working parents
  - family and individual support
  - post-adoptive service
- **Social/home support.** The areas included in this category are:
  - community-based residential care
  - rural counsellors
  - assistance to the disabled
  - home and community care
  - disaster welfare services
  - financial counselling services
  - prison inmates aftercare
  - community transport
  - material assistance
  - meal on wheels.

- **Community action/development.** The following services are included under this heading
  - community legal centres
  - community development
  - community youth projects and adolescent support programs
  - juvenile justice services
  - family and community development strategy
  - assistance to the disabled
  - self help organisations
  - ethnic and multicultural services
  - regional development
  - leisure and recreational services

- **Housing/residential accommodation.** Services here include:
  - refuges
  - homeless persons support
  - mortgage and rent relief scheme
  - rent rebates for pensioners
  - community tenancy schemes
  - supported accommodation
  - hostels

- **Community health.** Areas under community health include:
  - health promotion and education
  - drug and alcohol services
  - self-help groups
  - services for Aboriginals
  - community health centres
  - community services for the psychiatrically ill
  - nursing homes

- **Labour market programs.** Areas under labour market programs include the following:
  - Workskill Australia
  - Skillshare
  - migrant employment and training schemes
- Start to Life
- vocational programs
- Aboriginal employment and training schemes
- out-placement and retraining assistance scheme
- employment services

Task 1

Handout 11: Community Services Industry Workforce

While there are many occupations in the community services industry, they fall into four main occupational groups:

- social workers and social scientists
- counsellors, psychologists, health workers
- community services
- pre-primary teachers and special education teachers.

Within these four groups there are a significant number of job titles. For example, in local council they are usually called community workers even though they may have a social worker background. Australia-wide, there are close to 85,000 people employed in these four occupations.

Task 1

Handout 12: Peak Organisations

The main coordinating bodies that represent workers from the different types of services are referred to as peak organisations. They relate directly to government and act as powerful lobby groups for change on behalf of their clients and workers. Currently in Australia there are over 500 peak organisations. Some of these include:

- NSWALC (NSW Aboriginal Lands Council)
- ATSIC (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission)
- ACOSS (Australian Council of Social Services)
- ACOTA (Australian Council on the Ageing)
- ECC (Ethnic Communities Council)
- NCOSS (NSW Council of Social Services).
ACOSS is perhaps the best known, with a wide membership of community based services across Australia. It undertakes studies of welfare needs, conducts seminars, informs the media, makes recommendations to relevant government funding bodies and in general has a high profile, with those in government recognising it as a community based leader.

Task 1 & 2

Handout 13: Consulting with others within the Community Services & Health Industry

What is a consultation?

A consultation is a process where the views of the community, stakeholders in your organisation, colleagues and others are actively sought. It is an opportunity for the community services network to talk about their needs as professional workers and the needs of their clients.

A consultation:

- Provides information
- Seeks the views and feedback of the community and others who are interested or affected by the work of your agency
- Helps to generate new ideas about solutions to community problems
- Helps to generate ideas about effective ways to help develop and empower the community
- Provides an opportunity for the community to have input into policies and programs that affect them prior to their design and implementation.

The Community Services & Health Industry is comprised of a diverse number of groups with different target groups, with different modes of delivery and service philosophies. Therefore if services are to network successfully within the sector effective consultation skills are needed.

Within the community services industry consultations occur in two ways:

- As a one-off activity where the industry, or part of the industry meet formally around a critical issue, such as the impact of the G.S.T. on low income families

- Provides information
• As an on-going part of the activities of an already established formal network. For example one of the roles of ACOSS is to represent the views of it’s members and in order to do this they must consult in an on-going way.

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Task 1 & 2

Handout 14: The Advantages of Consultations within the Community Services & Health Industry

A consultation should achieve a range of objectives that will assist in empowering the service you are working with or the network you belong to. These include:

• Informing community service professionals and interagency groups about current service needs, problems, expectations, and hopes
• Providing feedback on existing programs and services
• Developing a positive relationship within which creative and positive solutions to community and service delivery problems between services can be found
• Identifying community concerns and priorities for new services, programs, policies and political activities
• To assist in future service planning

Consultations can be seen as a cumbersome and difficult process, but increasingly government-funding providers are insisting upon the active participation of client and community groups in the planning of programs and services.

The Focus of a Consultation

An effective consultation should focus upon:

• The needs of the services being consulted
• Evaluating policies and programs which affect the services
• Planning for new services
• Ensuring that the consultation is accessible for services
• Ensuring the consultation is culturally appropriate
• Ensuring the consultation is respectful of different value systems within the community
Task 1 & 2

Handout 15: Methods of Consulting

To maximise participation any of the following methods or combination of methods can be used in a consultation:

- Public meetings which have been promoted and widely advertised
- Focus groups
- Consulting with formal or informal groups in the industry
- Tapping into existing networks within the community. For example, interagencies, schools, churches and clubs
- Questionnaires, surveys, submissions, case studies
- Phone-ins
- Community social days such as especially organised BBQs

Communication is the Key to a Successful Consultation

All consultations are dependent upon effective communication both within the consultation process and in promoting it. When planning a consultation consider the participants' knowledge, understanding and experience of the issue/s.

Make sure your processes are easy to follow and meaningful to the participants. At all times the worker must be sensitive to language issues, religion issues, gender issues, historical issues, and other sensitivities within the community.

A lack of attention to these will reduce the effectiveness of the consultation

Task 1 & 2

Handout 16: Considerations when Planning a Consultation

- Have you identified potential constraints such as historical issues or conflicts within the community?
• Is the venue suitable for a meeting? Is it comfortable? Is it accessible for people with disabilities? Is it accessible for elderly community members?
• Has the need for transport to the venue been identified and arranged?
• What are the seating arrangements? Are they flexible?
• Can participation be encouraged through personal contact?
• Have community elders been contacted?
• Have you organised a process for the meeting?
• Have you pre-planned your questions and information?
• Has the consultation been widely promoted?
• Have you considered ways to manage destructive or difficult community members?
• Have you organised childcare?
• Do you have clear and achievable timeframe?
• Do you have skilled and knowledgeable people to assist in facilitating the consultations?
• Advertise the consultation in plain English
• Any written material for the consultation must be in plain English
• Ensure that your agenda is transparent
• Provide participants with clear information about the purpose, its outcomes and the ways they can give you feedback on the consultation
• Ensure that mechanisms are in place to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of community members

Task 1 & 2

Handout 17: Maintaining the Interagency Network

1. Ensure that the group has a clear purpose
2. Ensure that the goals of the group respond to the needs of its members
3. Keep the meetings interesting for example by inviting guest speakers, organising meetings at different locations
4. Ensure that meetings occur at convenient times
5. Keep the content of the meetings relevant
6. Manage the time at meeting – workers do not have time to waste

7. Ensuring that all member groups have input into the vision, goals, values and
decision of the groupie all members feel they own the group

8. Finding a constructive way to resolve conflict

9. Ensuring that trust is developed and maintained in the group 10. establishing a
collective identify by sharing tasks and responsibilities and by establishing
group rituals

Task 2

Handout 18: Effective Interagencies

Characteristics of an effective interagency group

- Positive interdependence. This means the group members believe they sink or
  swim together.

- The group must meet regularly

- The interagency receives rewards for its efforts.

- Individual accountability. All members must be responsible for the activities
  of the groups and account for the work they do for and on behalf of the
  interagency.

- Social skills. Effective communication, good leadership, trust, efficient
  decision-making and conflict management skills are required for effective
  interagency or networking group

- The interagency group reflects upon and processes its activities

- All interagency members should take responsibility for ensuring that the
  interagency is working.

- All participating members should feel a sense of ownership of the interagency
  and its activities. They should not feel that the group is a front to push the
  ideas of a few member’s and their agencies.
Characteristics of an Ineffective interagency group

- Dwindling attendance at meetings
- Conflict within the group which becomes personal in its nature and is unable to be resolved
- The group is not achieving its goals
- Ineffective use of time
- Only a few members take responsibility for the interagency’s activities

Task 2

Handout 19: Managing the Interagency Meeting

Regular and interesting meetings are a vital part of building the interagency group. Most interagencies will perform as long as they have a purpose and as long as the group can see that they are succeeding in meeting their goals.

Meetings can occur at both the formal and informal levels. It is important to be aware that beside the agreed agenda there will also be hidden agendas. These are the personal wishes and needs of individual workers and their agencies. The hidden agendas develop because of the dynamics in relationships and conflicts with one another, struggles for power, and differences in beliefs, values and culture are inevitable when people work together.

Listening skills are the keys to good communication. Good meetings exemplify this. In effective meetings instead of looking for what is wrong with others’ ideas, people listen for the positives and build and support ideas. As a consequence everyone feels involved and committed values. The key skill involved in dealing with these aspects in the interagency group is to listen and acknowledge them, and to understand.

Prior to meetings it is important to:

- Clarify purpose and agenda
- Inform and discuss issues with all involved
- Ensure that all members have the opportunity to contribute to the agenda

During meetings it is important to

- Stay on task
- Share information
• Get information using questions
• Support/build on proposals
• Acknowledge others’ ideas by summarising and reflecting
• Use a problem-solving process to aid decision making
• Respect and acknowledge different perspectives don’t condemn or judge
• Be aware of hidden agendas and power-plays
• Remember the context of the meeting, ie:
  o Why are we here?
  o What is the purpose?
  o The options that are available to solve problems
  o Planning for action, not more planning! It is not enough for the group to make a decision. The group must also take action on that decision and a member of the interagency needs to take responsibility for this.

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**Task 2**

**Handout 20: Managing Difficult Behaviour at Meetings**

**Negative behaviour: rambling, domineering, side conversations**

• Be firm but friendly
• Use group to deal with awkward people

**Conflict**

• Confirm agreements, clarify areas of disagreement
• Break conflicts down, aim for consensus if not total agreement
• Use influencing/ assertiveness/ negotiating skills

**When an interagency is struggling to achieve its goals and maintain membership it is time to consider:**

• If the group should be closed; or
• If the group should reconsider its vision, goals, leadership and decision making processes.

In some instances a careful review of what the interagency does and why it does it can help to rejuvenate interest in the network group. It can also ensure that the network is working for its members and not for an agenda which is not relevant to the member’s needs.
General

- Allocate roles, timekeeper, scribe etc
- Summarise continuously
- Record all decisions
- Have action point

Task 2

Handout 21: The Action Reflection Model

When working collaboratively with others it is useful to have a model that will assist you to not only work well with others but also to learn from those experiences so that your work continually improves. One such model used a great deal in the community services industry is the ACTION RESEARCH/ACTION REFLECTION MODEL.

This way of working emphasises the need for the ‘best practice’ worker to organise all the information that comes to them in the course of networking and other community sector activities in a systematic way to improve their work. It emphasises turning routine tasks into professional development and improved work practice opportunities. It emphasises using everyday events in the their work program for effective and reflective practice.

Action research/reflection is about working with others. It is about including the people in your network in your activities to find out about what the community needs and how these needs can best be met.
One way of thinking about the model is:

Key Points about the Action Research/Reflection Model

- action research is about improving what you do by changing it and learning from the consequences of the change
- action research is participatory; it is through research that people work toward improving their own practice
- action research is a self - reflective spiral; a spiral of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically) and then re-planning; re-planning should refine and improve the plans of the previous cycle
- action research is collaborative; it involves all responsible for the action in improving it, widening the collaborative group from those most directly involved to as many as possible of those affected by the practices concerned
- action research requires a worker to commit to networking and to working towards collaborative rather than competitive activities with other workers and their agencies
- action research is a learning opportunity where workers are open to the feedback and ideas of other this feedback is used to improve the quality of
their work and to help their agency achieve its goals

- action research is open minded about what counts as evidence or data - it involves keeping records which describe as accurately as possible what is happening and also analysing one's own judgements, reactions and impressions

- action research involves keeping a personal journal in which they reflect upon their practice and what they are learning

- action research is a political process because it involves us making changes that affect others

- action research starts small by working within your immediate work environment and then increasing the number of people in that network

- action research allows us to build records of our changing activities and practices

- action research allows us to give a reasoned justification of our work to others because we can show how the evidence we have gathered and the critical reflection we have done have helped us to create a developed, tested and critically examined reason for what we are doing.

**An Example of the Model in Action**

Imagine you are working as a family worker at the Carmen Poldis Centre. You have attend the family services interagency and at the last three meetings you have noticed that the issue of men’s groups was raised, you decide to do something about it so…..

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of the Action Reflection Cycle</th>
<th>What that Looks like in Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying a need for action on an issue</td>
<td>At the next interagency meeting you may raise the issue and after much discussion it is noted that the people at the meeting feel there is a need for men’s groups in your area and a sub committee is formed to look into this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Action on an issue</td>
<td>The sub committee meets and the plan is to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Find relevant statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Search current literature to discover if the stated need is based in fact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering information to enable the plan to be realised</td>
<td>1. A literature search is completed, including internet and journal search.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Statistics regarding men’s groups are raised from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Local Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Internet sites such as FACs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking action</td>
<td>Members of subcommittee complete tasks of searching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflecting on the Progress
Subcommittee report to the Interagency that their initial search has revealed that there is a need for men’s groups in the district.

Evaluating
The literature research revealed that men are requesting more services and that men’s groups are becoming a focus in many family services. However more work needs to be undertaken to decide what format the groups will take, how they will be run and where.

Identifying a need for action on an issue
There is a need for men’s groups has been shown now the issue is: what format the groups will take, how they will be run and where.

Planning for Action on an issue.
The subcommittee decide there is a need to consult with the potential clients and will do this by:

- Questionnaires
- Guided reflection groups

Task 2
Handout 22: Evaluation of Networks

Why is it Important to Evaluate?

There are good reasons why you should evaluate:

1. It enables you to run an interagency that meets its aims and objectives.
2. It helps you to find out if there is anything happening that you hadn’t planned for.
3. It means that you can make changes effectively. These changes are planned rather than reactive.
4. It helps you to see the positive things you’ve achieved as well as the problem areas
5. It gives a sense of direction and common purpose to the members of the network group
6. It can be used to support funding applications.
7. It provides a form of accountability.
Types Of Evaluation

The evaluation process can be simplified if it is separated into 2 components -

1. **Process**
2. **Impact**

These 2 evaluation processes should be considered in the planning stages of any network group. They should also correspond with the objectives, and strategies of the group. There are no prescribed methods for evaluation as it largely depends on the culture of the group itself. Some methods work better with some people than with others. For example if the workers in the interagency are really busy they probably will not have time to sit in long discussion about the good and bad things about the group A simple quick questionnaire might be better.

**Process Evaluation:**

Process looks at what the group does, its attendance, and what people think of the group.

This sort of evaluation provides specific information which will help you improve the format of the group’s activities. For this reason process evaluation has also been called ‘formative evaluation’.

Process evaluation examines whether or not you are performing the activities or strategies as planned. The results are used to guide the group’s meetings and may signal the need for modifications. This is the most basic level of evaluation and should be a regular feature of the group’s activities. Process evaluation considers things like the suitability of content, communication strategies, suitability of venue etc.

**Impact Evaluation:**

Impact evaluation is concerned with measuring if the group is achieving its objectives.

Impact evaluation examines whether or not the objectives of the network have been met and focuses on whether there has been change in the circumstances which led to the need for the interagency. For example if a disability network forum was established to lobby government about the nature of its policies and the impact this was having upon the clients of the workers an impact evaluation would be trying to see if the policies had changed as a result of their activities. The measurement of success would clearly be the change in policy to effect the client groups in a more positive way.

Measuring the effectiveness of what you do is dependent on having accurate information about the issues to be addressed. This may involve research before and after commencement of a particular activity by the networking group. This enables you to determine whether any changes have occurred due to your work. Hence, it is...
important to consider evaluation at the very beginning of the planning stages and to identify what other work is being done on that issue.

**Planning and Designing the Evaluation**

Before you undertake any evaluation there are a number of key questions that must be addressed.

1. **Who will be the evaluator?**
   - Which members of the networking Group will be involved? Will you bring someone from outside your group to assist with the evaluation?

2. **Who will be involved?**
   - All members or just some? This may depend upon the size of your network group and also the activities you are evaluating

3. **Who will use the evaluation (stakeholders) and for what purpose?**
   - Will the evaluation be used as a form of accountability?
   - Is the main purpose of the evaluation a means of directing change?

4. **At what stage will the activities of the network be evaluated?**
   - Will it be carried out at the completion of the activity or while the activity is occurring or on completion of the activity?

5. **What can and should be evaluated?**
   - Will it be:
     - The projects and programs
     - The management/organisation performance

6. **How to will the evaluation be conducted?**
   - Questionnaires
   - Informal feedback
   - Small group discussions
   - Large group discussions
   - Submissions from agencies and workers
   - Phone survey
   - Observation

Which model or technique you use will depend upon the culture of the group.