

BLACKTOWN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS FAMILY SERVICES (BADFS)

·BADFS·



Blacktown
Alcohol and other Drugs
Family Services

BADFS AS A MODEL OF A SMALL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION - *FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:* A Discussion and Promotion Paper

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Why do we need models of small NGOs?	4
The role of NGOs in achieving common goals	5
How is BADFS a model of a small NGO?	6
BADFS activities, achievements and as a model	6
BADFS context and current challenges	8
BADFS directions	9
BADFS' future resources requirements	10
Evaluation	11
What happens if we do not receive increased resources? .	11
What are we looking for?	12
Why would you invest your time, funds or other resources into BADFS activities?	13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper has been developed to present BADFS as a model of a small non-government organisation (NGO) whilst sharing BADFS' views on the value of and issues for small NGOs. BADFS is presented as one model. Other models are equally important and valid. We hope that BADFS is able to obtain funding to continue its good work whilst further developing the model. We also hope that a number of other small NGOs will be encouraged to also present themselves as models whilst increasing the community's understanding of their value and attract funds needed for themselves and other similar types of organisations.

The current political and economic environment values "large" over "small". In the private sector there are continual mergers with corporations growing and small operators struggling to survive. Similarly, in the community sector small NGOS are being forced to close down. This trend could result in a loss of diversity in services, loss of grassroots participation in decision making and loss of commitment to working towards common community goals. This seems to go against the express commitment of the government to strengthening communities and building capacity. In a climate of competition, it is a challenge for community sector organisations to work together to achieve common goals. In such a climate there is an urgent need for models of small NGOS that demonstrate their value. .

BADFS is a small NGO that demonstrates its value through its ability to address local issues for its identified target group as well as work collaboratively on common community goals at a local level whilst making links of state and national significance. BADFS demonstrates how values related to trust and co-operation can be put into action. BADFS has also demonstrated how small NGOs can initiate and co-ordinate large projects and how relationship and alcohol and other drug issues can be addressed using a social capital and community strengthening approach.

BADFS' achievements have taken place on an insecure and minimal funding base but also with passion and commitment from workers, management and other stakeholders. To both build on its achievements and further develop the model, BADFS requires funding and resources. Funding is required to support the development of clinical, community development and interagency activities. This report particularly emphasises the need to fund the co-ordination role that is often undervalued in government reporting and accountability requirements. This role is crucial for the maintenance and development of BADFS core activities and for the development and maintenance of a sustainable collaborative approach across services. This role clearly goes beyond internal management. It involves the development of trusting, co-operative relationships as well as advocacy that support the broader community and network of organisations as well BADFS target group.

INTRODUCTION

In the current climate, large organisations are becoming larger through takeovers and mergers and smaller operators are disappearing. The role and value of small NGOs does not seem to be fully recognised by many in the community sector, by governments and by the community in general. With “large” being valued over “small”, there is a need for models of small non-government organisations (NGOs) that demonstrate their value. This discussion paper introduces BADFS as a model of a small NGO that is innovative, collaborative and develops trusting, cooperative relationships at all levels of government and NGOs whilst addressing specific and common goals.

This Discussion paper describes BADFS’ activities, achievements and challenges in the current competitive and individualistic climate. It also describes future directions and requirements for BADFS to continue its work and develop itself as a model. BADFS has built a strong foundation of grassroots and high level networks, trust, knowledge and experience. It is vital that BADFS is supported to further build on this foundation and continue working with others in dynamic and innovative ways to address common community needs at the same time as addressing alcohol and other drug issues. We seek financial and/or other in-kind support from other services, government, NGOS and individuals and groups in the community.

Whilst learning about BADFS, you will be challenged to consider the need to invest in an organisation, not just a service. Co-ordination and administration are crucial roles for the organisation’s survival and development. BADFS and other small NGOs require funding for activities that develop the organisation and work in true collaboration with other organisations and community partners on common goals.

WHY DO WE NEED MODELS OF SMALL NGOs?

With many small NGOs struggling to survive, there is an urgent need for strategic action to support them. Large organisations are often described as efficient and effective through their economies of scale. There are definite benefits to large NGOs. However, small organisations are efficient and effective in different ways. The community sector needs a mix of large and small NGOs. There are many reasons why small organisations are valuable. Small organisations :

- are close to the community and are flexible in their approach to service planning and delivery. This flexibility is supported by decision-making processes in small organisations that could be described as more efficient and effective in comparison to bureaucratic decision-making processes necessary in large NGOs.
- have more autonomy than small units of large NGO. Small NGOs can independently determine their philosophies, policies and procedures to

suit changing client needs. They also have more freedom to advocate on issues for their client group and liaise with a range of bodies. In general, the co-ordinator of a small NGO can liaise with the media and senior bureaucrats to a greater extent than the coordinator of a small unit in a large NGO. This can give them greater ability to effect systemic change.

- collectively support the diversity of the community sector.
- collectively maintain grassroots participation and decision making, and democracy – they therefore support more even distribution of power in our society.

In the current climate small NGOs are undervalued. Many are closing down, amalgamating or being taken over with little action by government to stop this trend. Clearly models of small NGOs are required to demonstrate their value and challenge narrow definitions of effectiveness and efficiency.

THE ROLE OF NGOS IN ACHIEVING COMMON GOALS.

In considering the role and value of NGOs and how they differ to business, the following points need to be considered:

- Businesses are motivated by profit whilst the community sector organisations are not-for-profit and motivated to achieve outcomes that are for the common good for our communities.
- While businesses might well network with other organisations, they ultimately seek to achieve profit for their own organisation above all other goals. NGOs certainly network to support better outcomes for their clients. However, their networking also has a stronger focus on addressing common goals.
- At times it is in the interest of the community that the small NGO give time to support another NGO.
- NGOs need to prioritise their common goals as well as their individual organisations' goals. They may be involved in activities that involve designing and developing projects that become auspiced by another organisation. It is not always possible to fully acknowledge the NGOs that have been involved in supporting the development of these projects.
- NGOs may participate in systems advocacy. This takes time and is as valuable and sometimes more valuable long-term for our society than the individual work that is carried out with clients.

As NGOs need to emphasise common goals and do not operate for profit they should not necessarily operate in an individualistic way to the degree that occurs for businesses. It is vital that NGOs do not take the same organisational framework as those in the business sector. Organisational growth for its own sake should not be a goal. When new projects are being considered, organisations need to collectively consider which of them is best placed to auspice and lead the project. This is the practice of community development!

HOW IS BADFS A MODEL OF A SMALL NGO?

BADFS is both efficient and effective in addressing its specific and common goals. BADFS is a great example of the following:

- how a small NGO can lead large scale projects through collaboration, in effect BADFS demonstrates how small can be large.
- how a small NGO can influence big picture issues
- a social capital and community strengthening approach to addressing alcohol and other drug issues
- a way of developing trusting co-operative relationships at all levels
- development of high level links and sharing them at the grassroots level
- prioritising common goals as well as goals for BADFS specific target group

BADFS ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND AS A MODEL

BADFS is an **innovative small NGO**. We are certainly known for working with individuals, couples, **families and communities** to support them to address alcohol and other drug issues. Perhaps more important are our values and beliefs and how we go about our work. We are known for recognising that drug issues are complex and to seek solutions that **take the complexity into account** and develop strategies that involve **strengthening relationships**. We are also known for **working collaboratively** and developing **trust and co-operation** as we engage a range of stakeholders from the general community and from the community and private sectors.

BADFS addresses the issues from a **preventive perspective** for the community by providing direct services for individuals and families. BADFS facilitates community forums, **advocates** for family and substance use issues and also provides **counselling** for individuals and families. We also emphasise working with others on **common goals** and participating in systemic advocacy that influences **broader structural change** to enable more positive outcomes for the targeted groups.

BADFS has demonstrated:

- **its ability to work effectively with individuals and families affected by drug use.** Last year BADFS saw 154 new referrals and continued to provide a counselling service for families affected by alcohol and other drug issues. The counselling work includes addressing relationship conflict, domestic violence, child protection and a range of other issues. BADFS views drug abuse as a symptom of other problems as well as a problem in itself. An holistic approach is taken that recognises the many factors that influence drug use and abuse. There is strong liaison with other services to support clients' needs to be met. BADFS is recognised in the community for providing a flexible and unique service. Without BADFS, many clients would have nowhere to go.
- **its innovation at the community level in its lead agency role for the Bridges Project.** Bridges has been a high profile project that has

engaged young people, adults and organisations to work together to address alcohol and other drug issues in the Blacktown LGA. Bridges has influenced a culture of understanding of the complexity of drug issues and the importance of strengthening relationships and working together. Bridges held a series of forums with high community participation and provided opportunities for young people and adults to have a voice on drug issues. BADFS has co-ordinated Bridges in collaboration with Western Sydney Area Health Drug and Alcohol Services and Blacktown/Mt Druitt Community Health. A range of other organisations and community members have also been involved. At one stage over 100 people were involved in implementing community forums. Bridges developed a community and interagency team with a shared vision and commitment to strengthening communities in Blacktown to address drug issues. The project has been evaluated by Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology. This project has been used as a model for using social capital and community strengthening strategies for addressing alcohol and other drug issues. Recently UTS held a forum with showcasing Bridges as such a model with over 100 people attending. Many of those attending indicated that they would like to use Bridges as a model for addressing drug issues in their areas.

- **its innovation at structural and inter-organisational level is demonstrated by its activities related to VOICE for SONG.** BADFS has been instrumental in initiating and developing Voice for SONG – this is a coalition of small NGOs that raise awareness of the value of small NGOs and seek representation for small NGOs at local, regional, state and national levels. This group arose out of a forum that was held by BADFS. BADFS co-ordinated and was the main spokesperson for the group in its founding year. Initiation and co-ordination of Voice for SONG was also supported by Family Worker Training and Development Programme. Interest in this group continues to grow. The development of Voice for SONG has been critical for BADFS and other small organisations. At the same time, it has placed a strain on BADFS. The time BADFS has given to this group could have alternatively been used in fundraising for BADFS only. BADFS commitment to a co-operative approach and making a difference for all small organisations is demonstrated by the work BADFS has put into Voice for SONG.
- **its advocacy role for individuals, families and communities in relation to alcohol and other drug issues,** in its active lobbying of government to include policies that take into account relationships and families when addressing alcohol and other drug issues. Before family issues were identified in NSW Health's Strategic Plan, BADFS was holding forums raising awareness of the importance of including family in policy. BADFS has played its part in influencing changes in government policy.
- **its ability to work collaboratively and share its philosophy of co-operation, trust and strengthening relationships and the need to address common goals** in particular through its activities related to Bridges and Voice for SONG.

BADFS CONTEXT AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

BADFS was established in 1978. Over the years funding has been decreasing in real terms and with limited opportunities to increase recurrent or ongoing funding. BADFS has been in a cycle of decline evidenced by a gradual decrease in service hours. In addition, there has been an increased demand for accountability and reporting requirements.

The core funding now provides for less than 2 full-time equivalent workers. These service hours are in fact shared over three staff, two of whom have worked at BADFS for 10 years and have developed strong networks in the area.

Given that funding increments do not meet increased costs, existing staff are unsure about whether their hours will continue or decrease. In many organisations, such insecurity often leads staff to leave. BADFS is fortunate that the existing staff have decided to stay despite these conditions. New project funding both allows new and exciting, innovative and productive work to be done, but also enables existing staff to continue working without reducing their hours. However, new project work and funding is always temporary and when the project specific funding finishes, staff and the organisation return to an even worse predicament as core service hours are likely to have decreased further. Unless new funding is found soon, two of the staff will be reducing their hours.

As a small NGO BADFS has not had the profile, time or resources to be competitive in its fundraising efforts. Even when BADFS has been successful in its fundraising it has limited time to administer the funding from additional sources. There has been insufficient time to develop the organisation and staff have been constantly engaged in trying to maintain the service on steadily decreasing funds in real terms. In addition, we have also needed to meet new project funding requirements. While the new project funding supports the maintenance of staff hours, it does not address overall organisational development.

BADFS' response to some of these issues has been to raise awareness of the value and plight of all small organisations. BADFS chose to put effort into this activity rather than apply for funds for numerous projects, when BADFS' infrastructure would limit its ability to manage such projects. These activities have benefited other small organisations. In addition BADFS' profile has risen. BADFS has developed links at high levels and shared these links with local organisations.

In addition, the Bridges project strengthened community capacity and again raised BADFS' profile. Both these projects have demonstrated the value of a co-ordinator with existing strong networks in being funded to be involved in capacity building activities that work on common goals. The co-ordinators activities have also influenced "big picture" agendas. There are opportunities to build on these activities, if the value of this aspect of the Co-ordinator's role

is recognised as well as the need to adequately fund BADFS to maintain and develop itself as an organisation.

In recent months BADFS has received temporary (12 month) funding to increase its counselling service. However, the concerns described above remain. Co-ordination and administration hours are still not adequately covered from this funding even on a temporary basis.

BADFS innovative work has occurred from a very insecure funding base. BADFS is a vital organisation and needs to be supported to continue sharing its values related to trust and co-operation whilst doing innovative work. It is paramount that there is continued and increased funding to both support further development of BADFS as a model as well as to support its activities which are vital in their own right.

BADFS DIRECTIONS

BADFS seeks to continue progressing the activities described above and developing itself as a model.

BADFS aims to continue to do the following :-

1. Further development of the organisation as a model of a small NGO that works collaboratively and develops trusting, co-operative relationships. Continued participation in activities that support common goals.
2. Continue to strengthen the capacity of the organisation itself i.e. continue to develop skills of staff team and maintain and further develop other links with individuals and organisations to support BADFS mission and make “real changes” in the community.
3. Further develop clinical activities to provide a more comprehensive service. This service will involve interagency counselling and groupwork activities.
4. Widen community development approaches as core activities for BADFS.
5. Access recurrent funding for workers to strengthen families and community to address alcohol and other drug issues.
6. Co-ordination of 2nd stage of Bridges Project. This will be a community leadership programme that will develop a network of young people and adults to develop and share skills and influence the direction of the project. The community leaders will also engage others to work together to address drug issues.
7. Continued systemic advocacy. BADFS intends to continue to be involved in Voice for SONG activities as well as participate in relevant forums and carry other activities that advocate for the needs of BADFS’ target group.
8. Continue to identify needs of BADFS’ target group as well as common community needs and develop proposals and projects to address these needs.

BADFS' FUTURE RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Resources are required for BADFS:

- to be a viable independent service
- to develop the model described
- to be cost effective service

The co-ordinating role that involves capacity building and linking at all levels needs to be valued and funded appropriately. The level of administration required equally needs to be acknowledged and funded adequately. In addition, two counsellors are required to develop a quality service. Two counsellors can share skills as well as network with other services and provide interagency counselling and groupwork services. The employment of two counselors further ensures the availability of one counsellor at all times. The community development officer will provide broad and specific strategies that support this activity. Therefore, to achieve this, BADFS requires:

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|---------------------------------|----------|
| • Co-ordinator | 35 hours |
| • Administration Officer | 35 hours |
| • Counsellor/Network Counsellor | 35 hours |
| • Counsellor/Network Counsellor | 35 hours |
| • Community Development Officer | 35 hours |

An overview of the roles are:

Coordinator – Manage Staff, students and volunteers, Capacity Builder of BADFS and Interagency and Community, Systems Advocacy, Maintain, develop links and participate in forums and networks at local, regional, state and national levels, Public speaking, Advocacy, Share links with BADFS workers and other agencies.

Administration/Support and Telephone Officer – Bookkeeping, general administration, day-to-day funding and accountability requirements, IT maintenance and development, telephone Information, referral. Assist in report writing and submissions. Design and develop promotional material. Liaise with potential funding providers. Assist in management of students and volunteers.

Counsellor/Network Counsellor – Provide face-to-face and telephone counselling, groups and interagency clinical and groupwork. Client advocacy. Participate in interagency meetings to support skills sharing, identify common goals and develop new clinical projects. Assist in management of students and volunteers.

Community Development Officer – Needs analysis, resource development, support community leadership programs, Groupwork, Initiate and participate in interagency projects that address needs of target group and common goals. Assist in management of students and volunteers.

Given that existing funding provides for only 2 full time equivalent positions, an additional three positions are required. Certainly, these positions can be broken down into specific programs to suit funding providers. However, this document argues for funding – not just for discrete programs but for the organisation – for the development of a minimal infrastructure (specifically co-ordination and administration roles) that can be a base from which great things can occur.

BADFS is seeking funds for both the capacity building and advocacy role of the co-ordinator as well as adequate infrastructure primarily carried out by the administration officer. Our funders and government reporting requirements currently do not adequately acknowledge these roles. It is these roles that form the foundation of the innovative small NGO that forms trusting co-operative relationships and also influences issues for BADFS' target group as well as broader structural issues.

EVALUATION

This model and organisation needs to be evaluated according to its ability to address alcohol and other drug issues as well as its ability to address broader structural issues and operate in line with its values of trust and co-operation.

BADFS should not seek to “build an empire” and should be evaluated according to its ability to both address its specific organisational goals as well as support other groups and independent organisations and work on common goals.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE INCREASED RESOURCES?

If we do not find additional funding that acknowledges and supports co-ordination activities described above, then the organisation will no longer be able to afford to support a Coordinator performing the current role. If the Co-ordinator were to leave, then the service, with such a small funding base, is most likely best auspiced by another organization – leading to the demise of another small NGO. The achievements and momentum will have been lost.

The loss here would be that the networks, skills and experience that have been built over 10 years by the Co-ordinator. The significant role that the co-ordinator has played in Voice for SONG could no longer be continued. The particular skills that the co-ordinator brings to facilitating trusting co-operative relationships and advocating around these issues would be lost. The high level links developed by the Co-ordinator would not be able to be shared at the grassroots level.

The potential to further develop and evaluate the model described above would be lost.

In addition, if BADFS were auspiced by a large organisation, the independence of the organisation would be lost. BADFS would have to comply with policies of its auspicing organisation that may conflict with its pre-existing philosophies. Workers would lose much of their flexibility to adapt the service according to changing client needs. Some diversity and autonomy would be lost. Workers would need to go through the large NGOs hierarchy before it could represent its clients or organisational needs in the media and many other many forums. Much of the community development aspect of the service, systems advocacy and capacity building aspects of the service would be lost.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

There are many ways in which you can support BADFS.

a) Core Funding

- Funding for any of the positions described above or aspects of any of the positions.
- Funding for participation in activities that influence broader structural issues. E.g. funding to attend and or speak at meetings or conferences as a member of Voice for SONG.

b) Participation and “In-kind” contributions

- Equipment, venues, stationery etc
- Your skills and time
 - to support the development of this service and access the resources it needs
 - to carry out some of our primary activities
- Contacts that will support addressing any of these issues.

WHY WOULD YOU INVEST YOUR TIME, FUNDS OR OTHER RESOURCES INTO BADFS AND OUR ACTIVITIES?

- Your values match ours with regards to general ways of relating to individuals, groups and organisations. You too believe that trust, co-operation and working on common goals that are not-for-profit and are for the common good of our communities and society is the way forward above competition. And you want to support a model that fosters such values.
- Your values match ours with regard to the approach to addressing alcohol and other drug issues. You recognise that the way forward involves developing strategies that acknowledge the complexity of the issues and

the strengthening of relationships within and between individuals, families, groups, organizations and sectors.

- You too believe that small non-government, not-for profit organizations are important structures for our society. You recognize that our society needs to continue to have these independent structures that influence what happens. You can see that supporting BADFS as model will be supporting a model that is involved in and promotes local decision-making and grassroots democracy.
- You like the fact that BADFS' approach involves taking into account contextual issues - that is political, social and economic issues.
- You see BADFS as an example of a small NGO achieving things through collaborative partnerships. This can also be a model of a service from the perspective of social capital and working partnerships emanating from a small NGO. These partnerships have and will continue to include representatives and groups from the community, government and private sectors.
- You appreciate BADFS demonstrated skills and existing extensive networks and achievements and you see the potential to continue to achieve great things through continuing the collaborative activities.
- You recognise that BADFS already has strong links across sectors at all levels of government and non-government bodies. Whilst being grassroots and addressing the needs of the local community its links at regional, state and national levels allow it to influence representatives, processes, structures and policies at the wider levels
- Your issues and your organisation's issues will be taken on board as BADFS seeks to take into account individual needs of stakeholders at the same time as staying true to its values and working collaboratively.