



Final grant report: My Voice, My Ability, My Rights

Grant recipient	Community Media CHY Limited
Project manager	Becky Cole
Position	Station Manager
Law and Justice Foundation awarded amount	\$14,077.00
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1. Description of the project

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand it. What was the aim of the project, who was the intended audience and what strategies did you implement to achieve the aim?

The aim of the project was to educate and improve the knowledge of young people with a disability, their parents and the wider Coffs general public about legal issues relevant to people with a disability.

The target groups were:

- Young people with a disability aged 12- 35 for radio training. We anticipated training ten young people to develop and record the interviews.
- The students' parents and other parents of children with disabilities
- CHYFM listeners - 30,000 per month aged 12- 50 who listen to the station, including not for profit organisations who are unaware of what resources exist.

Our proposed strategy was to educate young people about their legal rights, advocacy and support networks available and the action that they can take when they have a legal problem via a series of face-to-face and phone interviews with legal, disability support and advocacy specialists.

2. The project – what happened?

How did the project come about?

CHYFM has been training students with a disability for the last six years. Over this time we have seen a major increase in the number of students with autism and/or having special needs.

Despite the rise, many students have limited knowledge on what support networks are available to them and even less on what their legal rights are, especially regarding employment since Coffs Harbour has a high rate of youth unemployment.

We also know from the Law and Justice Foundation's LAW Survey that while most young people do well, many face challenges as they move from childhood to adulthood, and that many young people experience legal problems. These legal problems can impact on their lives negatively. We believe that young people living with a disability are particularly vulnerable to experiencing legal problems, which, if unaddressed in a timely manner, can potentially lead to considerable adverse outcomes that can have a substantial impact on the everyday lives of those young people, and their families.

Additionally, there is a stigma of "shame" around disabilities so many students and their parents deliberately avoid seeking support for fear of being "found out" and ridiculed.

As a result, the lack of awareness about disability rights, advocacy and support resources available impacts the station directly, as CHYFM has very limited resources and receives no additional funding to support the many students with disabilities.

This project aimed to decrease the stigma of being "disabled" by empowering young people with a disability to ask questions of their own choosing to leaders in the field of disability law, advocacy and disability support, and share their findings with their parents and the general public.

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

Student recruitment: Initially the plan was for the Project Coordinator to recruit students to engage with the program through a range of channels, but they ended up finding sufficient participants through students with disabilities who already volunteered at the station, and a special needs unit at the local high school.

Community consultation/compiling training materials: The Project Coordinator liaised with many legal, advocacy and disability support organisations to lock in interview dates and times. Any print resources available were requested, as well as any potential questions the interviewee thought it useful to be asked. The Project Coordinator created and compiled training documents that related to each organisation so the students had a background and focus point for their interview questions.

The Intellectual Disability Rights Service, IDRS, sent CHY-FM a set of workbooks for the students to use in class regarding student rights. By the end of the few weeks in training, each student had increased their knowledge about their rights and felt quite comfortable asking questions as a result.

Basic radio interview training: The trainer conducted basic radio broadcasting and interview training at CHYFM studios. Students were trained to conduct on air interviews at an acceptable level for radio broadcast.

Weekly specialised training and recording of interviews and extra community consultation: Weekly ongoing training and interviews. Recap of interviewing techniques at the start of each lesson. Each week there was a class discussion about the organisation and the person the students were interviewing. Students were encouraged to brainstorm questions for the interviewees in advance, so the organisation had the opportunity to clarify targeted questions for CHYFM's listeners. Phone/face to face interviews were recorded at CHYFM studios.

Audio production, formatting interviews into podcasts and broadcasting on air: Audio production of audio clips was done in class at the end of each interview. All clips were compiled by the trainer to form a final audio file ready for broadcast. The files were then broadcast live in weekly episodes and formatted into a podcast.

Uploading podcasts online and sharing via CHYFM website and social media: The podcasts were broadcast on 104.1 CHYFM live on air weekly on Wednesdays at 9.30am from 9 August 2017. The podcasts were also uploaded to the website www.chyfm.com and shared via CHYFM's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Evaluation: Students were tested on their knowledge about disability and the law both before and after the project. Parents were also invited to share their knowledge before and after the project was run.

If grant materials were produced as part of the project:

How were they distributed?

The podcasts were distributed on air (on CHYFM), put on our website www.chyfm.com, they were shared via CHYFM's Facebook and Twitter pages and they were distributed from our peak broadcasting body CBAA's CRN Segments Round 5.

What was the extent of the distribution?

CHYFM has a listener reach of 18,972 people per week from Corindi in the North, to South West Rocks in the South and west to Dorrigo. We were lucky enough to have our peak broadcasting body Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA)'s Community Radio Network (CRN) segments promote national distribution of the podcasts to all community radio stations in Australia in July 2017. 4ZZZ who broadcast to the entire Brisbane area also played the segments in July 2017.

At the time of writing this report updates about the shows on CHYFM's Facebook page had 2072 likes.

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended? Did anything surprise you? Were there any unintended outcomes?

Yes, the implementation and outcomes did differ slightly from what was originally intended. The first difference with implementation was navigating the reading and writing level of the students with disabilities. Because we had many students with very low literacy skills, the training process took longer than anticipated. It also meant that we could only interview one guest per week, as it took a whole lesson to brainstorm and rehearse questions before interviewing the guest. This did work well as a training pattern once we took into consideration how long it would take to train the students.

The second difference was figuring out the length of podcasts. Because we didn't know what content we were going to be getting from our guests, we were flexible on the length of podcasts. When we applied to CRN to get national distribution however, we quickly found out they had very strict time restrictions for the podcasts so this influenced how we put the podcasts together. In retrospect it forced us to only use the best bits of each interview and made a far tighter and better put together series than if it had been open length.

We had a few surprising unintended outcomes – all positive!

We had an online listener from Sydney who has a son who was affected by some of the issues we raised in the podcasts. She was so impressed by what we were doing that she donated \$500 to the station as encouragement to keep up the good work!

Also, the literacy and confidence levels of the students was lovely to watch grow over the year. The students were initially terrified of coming up with questions of their own in the first few weeks, but by the end they were talking over each other trying to get their question in! Many would improvise questions on the spot during interviews as well, which demonstrated just how far they had come in improving their confidence and ability to speak with legal professionals.

One personal highlight for me was watching the students open up in regard to their struggles with bullying and depression when we were doing interviews for the mental health episode. One of the students was on the verge of being expelled for disruptive behaviour at school and up until this time had participated little in class. When we started sharing stories, she suddenly opened up about her struggles with depression and from that point on, was completely engaged in class for the remaining weeks. By the final week, she was asking questions along with the other students and fully participating in class.

One surprising outcome was having 4ZZZ in Brisbane contact us to share our podcasts over their digital channel and finally we were lucky enough to be nominated for a CBA Award for Community Participation due mainly to this project!

3. Evaluation

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

- Before and after training we asked questions to students about their knowledge of what legal organisations exist to help them and how confident they were in accessing help.
- Before the course started, we sent a questionnaire to parents to test their knowledge about what legal and advocacy organisations exist locally and nationally that they could access, and how confident they were in accessing help.

What data did you gather to answer your questions?

- At the start of the course students could only identify one or two legal organisations that they could access for help. By the end of the course, we retested the students and all students were aware of all the organisations as they had interviewed them! The students also mentioned that they felt more confident in approaching legal and advocacy representatives as a direct result of the program.
- From the replies we received, it turned out the parents' knowledge was only marginally higher than the students. Knowledge of local organisations was well known, but a lot of national organisations like People with Disability were completely unknown.
- Through the course, many parents would visit and remark on information that was presented by the interviewees during the weeks. Often, they would throw in questions of their own! By the end

of the course, students were bringing in questions submitted by their parents. This was wonderful because it demonstrated how the students were discussing the podcasts with their families before coming to class.

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

Yes, we did achieve our aim as students and parents had not only learned about the existence of many legal and advocacy organisations available to help them, but they learned a lot about their rights in the process.

What was interesting however, was watching how the students' confidence progressed during the year. In the first few weeks after initial training, all students were hesitant in coming up with questions and needed a lot of assistance. As the weeks progressed however they grew more vocal in not only coming up with questions but also asking impromptu questions to interviewees. By the end of the year it became normal to hear in-class bickering about who got to ask more questions!

An unexpected outcome was directly increasing the reading, writing and literacy levels of the students involved. At least half the students had severe difficulties in reading and writing and required a lot of coaching during the year. As the year progressed, you could hear a distinct difference in the vocal abilities of the students and many of the students required less help with writing questions as the project progressed.

The process of brainstorming and examining a new organisation every week meant we could do an in-depth study about what each organisation does and discuss issues that each organisation deals with. By conducting the interview straight after the brainstorming session, it allowed students to critically engage with each organisation and observe how each organisation would deal with the issues raised.

In terms of the content – one episode that really shocked a lot of the students was learning from Bonnie Millen from People with Disability that people with disabilities are still getting sterilised. It prompted a big debate in class with some students for (surprisingly!) and some against sterilisation. Also, employment and the NDIS were discussed a lot in class as a few of the students were entering senior years and were unsure of their rights.

One student with vision impairment had a passionate conversation with Dave Tune from Vision Australia regarding accessible ATMs at the local university. The follow up legal advice we received confirmed that universities do in fact have an obligation to provide accessible ATMs for the vision impaired. Our student learned he could in fact get help from the many organisations we interviewed should he wish to pursue the issue further.

The interview with Headspace was quite an emotional one as each student recounted their experience with bullying. One of the students was on the verge of being expelled from her school, and up until this point in the year had been unresponsive in class. During the student interview, she shared her struggle with depression and even recounted her harrowing experience of a friend's suicide. Her story left everyone (myself included) in tears. The next week in class, this student had become a changed student and actively participated in class – even coming up with impromptu questions during the guest interview! It was heartening to hear her dreams of how she wanted to

create and manage an accessible gym after graduating, since most health clubs in Coffs aren't actually set up to be wheelchair friendly.

Overall it was a very heartening experience training the students and watching their confidence bloom throughout the year.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

What is your conclusion?

I believe the program turned out to be even more successful than I ever thought possible! The students learned a lot about their rights, the partner organisations involved got to experience real youth engagement and listeners were treated to content you could not find anywhere else.

The fact that it has been shared nationally via the CRN is an additional bonus we had not counted on.

Interviewing legal and advocacy representatives has proven to be a wonderful way of educating young people about their rights and I believe the process used could easily be replicated in the future as a model for youth engagement with the legal sector. I have also witnessed first-hand how opening up about bullying can permanently change the way a student engages in class.

On a personal note, I have loved watching how proud the parents were, watching their children actively engage with adults on the airwaves. I have also loved hearing all the positive feedback from listeners and partner organisations.

This project has been the most successful project I have worked on here at CHYFM in the last eight years. It was a complete success.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim? What would you do differently next time?

The intended audience was perfect, and the training strategy was spot on, however I would allocate more time to the final editing of the podcasts. Cutting the episodes down whilst keeping a cohesive narrative took a lot longer than expected. The feedback we received from the CRN meant we had to do re-edits to precise timing which again took longer than expected. Also having to work around CRN timelines meant we had to wait longer to distribute the podcasts.

Training wise, I would still keep the interviews at one per week, since any more than that would overwhelm the students.