

A TYPICAL PEER-PROFESSIONAL WORKGROUP LIFE CYCLE

While each Peer-Professional Workgroup is unique, there is a general template that each Workgroup can follow. Below is a description of a typical Workgroup, to provide a sense of how the process works.

Peer-Professional Workgroups are a rapid cycle approach to catalyzing a specific niche of end-of-life care. The time-span varies by Workgroup, but they generally have a lifespan of 18 months during which the group forms, accomplishes its business and creates a report to the field. Most Workgroups meet over a period of 18 months and then spend the following 6-9 months polishing, producing and disseminating the *Recommendations to the Field* document.

The usual scope of work includes:

- Reviewing the medical literature on palliative care in the area of focus;
- Determining gaps in data, clinical resources, curricula and protocols;
- Gathering and making available guidelines, measurement tools and models of palliative care;
- Defining, where possible, specific practice guidelines, recommendations and standards; and
- Recommending future research and program development strategies.

Workgroups can use various methods of convening, including in-person meetings at the beginning, middle and conclusion of the lifespan, monthly conference calls and web site/Internet discussion rooms or listservs. In addition, the full group can form subcommittees that meet via conference call or discussion room to tackle specific tasks. Some groups also request online discussion groups, although conference calls are the more typical forum for long distance discussions.

The following describes the typical lifecycle of a Workgroup in three phases - forming the group, accomplishing the mission and completing the work.

Phase I: Forming the Group

Workgroup Structure & Parameters

Workgroup conveners collaborate to determine the parameters and structure of the new Workgroup and to identify a potential Chairperson.

Selection of Chairperson & Workgroup Members

Conveners select a Workgroup Chairperson. The *Promoting Excellence in End-of-Life Care (PEELC)* Workgroup Chairs received a \$2,500 honorarium. The Chair and conveners then select the membership in a collaborative process.

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Invitation letters are sent to potential Workgroup members from the Workgroup Chair and convening organization.

PEELC found that 20-25 members is an ideal number for a well-functioning Workgroup.

Development of Draft Charter

The Workgroup Chair, along with the contracting institution and/or convener, develop a draft charter for review by Workgroup membership during its first meeting. (See Charter template document).

THE FIRST MEETING

The Workgroup officially begins with a one-day meeting, typically preceded by a “get to know each other” dinner. The tenor of the first meeting is critically important to the success of the Workgroup. At this time, participants gain an understanding of the expectations, goals and structure of the Workgroup and establish clear parameters for the work. They also begin discussions about the end product, the *Recommendations to the Field* report.

It is important that all Workgroup members attend, to meet their co-members and agree on the tasks at hand. The Workgroup Chair generally leads this meeting, sometimes with the help of a facilitator. During the meeting, the Workgroup Chair gathers input and finalizes the charter through consensus. The meeting is also used to set the calendar of events, including the schedule of monthly calls and future meetings.

During this group formation period, relationships begin to develop and many questions arise. It may take a few months for the group process to gel. Workgroups often create subgroups to tackle the work set forth by the charter.

Phase II: Accomplishing the Mission

After the initial meeting, work continues via conference calls and online discussions:

Conference Calls

Workgroup calls are arranged by the Workgroup Chair, but are placed through the convening organization. A contact person should be provided for troubleshooting purposes.

Conference calls work best when agendas are circulated prior to calls and minutes are distributed regularly and in a timely fashion.

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Mid-Project Meeting

Workgroups can latch a meeting onto other national meetings mid-stream in their process. Such a mid-cycle meeting can build on a Workgroup's impetus to reach its goals. Dissemination discussions begin and carry over to the final meeting. With PEELC Workgroups, the Workgroup director and *Promoting Excellence* communications officer also held discussions with Workgroup chairs between the second and final meetings that focused on the development of a dissemination plan.

Phase III: Project Completion and Closure

Participants enter the final phase of the Workgroup with project completion in sight and dissemination discussions begun. Workgroups should finalize dissemination strategies with guidance from the convening and contracting organizations. A final meeting occurs; and a 6-10 page *Recommendations to the Field* summary is submitted to the convener. (See *Recommendations to the Field* description).

Promoting Excellence staff worked intensively with Workgroup chairs, members (and in some cases, administrators) to refine their recommendations and revise the document in preparation for production. Then, a 20-30-page *Recommendations to the Field* report (with accompanying appendices and bibliographies that substantiate the recommendations, which can cover another 100-150 pages) was submitted to the national program office. At this point, with PEELC Workgroups, production and dissemination were overseen by *Promoting Excellence* communications staff. Guidelines for this *Recommendations to the Field* document are described more fully elsewhere in this Orientation Packet.

Final Meeting

The final meeting has a number of goals that include:

- Creation of a dissemination plan;
- Distribution of written *Recommendations to the Field* summary;
- Evaluation of Workgroup results; and
- Exploration of Workgroup's possible future.

Sometimes Workgroups remain intact in some form after completion of their work under the sponsorship of larger institutions, usually professional organizations.

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