

MENTAL
HEALTH
MONTH
OCTOBER



Starter Kit

Mental Health Month 2023

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What is Mental Health Month?

October is Mental Health Month and it is a chance for us all to come together to focus on mental health, learn about stigma, and create safe, caring communities. It also gives us the opportunity to understand the importance of good mental health in our everyday lives and encourages help seeking behaviours when needed. Mental Health Month is centred on World Mental Health Day – October 10th.

Each year WayAhead, along with our reference group and the community, work to create a theme, and this year's theme is:

We all have a role to play

Whether it's taking time to care for yourself, caring for someone close to you, supporting your community to be more mental health aware, or being a mental health ally. This mental health month, think about ways you can connect with the people around you. Making a world free from mental health stigma, and more inclusive for people who are going through tough times takes all of us! What roles will you play?

Get Involved!

Each year WayAhead provides more than 50 small grants to community groups and organisations across NSW to help get your Mental Health Month project or event off the ground.

This starter kit will give you all the information you need to plan your event and submit your application.

A Mental Health Month project or event is a great way to encourage awareness of mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing in your community. It can decrease stigma, and empower people to seek help, for themselves or others.

50

**small grants
up for grabs!**

A Mental Health Month event or project can give people from your community the awareness and the courage to consider mental health and social and emotional wellbeing as something that they can work on.

Mental Health Month events can be fun, thought-provoking, creative, engaging, sporty, and interesting.



Mental Health Month Grants

Part Two

WayAhead provides small grants to help get your Mental Health Month event off the ground.

We provide approximately 50 grants of either \$500 or \$1000 across the following categories:



General

Youth

**Culturally and
Linguistically Diverse
(CALD)**

**Rainbow Community
(LGBTQIA+)**

**Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander**

About the Grants

The Mental Health Month small grants are designed to be easily accessed by people, even people who have never applied for a grant before.

We believe it's important for you to know what we're looking for so that you can put in the best application possible.

Firstly – what we're not looking for. Spelling, grammar, and fancy wording aren't required. We know many applicants might have a range of reasons for having challenges with written English. Our judges are specifically instructed not to mark applications down on these grounds. Concentrate on making sure you show off the idea for your event or project, and use the judging guidelines (below) to make sure you give yourself the best chance.

What are we looking for?

All grant applications are scored by at least two judges who have relevant expertise. We provide guidance on how to score each application.

We have provided this here so that you can address all the things we are looking for in your application.

Lived experience involvement and expertise is a key value of WayAhead and it underpins all our work. Your project should involve, and as much as possible be led by, people with lived experiences of mental health challenges/illness/distress, and people from marginalised communities (where relevant to your project).

How the grants are scored:

1) Promotion strategy and link to MHM theme: We are looking for projects that have a clear Mental Health promotion/education/community building strategy – that is, have you thought about the ways your project will achieve its goals. Think about things like how to best link with your community, what styles of communication work best. For example, if you know that your community is really into sport, find a way to incorporate sport into your project.

We also look at how your project links to the Mental Health Month theme “We all have a role to play”.

2) Planning and budget: We are looking for projects which have clear aims and a well-considered budget. This doesn't need to be overly complicated, just make sure your application includes the aims of your project (even in dot point) and how the project hopes to achieve them. The budget doesn't need to be detailed, just show that you've considered what costs you anticipate. We know this change over time, so you won't be held to them.

3) Creativity/innovation of proposed project: We are looking for projects that take a unique, new, or interesting approach to mental health. A good thing to do is to include a bit of information about why you chose to approach your project the way you have. So, if your project includes gardening, you might want to include that gardening has been shown to have beneficial mental health impacts, and that the young people in your community don't have a lot of opportunities to interact with nature. In general, things like delivering mental health first aid to a workforce don't do well here, as it doesn't really show that it's been thought out. But if it were to be incorporated with some other information about why that is a particularly innovative approach for your community then it would score more on this measure.

4) Involvement of target audience: This is the big one! Making sure your target audience is involved with all stages of your project is the key to a good application. If you're doing work with young people, make sure young people are involved right from the get-go! Are you applying for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grant? Then the project should be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This also is true for populations that aren't connected to a specific grant category. A good way to measure this for yourself is to think “who am I trying to reach with this project” and then make sure there is someone from that group involved in your project!

Planning your event

Part Three

Remember to list your event or project with WayAhead on our *EVENTS CALENDAR*

Planning an event or project can be a bit daunting. We have created a guide to help you through the process. Use as much or as little as you like.



Investigate

- Brainstorm - Research -

Identify the issue – What do you want to address? General awareness? Reducing stigma? Increasing access to services?

Think about why this issue is important – To you, your organization, your community. Understanding the issue will help keep your event on-track, and help you determine the goals for your event.

Identify your target audience and research how best to reach them – Use your own expertise here as well as people from your target audience. What has worked in the past? – do people come together over food? Music? Combination?

Identify your goals – Think broad, rather than specific. What's the aim of the project or event? This should reflect the issue you've identified, as well as your target audience.

Identify your challenges – Think about what might hinder the success of your event or project and plan for possible challenges. This can be broad – stigma, discrimination – or specific – lack of appropriate venue in your area, communication challenges – or anything in between.

Formulate

- Plan - Design -

The information from step one, investigation, should inform what your project or event looks like and now it's time to create.

Plan a message – Something cohesive and catchy that ties your event or project together. Think about the issue and the goals you have identified, and how you want to capture that.

Plan the event – What type of event or project best suits what you've identified? Break down the planning into as many steps as you need.

Plan what you need – what do you need to host this event or project successfully – materials/ supplies, staffing, time? Creating a visual plan can help to work this out, including a timeline. Having lots of small time-based goals can help ensure everything gets done in time.

Communicate

- Connect - Promote -

Connect – Are there other services or organisations in your area that work with similar people, or do similar things? Think about teaming up with them for Mental Health Month, pooling resources and finding new opportunities to promote your event/project.

How do the people you work with tend to connect best? Social Media? Newspaper? Support Groups? This kind of promotion means you're meeting people on their own ground, and making use of systems already in place. Don't forget to invite people directly as well.

Promote – Make use of local media and think creatively about how best to reach as many people as possible. Professional looking posters can make a difference, there are some free online tools such as Canva which can help design great posters without design knowledge. There's a media guide included in this starter kit with even more ideas for promoting your project and event.

And don't forget to list your event or project with WayAhead on our EVENTS CALENDAR

Evaluate

- Check - Measure -

Having a framework for evaluating your project will help make sure your project or event was successful in achieving the goals you've identified. What do you want to measure? How best to measure it?

It can be good to think about how you will evaluate the project/event from the beginning, to make sure the evaluation framework fits the project. It can even form part of your event – for example, people can post selfies using a specific hashtag, or write their thoughts or feedback on a large board, each of which can be counted and used for evaluation.

Types of evaluation:

Outcome evaluation – Has the desired effect been achieved? Are people seeking help more? Making contact? Simply think of one simple thing that can be easily tracked – like number of people who have signed up to your mailing list, or people who have liked, shared, retweeted or commented on your social media posts.

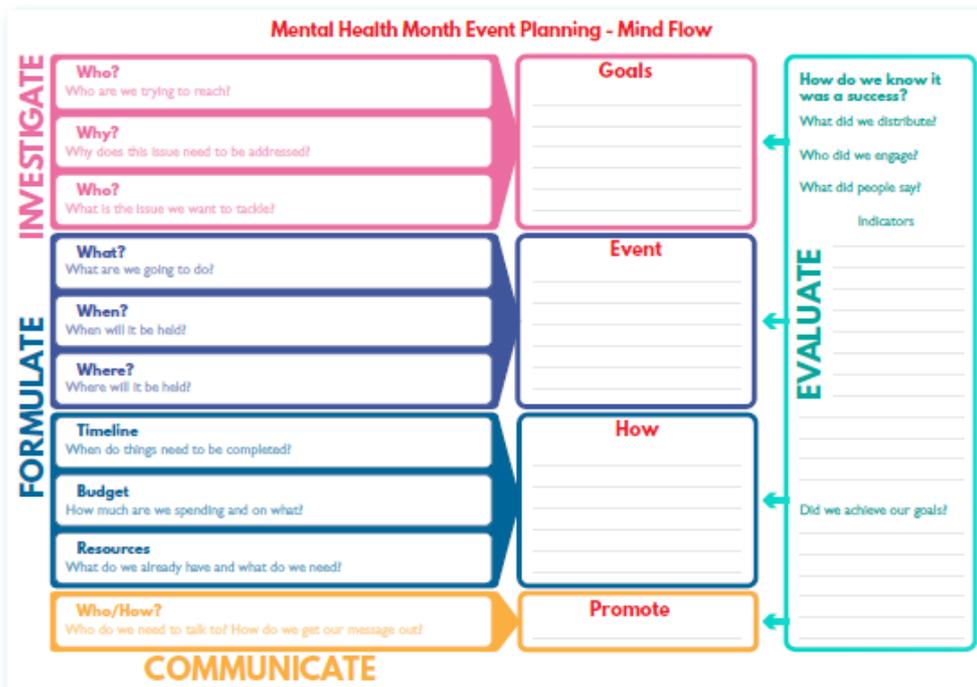
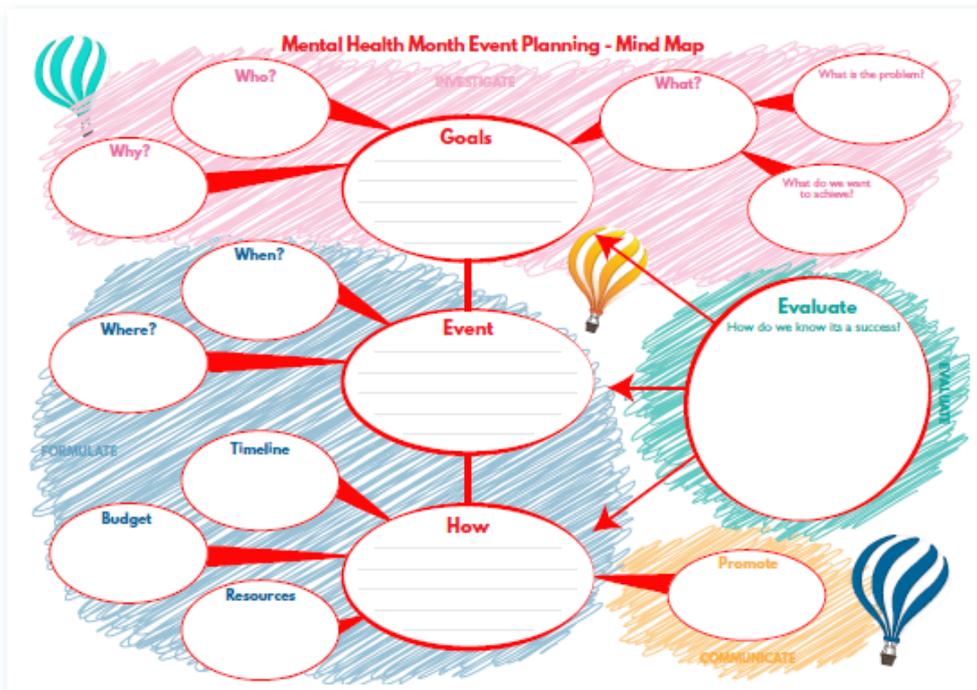
Implementation evaluation – Did you stick to your plan? Did your project get through unexpected challenges?

Goals evaluation – Have you achieved the goals you decided on?

Uh, little help?

Part Four

These worksheets can help you to develop your event – use whichever you find most useful.



A big part of Mental Health Month is that we increase public awareness of mental health and wellbeing. It also means that, for some people, this increased awareness can bring up some difficult thoughts or feelings. During your event or project, people might approach you with varying levels of concern or distress. It's important to know how best to support them, and yourself, whilst respecting the boundaries of the event, the other person, and yourself.

The following includes some tips you might find useful if someone approaches you for help at your event:

1 Be prepared

If you work for a mental health organisation or are a mental health professional, you will have experience in responding to enquiries about mental illness. Otherwise, it can be useful to have some information prepared that you can pass on to people who have questions you don't have answers to.

Having information on-hand from local organisations can be useful for helping people determine what steps to take next. You can find information on where to get help on our website at wayahead.org.au

2 Practise respectful communication

Listen actively to what people are saying to you. It can help to repeat what they have said as a question to make sure you've heard them correctly. It can sometimes help to share your own experience – although you certainly don't have to – but often people just want to know that someone has heard their story. Active listening gives others a real sense that their story is important.

If someone is talking with you about their mental health, they trust you to be understanding and non-judgemental. Avoid making judgements about behaviour that may seem unusual to you or giving advice about choices like diet or substance use – this advice can feel like a judgement.

Respect that people are entitled to determine their own course of action. It is up to them what they do with the information available to them.

3 Know your boundaries

Before the event, have a think about what your boundaries are. What do you feel confident talking about? What might you need more information or support with? When might you need to refer someone to another source of assistance?

Be honest about your limitations and communicate them clearly. Remember, it's ok not to know everything yourself. Let others know if they are asking you for information or assistance that you can't immediately provide.

Identify people that can support you if something comes up that is difficult or upsetting, and let them know that they might need to do that for you on the day.

4 Look after yourself and your team

Remember that looking after yourself and your team is just as important as looking after others. Consider getting together before the event to have a chat about your plan and after the event to talk about how you think things went and to celebrate. Keep an eye out for each other on the day.



It's important to think about how you're going to promote your event or project, and some of the most effective channels are probably already familiar to you – social media, posters and flyers, email invitations – but it can also help increase awareness of your event to engage with local newspapers and other local media outlets.

Even if you are holding a private event (not open to the public), you may still wish to tell the media about it beforehand so that a journalist can attend part of the event and write a story about it to go into the local paper afterwards.

Alternatively, you can write your own media release and send it to local print, radio and TV journalists. We have provided a template media release below as a guide.

Why?

Mental Health Month events are a great opportunity for media to bring attention to mental health – and your event provides a good reason for them to do this. Working with the media is one more way that we can promote positive mental health and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness.

If you are holding a public event, then using the media is a great way to get more participants.

How to get in the media:

Contact a journalist:

Have your media release prepared and specifically target your media release carefully. Address them by name and take a sentence to introduce yourself, and if you're not sure who would be best journalist for your article, call a general office number and ask. Make sure you can answer any questions they might have or send along the press release straight away if they're interested.

Selling your story:

Remember, your event could be very interesting to local news so don't be shy! Think about what is unique and newsworthy about your event and mention it – maybe you're holding the only community fair in your town for the month, perhaps you've found a local celebrity to speak, or you might be repeating an event that was successful the year before.

The person you speak to may not report many mental health stories, so be prepared to explain terms or direct them to other resources for more information. MINDFRAME have some good resources. WayAhead is also happy to provide a quote about your event you can add to your media release.

Contact:

Your local media are employed to cover interesting news, not provide free advertising. Don't expect that they will automatically cover your story. It's okay to follow up and find out whether the story is being published, but always be polite and don't hound them for an answer.

Keep in touch with your media contacts after the event is over. Even if they haven't run a story yet, if you can provide good photos and details on how successful the event was it may become more newsworthy. Whatever the outcome, make sure to say thank you for their time.

[Insert date]

[Insert headline – keep it short and simple, you want it to be attention grabbing and ideally less than 7 words)]

[Write a short paragraph summarising your event. Remember to cover ‘who, what, when, where, and why’ your event is on or about, as this is often the most important information for a journalist.]

Mental health issues will affect 1 in 5 Australians every year. Anxiety disorders are often the most common mental health challenge, followed by depression.

[Include a relevant quote from a local, noteworthy person here.]

Mental Health Month is co-ordinated every October by WayAhead. This year the theme is ‘We all have a role to play’. People across NSW & Australia come together during the month to hold events and promote good mental health and wellbeing in their local communities.

These events are a useful reminder for all of us to think about the mental health of ourselves and those around us. It’s also a good excuse to get out there and have some fun!

[Include final quote(s) and any final information relevant to your event such as when it’s on and how people can RSVP or attend]

Contact details

Name: Your name

Phone: Your telephone or mobile

Email: Your email

Tips:

- Be careful with your spelling and grammar, if you’re unsure, it’s always good to have a couple of people proofread your media release before it goes out.
- Keep it short and interesting. Journalists are often busy and see loads of media releases, so you want to make it as easy as possible for them to understand why your event is newsworthy.
- Try to keep your language simple and avoid over-hyping your story. An art exhibition doesn’t have to feature the next Van Gogh to be newsworthy and interesting to local readers, so be enthusiastic but don’t exaggerate.
- Let them know if there are photos available or they can take photos on the day. A great photograph can often help get a story published.
- Use quotes from interesting spokespeople. This can include people from local businesses and organisations that are supporting you (including WayAhead), local people planning to attend, or any prominent people from the local community involved in the event itself. Remember to ask them why they think your event is going to be great for your community – it’s an easy way to show your newsworthiness!

Example events

Part Seven

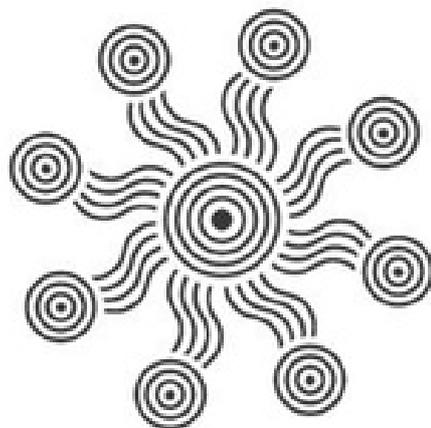
Each year we see some incredible, creative, exciting events happen during Mental Health Month, and we've featured a few of them here to inspire you!

Share it at Shoalhaven Heads

This is a festive event celebrating the wisdom of the elder years by incorporating contemporary performance practice. It will utilise the existing regular over 60's Monday Social Hub attendees and the 60+ PERFORMANCE participants, as active hosts for the event. In short, the event, which welcomes the general community, will shine a light on some local everyday heroes and ask them to share their journey, advice and tips.

The Enemy Within

The Enemy Within is a two-day event of workshops and presentations delivered by Joe Williams - a former NRL player sharing his lived experience with mental health. Presentations will focus on connecting with the Indigenous community through the Wakagetti Dance Team based in Muswellbrook. They will also focus in suicide prevention and wellbeing education.



The Enemy Within

Suicide Prevention & Wellbeing Education



Art 4 Connection

Art 4 Connection Workshop & Creative Presentation is an event incorporating a 'hands on' workshop that will explore how art facilitates wellbeing, insight and healing through expression. The workshop will be facilitated by four specialist Art Therapists who work with individuals and local community groups with a diverse range of needs. It will also include presentations by all four art therapists which will provide the overarching framework and themes for the day. Morning tea and lunch will also be provided.

Misery Loves Company – Sharing the Darkness to Lighten the Load

'Misery Loves Company – Sharing the Darkness to Lighten the Load' by Waitling & Bates is an event showcasing a selection of original songs and covers that express feelings that are difficult to discuss. There will also be a short performance by two local artists living with anxiety and depression. The event will also include a shared dinner before the show. Standby Response, an organisation dedicated to supporting people and communities bereaved by suicide, will also present a talk about grief and grieving in rural communities and provide some self-care strategies.

Mind Your Art

The Mind Your Art Competition targets young people aged 12-25 in our local community by providing an opportunity to express themselves through art, while focusing on the importance of mental health and early intervention. This event will be held at the Glasshouse Port Macquarie which exhibits some of the best artists in the world. As a result, it offers our entrants a unique opportunity to exhibit their own works. An opening night will be held at the beginning of October. The exhibition will run for the whole month to raise mental health awareness and will be accessible to the whole community.

Pasifika – Be Young and Well

Pasifika – Be Young and Well is an event emphasising the importance of keeping well mentally and why it's vital for young people to look after their mental health. We will include dancing and singing from the young people of the 5 different Pacific communities in between the talks from health professionals but also an NRL player of Pacific background. The program will be concluded with a panel Q&A and a lunch which will include healthy traditional food and drinks.

Batiba Guwiyal Healing and Cultural Renewal Workshop

Batiba Guwiyal Healing and Cultural Renewal Workshop's includes three morning workshops held across three days based on healing and psychological empowerment that addresses the impacts of trans-generational trauma and domestic and sexual violence, through Yarning Circles, Aboriginal arts and cultural practices, expressive arts therapy, capacity building activities and trauma education. Workshops will also be open to all Aboriginal women in the community.

Pride Day

All ages LGBTIQ+ and straight allies event – Pride March and Fun Day in the Park. The purpose of the Pride March is to highlight and celebrate the diversity of the Central West community. It will hold floats of various organisations and businesses, such as Australian Post, banks, headspace Dubbo, Uniting and Community Members. The Fun Day in the park will involve various mental health stakeholders setting up stalls to provide information of relevant services, as well as activities for all ages including Zumba lessons, taekwondo sessions, face painting, jumping castle, speeches from members of the LGBTIQ+ community and live music.





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