

MENTAL
HEALTH
MONTH
OCTOBER



Starter Kit 2022

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What is Mental Health Month?

October is Mental Health Month in New South Wales, Victoria, and the ACT. Mental Health Month is an opportunity to raise awareness around mental health & wellbeing, centres around World Mental Health Day, which is marked each year on October 10.



Tune In means -

Tuning In means being present, being aware of what's happening within you, and in the world around you.

- Tune In to your senses – what can you sense right now? What can you feel?
- Tune In to your communities – what's happening that you can be part of, or that you can help others be part of?
- Tune In to stigma – how do attitudes and understandings of mental health and wellbeing impact people's ability to live the lives they want?

Taking a moment to Tune In can help still and focus your mind, it can help you understand what's going on for you and others. Tuning in can help you find a new perspective, and it can help you reflect and be present.

Tuning In has been shown to help build self-awareness, help make effective choices, reduce the impact of worry, and build positive connections. Tuning In to communities and the impact of mental health stigma can help ensure that people who need support have safe places to talk about their experiences and reach out.

[Find out more about how this theme was developed](#)

Tune In to Mental Health Month and help create a world we can all Tune In to

Why should you be involved?

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. 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 something that they can work on.

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



Rutherford Highschool - Aboriginal Learning and Engagement Centre
2020 Grant recipient

Mental Health Month during COVID-19

The changes brought about by COVID-19 are impacting us all, and this means that the important work done around the state during Mental Health Month is even more vital to the wellbeing of our communities during this time!

We know that many groups and organisations plan their Mental Health Month activities long in advance and that the uncertainty of the current situation makes this challenging.

WayAhead is still supporting people across NSW, especially through our small grants program. Although in-person events might not be feasible for all in October, we know that the groups and organisations who apply for our grants consistently create incredible projects and events to support people and raise awareness during Mental Health Month, and 2022 is no different. We recognize that it can be a challenge to design projects and events that cater for all during times like these.

Ideas for a physically distant event

We've put together this little list to help spark your creativity, and to help support your grant applications. We absolutely encourage you to think outside the box about ways you and your communities can get involved in Mental Health Month!

Recorded or Live Online Workshops and Presentations

- Presentations, panel discussions, and similar events can be done as pre-recordings or live online and interactive forums.
- Pre-recorded content can be viewed by people at any time from their home, and live events can include community Q&A.
- There are several web-based applications that can be used, including Facebook Live, YouTube, Google Meet, Instagram Live, and Zoom.
- To organize a live event, it is a good idea to get registrations from participants ahead of time, which can be done via an online survey tool or event ticketing platform. This can be used to keep participants up to date with your event and help build anticipation and excitement.
- It's important to ensure that during live online events there are people on hand to moderate and help along the discussion. As with any Mental Health Month event, people can experience a range of emotions and having someone available to chat and direct people makes sure that the comments and discussion are as effective as possible. It can help to have some pre-planned responses, such as a list of relevant services and contact numbers. Having a safe-discussion guide sent out in advance can also help ensure that people involved in the discussion can contribute safely.

Collaborative Online Art Projects

- Collaborative online art projects or interactive projects can be a great way to engage people online.
- Using social media platforms such as Instagram Stories or Facebook Stories, collaborative art projects can start with one person and be shared and added to by others through editing the story and re-sharing to others.
- Prompts for sharing of photos, art, or videos can be used and shared together through a specific hashtag through sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.
- Submissions of individual artistic contributions that fit a topic or prompt can be combined into a larger quilt or art piece that can be shared online.
- Using social media such as an Instagram account, website, or Facebook, a campaign could be done with anonymous contributions surrounding a topic of mental health.

Online Group Gatherings or Events

- Web-based applications such as Facebook Live, YouTube, Google Meet, and Zoom can be used for live events and gatherings. These can be for specific activities such as yoga practice, learning new dance, singing, or games such as trivia or musical bingo. These can be themed events, such as dressing up as your favourite animal.

Mental Health Hour

- Similar to Earth Hour and other types of hour-long events, events can be held for a specific hour or time where everyone takes part in a specific pre-set activity such as lighting a candle or listening to a favourite song. This is something for multiple people to do at once in solidarity and togetherness.

Chalk Art

- Chalk art can be used to decorate places where drawing is allowed in the community. Inspiring messages or notes can be left for others to see as they pass by during exercise time.



Kiama Council - chalk art workshops
2020 Grant recipient

Online Film Festival

- An online short film festival is another option. This can be done over the course of several weeks or even just 24 hours. The films may follow a specific theme or a specific word or item. Films can then be posted online or streamed online during a specific event time.

Online Group Gatherings or Events

- Getting people to mail in art, letters, cards, photos, or community messages, and then displaying these in a public area is a great way to raise awareness of Mental Health Month – especially amongst people who might not typically be involved. You can also set up “creation stations” where materials are available for those who want to contribute as they walk past the display. For example – last year Newcastle Airport asked community organisations to send in folded paper planes which were then displayed at the airport for Mental Health Month.
- Pen Pal initiatives can help connect with people who might have difficulty accessing the internet reliably. Participants can be randomly matched, and you can have a variety of “writing prompts” to help people write their letters. You might also like to develop a “mail tag” form where people can fill out pre-determined questions to swap with their pen pals.

Your Mental Health Month Event

Remember to list your event or project with WayAhead on our [EVENTS CALENDAR](#)

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 – What has worked in the past? Use your own expertise here – do people come together over food? Music? Maybe you can combine a few approaches to reach more people.

Identify your goals – What do you want to achieve. 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. This can be broad – stigma, discrimination – or specific – lack of appropriate venue in your area, communication challenges – or anything in between. Thinking through potential challenges before they come up allows you to plan for them before they come up

FORMULATE

- Plan - Design -

This is the stage where you use everything from step one to actually plan the event or project you want to create. The information from step one should inform what your project or event looks like.

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? Where will you hold it? Think about this stage strategically, and break it down 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? You're probably already connected with them professionally, think about teaming up with them for Mental Health Month.

Connect – Connecting with other organisations and groups can help promote the event, pool resources, and find new opportunities for your event or project. It can help you reach more people with your message.

Connect – 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 – Think about how best to promote your event or project. 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, but not every organization has access to a graphic designer. There are some free online tools such as [ADOBE SPARK](#) which can help design great posters without design knowledge.

Promote – 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 -

Check – Having a framework for evaluating your project will help make sure your project or event stays true to the goals you've identified, and let you know that you've been successful. It can be complex or simple.

Think about:

What you'll want to measure?

How best to measure it?

Check - Types of evaluation:

Outcome evaluation – Has the desired effect been achieved? Are people seeking help more?

Making contact? This can be difficult to measure, so it can be helpful to 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.

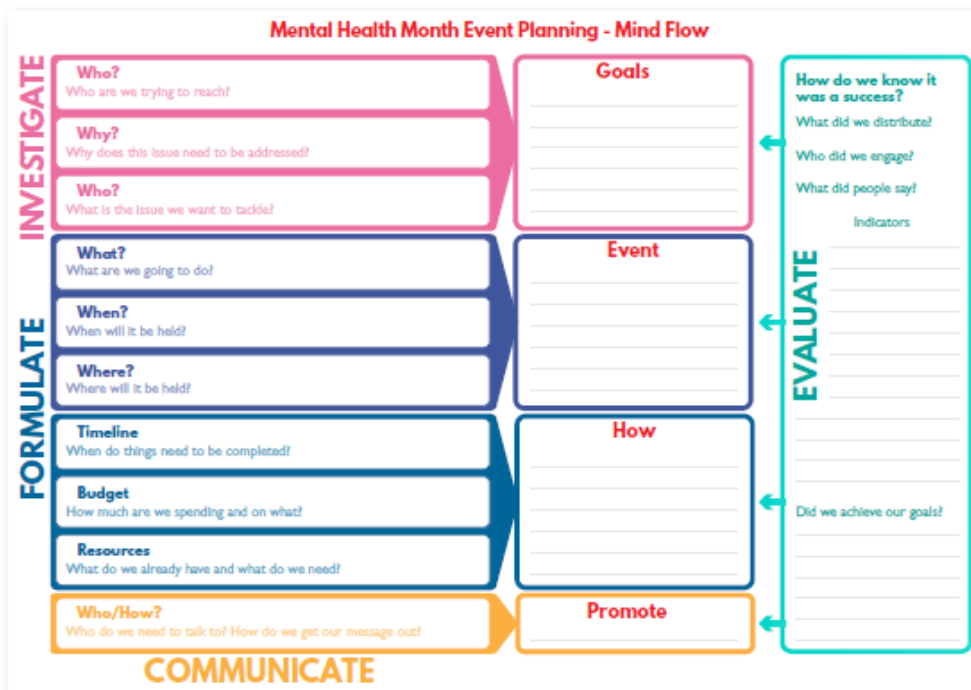
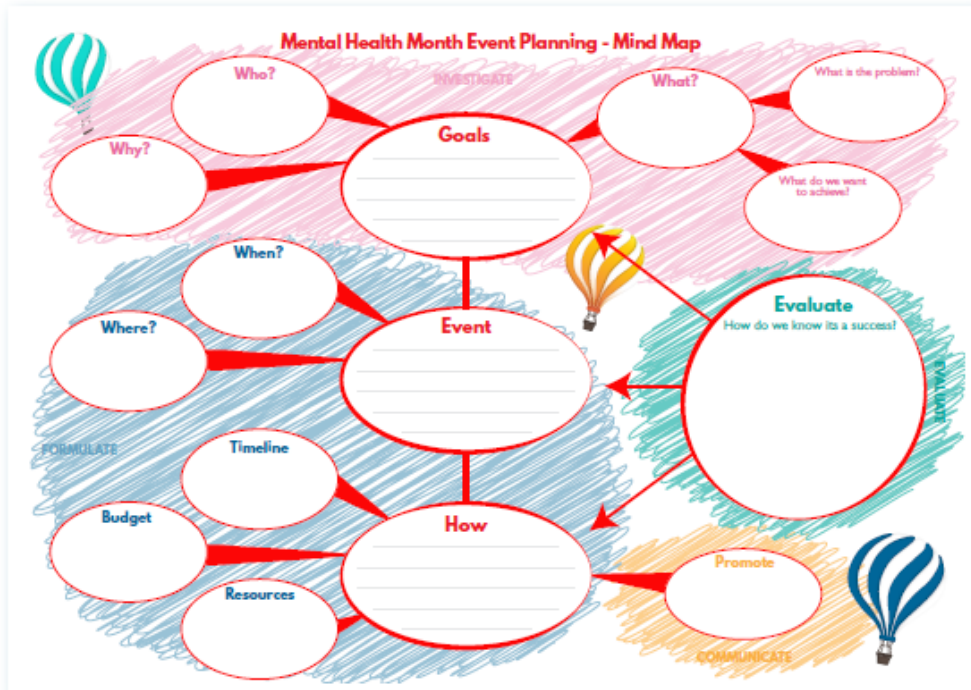
Implementation evaluation – Did you stick to your plan? Did your project get through unexpected challenges?

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

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.

Uh, Little Help?

Use these to brainstorm and lock-in your event ideas! (Whichever one works best for your brain!)



Show me the money

Grant applications have now closed for this year but be sure to look out for our grants program next year! More about our grants program is below.

WayAhead provides small grants to help get your Mental Health Month event off the ground. We provide 50 grants of either \$500 or \$1000 across the following categories:

- General
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)
- Sex, Sexuality and/or Gender Diverse (LGBTIQA+)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Youth

What are we looking for?

Innovation

Is your event taking a new approach to mental health promotion? A creative way to reach people? Or is it a new way of delivering a tried-and-true message? What makes your event stand out? It doesn't have to be completely new, and if you know something works to reach your community, absolutely go with that – this is more about showing that delivery of the project/event has been thought about from different perspectives, and that the most effective approach is taken.

Reach

Will your event or project reach hundreds? Thousands? Or just a few in a significant way? Are there chances for “incidental” involvement with people who might not have heard about your event – people walking past maybe? Is your event accessible? Out in public where lots of people can engage?

Practicality

Have the steps been thought through? Have challenges been thought through and addressed? We want all the events and projects to succeed, which means making sure that solid plans are in place, and that possible problems have been thought through

Theme

How does your event or project centre the “Tune In” theme? “Tune In” has been chosen as the theme because of the positive impact it can have on mental wellbeing. Connections and community are proven to increase positive mental wellbeing, so we are definitely looking for events and projects that incorporate this theme.

Collaboration

Have you connected with other organisations in your community? Who will you Tune In to? Making use of the resources and expertise of multiple organisations and groups increase the reach and success of events and projects. Think about other organisations you might partner with.

Overall, we are looking for an event or project which incorporates all these things cohesively – does it make sense as a whole?

We aren't looking for perfect spelling or grammar, but it can help to have someone look over your application to make sure it's clear and easy to understand.

How is it judged?

We have a panel of judges – a least two for each category – and for the target categories the judges must have experience with those communities. There is a clearly written guide for the judges, so they can mark the applications according to the same score sheet each time.

After that the judges will meet in person to see if their scores match up and decide on the final recipients.

The Application

Application forms need to be submitted online through our portal. You will be able to go back and edit your responses right up until the closing date, but we also have a copy of the questions available to download for you to work on before submitting the application. We've tested the form, but if you have any difficulties filling it in, submitting it, or just have questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We're happy to help.

Amounts

We have both \$1000 and \$500 grants. Grants that are unsuccessful in the \$1000 category will automatically be considered for a \$500 grant – please indicate if you do not wish to be considered for the \$500 grant.

If you have any questions about the judging process please get in touch.

Take Care

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:

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

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

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.

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.

Show off

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?

Here are some important hints to remember when you're working with the media:

- Have your media release prepared before you contact a journalist. Make sure you can answer any questions they might have or send along the press release straight away if they're interested.
- 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.
- Target your media release carefully. Don't send a release about a book launch to the sports writer, and don't send one email to multiple journalists. Address them by name and take a sentence to introduce yourself, and if you're not sure who to talk to call a general office number first and ask.
- 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.

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.

Sample Media Release

[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 ‘Tune In’. 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 proof read 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, 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!