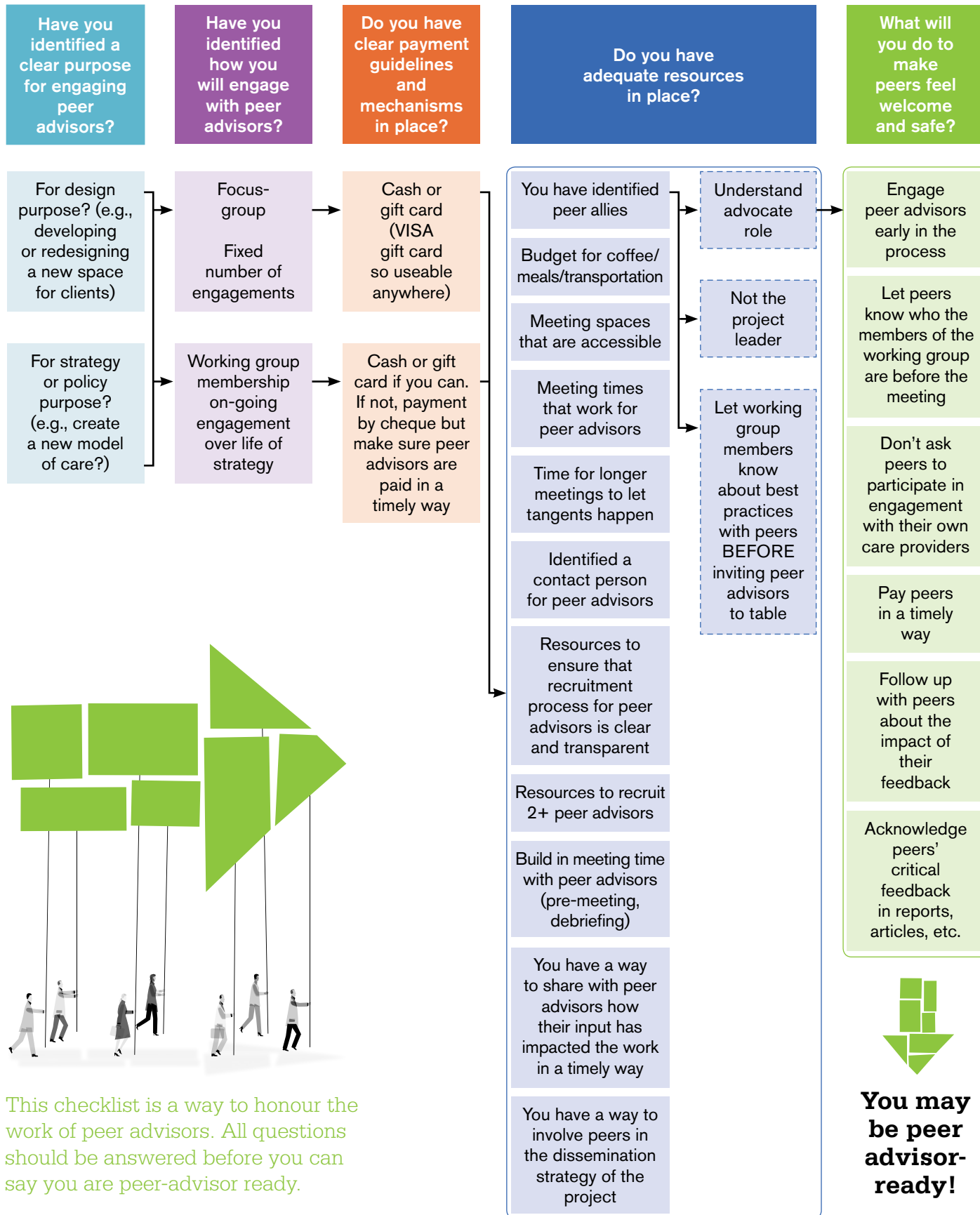


Are you Peer Advisor-ready?

Including people with lived experience



This checklist is a way to honour the work of peer advisors. All questions should be answered before you can say you are peer-advisor ready.



This tool was created by the Vancouver Coastal Health DTES 2nd Generation Strategy Peer Reference Group. It is the culmination of lessons learned from two years of hard work, wisdom, and expertise shared by this group.

In the scope of this project peer was defined as “a current or former resident of the DTES with lived experience of substance use, homelessness, and/or challenges related to mental health and has accessed services related to these experiences”. This definition and this tool are adaptable to different contexts.

The complexities of peer engagement in the DTES may require resources not applicable to other forms of community engagement. The systemic inequities experienced by people who live and work in the DTES may require some flexibility and accountability to make peer advisor work as accessible, inclusive, and as fair as possible for peer advisors from this community.

Value of working with Peer Advisors

- It's a reality check – a way to check assumptions
- It's a way to see if work/ideas/plans are relevant to clients before starting a project
- It's an opportunity to listen
- Peer Advisors bring critical questions and reflections and ask key questions
- Peer Advisors bring knowledge of organizations and services in the community

Value of working as a Peer Advisor

“It's an opportunity to be an example for my community.”

“A way to show we can be trusted.”

“A way to show we are human.”

“It's a way to acknowledge the unique insight and wisdom that we have.”

Tips for working with Peer Advisors

- Be curious
- Allow for flexibility
- Let yourself be surprised
- Allow yourself to think outside of the box
- Let tangents happen – often tangents yield the richest feedback
- Create a checklist for check-ins for peers – questions for jumping off point for discussion
- Have a clear process for dealing with conflict
- Use peer allies who have experience working with peers
- Give peers the option of choosing their ally
- Have peers on your hiring committee
- Don't use the same peer advisors across projects
- Involve peer advisors to develop meeting format (ground rules and group agreements)
- Honour peer advisors' lived experience by respecting the real life impacts of issues you bring to them for feedback
- Peer advisors are experts in their own lived experience, not the lived experience of all clients – don't assume one peer advisor has the same views as all peer advisors
- Give opportunities for capacity building and transition planning for peer advisors

HOW DO YOU SHOW APPRECIATION TO PEERS?

Have a clear and punctual payment processes.

Show gratitude for positive feedback AND tough critique. Many people have had complex and often negative experiences when sharing criticism with people in power.

Letter of reference from the person leading the advisory group.

Giving credit to peer advisors whose feedback was incorporated into reports in acknowledgment section or as co-authors if applicable.

Sharing published reports with peer advisors (by mail or email).

Close the loop. Report back to advisors how their input was valuable and how it has impacted or been implemented into projects.

Get creative and try new things. Ask advisors what makes them feel appreciated.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES THAT HAVE BEEN USEFUL FOR ENGAGEMENT IN OTHER CONTEXTS AND ALLYSHIP IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS.

Have you identified how you will engage with peer advisors?

Engagement with peer advisors should be, at minimum, to obtain input:

▶ <https://bit.ly/2kvJ19q>

Do you have payment guidelines and mechanisms in place?

The BC Centre for Disease Control Peer Engagement & Evaluation Project (PEEP) has recommendations for peer payment:

▶ <https://bit.ly/2GX08tL>

The BC Centre for Disease Control Peer Engagement & Evaluation Project (PEEP) has recommendations for peer payment for short term engagements:

▶ <https://bit.ly/2n9r41z>

Do you have supports for peers in place?

The BC Centre for Disease Control Peer Engagement & Evaluation Project (PEEP) has best practices and recommendations for working with peers (p. 8 has a checklist of resources to support peers):

▶ <https://bit.ly/2skxGwn>

A brief version of the PEEP Best Practices for peer engagement

▶ <https://bit.ly/2xnG7wO>

Do you have peer allies?

PeerNetBC has some guiding questions for folks who want to be allies in community work:

▶ <https://bit.ly/2GWR2NH>

A great article by Vikki Reynolds about imperfect allies

▶ <https://bit.ly/2l2CGjd>

Here's some background about anti-oppression from the Anti-Oppression Network

▶ <https://bit.ly/2lSYiMc>

This tool was created by the member of the Downtown Eastside Peer Reference Group who advised on the planning work related to the Downtown Eastside 2nd Generation Strategy from June 2016 – April 2018.

Peer Advisors:

Daniel Benson
Brenna Bezanson
Paul Choisil
Kelly Elliott
Sara Fieldsend
Norm Hale
Annette Ledrew
Debbie Moodie
Rob Morgan
Amber Romanowski

VCH staff:

Monica Coll
Caitlin Etherington
Sue Macdonald
Rachael McKendry
Breann Specht