

# Comparing Self-Help to Professionally-led Support Groups

## **Background**

This matrix is based on the work of Professor Thomasina Borkman, a leading researcher on the characteristics of self-help/mutual aid. With growing recognition about the benefits of self-help/mutual aid approaches, many professionals now integrate self-help/mutual aid strategies into the groups they lead. Borkman calls these “hybrid” groups.

## **You can use this matrix tool:**

1. To highlight the unique characteristics of self-help/mutual aid groups in contrast to professionally-led support groups; and
2. To explore how your hybrid (or transitioning) group already incorporates aspects of a self-help/mutual aid approach – choose a number that illustrates where your group’s structures fall along the spectrum, list benefits and drawbacks and decide if/how your group wants to change.

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	Self-help/ Mutual Aid	✍ 1 2 3 4 5 ✍	Professionally- led
Knowledge emphasized	<b>personal experience</b>		<b>training/education</b>
Type of Leader(s)	<b>“one of us”</b>		<b>“outsider”</b>
Focus of meetings	<b>mutual support</b>		<b>guidance</b>
Structure	<b>informal</b>		<b>formal</b>
Decision Making	<b>everyone</b>		<b>led by facilitator</b>
Resources Used	<b>volunteer and “in-kind”</b>		<b>paid staff, fees or funding</b>
Duration	<b>ongoing</b>		<b>time-limited</b>
Evaluation	<b>decided by members</b>		<b>often required by funder</b>