



Menu of engagement methods

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November 2009

Information provided below has been obtained from the following sources:

Queensland Health. 2002. *Consumer and Community Participation Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au/documents/items/2008/08/226706-upload-00001.pdf>

Department of Public Health, Flinders University, and South Australian Community Health Research Unit. 2000. *Improving health services through consumer participation: A resource guide for organisations*. Consumer Focus Collaboration Publication, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra. Section 3: The tools catalogue. Available at <http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au/documents/items/2008/08/226537-upload-00001.pdf>

Health Issues Centre. Getting started. Involving consumers on committees. 2008 <http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au/documents/items/2008/07/222372-upload-00001.pdf>

There is no 'one best way' to implement consumer and carer engagement. The tools and techniques selected will need to take into account a range of issues including the level of engagement sought, the desired outcomes, the resources available, the views and needs of consumers and carers, the locality and the skill levels of participants.

A three-step process for selecting appropriate tools

- 1.** Gain an overview of available tools, their strengths and limitations.
Consider:
 - what you want to achieve
 - the level of engagement you are seeking i.e. informing, consulting, partnership
 - the scope of your activity
 - the characteristics of stakeholders (in the case of consumers: ethnicity, locality, health status, age, carer role, language, past experiences of involvement, employment status, etc.)
 - financial resources available to you
 - time lines
 - your own skill level and that of participants
 - other activities in your organisation which relate to consumer engagement e.g. accreditation requirements, staff training and orientation, reference groups.

- 2.** Select a mix of tools and methods which provide a range of opportunities for engagement and which are appropriate to the level of engagement being sought.
- 3.** Monitor and review implementation of the tools to determine whether they are appropriate and effective. Be prepared to make changes if necessary.

Some common methods of engagement

Tool	Strengths	Limitations
Surveys - can be written, telephone, email, face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • email and mailout questionnaires are inexpensive • can cover a wide geographic area • useful for gathering quantifiable information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions need to be structured, straight forward and unambiguous • care must be taken to avoid biased questions • literacy may be an issue • often low response rates • limited opportunity to probe in telephone/written surveys • consumers may not be able to afford or access internet facility
In-depth interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • useful to follow up specific issues • provides in-depth information from selected stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires skilled interviewer • time consuming • small numbers – requires careful selection of informants
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quick and low cost • allows exploration of issues identified through surveys for example • useful for collecting information on a specific issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may not be representative of consumers • not suitable for information dissemination • not suitable for decision-making • requires skilled facilitator • language barriers
Public meetings and forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunity for anyone to attend • new networks created • a forum for debating issues • opportunity for information dissemination and sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible poor attendance • confidentiality issues • risk of domination by particular individuals or groups • not representative of population • may be difficult to stay focused on issue • requires skilled facilitator • disabled may be disadvantaged (hearing, sight,

		language)
Consumer representatives on committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium to long-term perspective • encourages debate • ensures accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires orientation and ongoing support • costs • requires organisational commitment to meaningful participation
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can develop a shared approach to a specific issue • brings together selected people from diverse groups • structured session can produce a plan or recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small numbers – needs careful consideration of participants • requires skilled facilitator • participants may need particular skills, knowledge or experience

NOTE: A list of 43 different methods is described in Department of Public Health, Flinders University, and South Australian Community Health Research Unit. 2000. *Improving health services through consumer participation: A resource guide for organisations*. Consumer Focus Collaboration Publication, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra. Section 3: The tools catalogue. Available at

<http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au/documents/items/2008/08/226537-upload-00001.pdf>