



Consumer and Community Participation Fact Sheet M04: Consumer and Community Advisory Councils

What are consumer and community advisory councils?

Councils are a formalised group of people brought together to support the development of partnerships between consumers, community members, researchers and research organisations. A council's purpose is to enhance the quality and relevance of research through consumer and community participation. They may be set up for a research organisation or a faculty or school to provide input at a strategic level. They would not be established for individual projects.

Who should be a member?

A council membership should consist of:

- Consumers and community members.
 - Researchers.
 - Senior management staff.
 - Consumer support staff such as an advocate or liaison officer.
- Ideally the council will have a majority of consumers and community members representing a variety of groups.

What do they do?

A council will provide or facilitate:

- Consumer and community perspectives on research.
- Links between consumers, the community and researchers.
- Advice and expertise on consumers and community issues and priorities for research.
- Advocacy on behalf of consumers and the community.
- The implementation of policies for consumer and community participation.
- Evaluation and reports on consumer and community participation.
- Feedback on strategic planning and governance structures relating to consumer and community participation in research.

The University of Western Australian School of Population Health and Telethon Kids Institute established Consumer and Community Advisory Councils in 2006.

The Council membership is aimed at reflecting the research programs and interests of the organisation.

A community member's perspective on being involved:

"Aboriginal people have been researched to the max – we want to see some results. I got involved because I'm passionate about this issue. So it's great we have Councils with Aboriginal people on them". (Dot Henry)

Practical issues:

- Identify appropriate consumers and community members. It is important for the council's consumers and community members to have an interest/links with the organisation's research programs as well as established networks with the community (see Fact Sheet P04).
 - Draft Terms of Reference and role statements for the group, be prepared to accept changes from the council and be upfront about items that are not open to negotiation.
 - Consider what support and/or training will council members need or be offered.
 - Organise meetings at regular intervals (Fact Sheet P05) and provide updates of any decisions that have been made between meetings.
 - Time for a member of the organisation will have to be set aside to organise and support meetings.
 - Consumer and community advisory councils are long term solutions, so members who can commit to long term involvement, and on-going sources of funding should be considered in the first instance.
- Payment of expenses and /or honorarium should be budgeted for, and discussed with members.

See Fact Sheets
P04 and P05 for
more information

