



Consumer and Community Participation Fact Sheet M05: Consumer and Community Consultation Forums

What are they?

Consumer and community consultation forums are one-off or occasional meetings between consumers and community members and researchers. They provide an opportunity for community input into research priority setting and planning at an organisational level as well as individual projects.

- This method is particularly relevant when conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (where it is a good practice example of high level consultation).
- Alternatively it can also be lower level participation when researchers want to inform or seek specific information from the community. This will depend on the amount of input consumers will have into the research project (see Fact Sheet T03). If only one meeting is held between the researchers and consumers there may not be time to build ongoing relationships.
- This can be a good way of accessing input from large groups of people in a short period of time.
- Some projects refer to this style of consultation as 'Community Conversations'.

Who could attend a forum?

- Consumers and community members.
- Members of consumer, advocacy or community organisations.
- Carers.
- Community members with a common interest or health issue.

When should forums be used?

- To seek input on priorities for future research projects.
- At any time in the research project.
- A number of times throughout the same project.
- To discuss the design of the project.
- To recruit people to get involved at any stage of the project.
- To advise the community of the potential impact or benefits of the project.
- To tell the results of the project to consumers and community members.

At Telethon Kids Institute the Consumer and Community Advisory Council developed a process to seek feedback from the community about their priorities for research. These seminars known as 'Community Conversations' have been held on a range of topics and have discussed topics such as disability, infectious diseases and vaccinations, genetics and alcohol in pregnancy. Feedback from the community conversations has been used to make improvements at an organisation-wide level and for planning for individual projects. The Improving Rural Cancer Outcomes Project at The University of Western Australia is using 'community conversations' to seek input from rural and remote cancer consumers on a range of topics associated with the project.

See Fact Sheets P05 and T03 for more information



Considerations when setting up a forum

- It is important to invite the most appropriate people;
- Budget for expenses/honorariums and refreshments, discuss this with attendees.
- The place where the meeting is held needs to be convenient, accessible and big enough to hold a large group of people (see Fact Sheet P05).
- Be very clear about what you want to achieve from the consultation.
- Provide any written information and presentations about the topic or project in plain easy to understand language. Avoid using jargon and acronyms and provide explanations if technical terms have to be used.
- Tell people at the forum how you will give them information from the forum and if there will be any further follow-up.
- Do I need any advice or support on running this forum?