



Consumer and Community Participation Fact Sheet P05: Meeting with Consumer and Community Members

Organising the first meeting

- The time and place must be practical for consumers and community members as well as other stakeholders e.g. early morning or early evening and places with little or no parking are often not suitable.
- Face-to-face meetings need to be in an accessible and comfortable room/venue.
- Consider using technology if face-to-face meetings are not possible i.e. teleconferences, facebook, e-mail, video conferencing (resources may have to be provided to do this).
- All information must be accessible to consumers and community members, print large documents and post them out in time for the meeting, consider using websites.

At the meeting

- Introduce all members.
- Work through documents/drafts that you already have, make amendments as necessary.
- Avoid using acronyms and technical language.
- Discuss confidentiality and if appropriate sign agreements.
- Allow time for members to ask questions and ensure that all questions are answered.
- Consider and discuss any training needs that the consumers and community members may have or be offered in order to continue being involved in the research project.
- Ensure all members show respect by not interrupting one another.
- Have a separate note taker.
- Ensure there are adequate breaks and refreshments if it is a long meeting.
- If required, set a time for the next meeting.
- Issue/complete claim forms for payment or issue payment itself if you are able.
- Thank members for coming and advise when further contact will be made.
- If technical terms are constantly being used, you may wish to provide a glossary.

Have members agree to simple ground rules at the start of each meeting.



After the meeting

- Summarise notes of the meeting including action points and post or e-mail them to the members in a timely way. Detail the next steps; date of the next meeting or when you will next be in contact.
- Update consumers and community members on changes that have been made to the project as a result of their input. If any ideas were not followed through explain why. It is important to inform everyone about out of session decisions that may be made.

Throughout the research project

- Keep consumers and community members updated throughout the project even if they were only involved in one part of the research project.
- Always share the results of the project with every applicant who wanted to be involved with the project, even if they were unsuccessful, this will strengthen consumer and community networks.

Comment from a community representative involved in the Alcohol and Pregnancy Project (2006-2008) at the Telethon Kids Institute.

“The team ensured that representatives always felt valued and that this wasn’t a token activity to satisfy the project requirement. Representatives were given adequate information to give comment on or influence decisions.”