

10 Stakeholder Engagement

10.1 Stakeholder Engagement



Engagement with stakeholders is a key activity for public health organisations, as required both in Local Health District functions under the *Health Services Act* and through Standard 6 in the corporate governance framework, which emphasises the importance of stakeholder engagement in decisions that affect them (see section 2.2.6).

Engagement with stakeholders develops an open and inclusive environment where information, comment, opinion and criticism is valued and utilised.

Government organisations must be open and transparent, act with integrity and be accountable to the public they serve. Government oversight agencies, such as the Audit Office of NSW⁵ have stated that government organisations, should engage key stakeholders, to ‘shine a light’ on who they are, how they operate, what they are doing and how well they are doing it.

With these objectives in place, well managed stakeholder participation is fundamental to the effective planning, and delivery of health service delivery formulated to improve patient safety and better health outcomes for the consumer and the community.

The recent structural reforms to the NSW public health sector has demonstrated a strong commitment to devolve decision making to the local level and to actively involve clinicians, Medicare Locals, aged care and other care providers, patients and the community in public health services.

Public Health Organisations are expected to have Stakeholder Management Plans and ongoing consultation programs in place

5 NSW Auditor-General's Report Volume Two 2011 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – STRATEGIC EARLY WARNING SYSTEM 2011 p13

Effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement is fundamental to achieving the public health organisations objectives in the planning, development and delivery of improved outcomes to our stakeholders.

Public health organisations should have stakeholder management plans and ongoing consultative programs in place as part of their strategic planning processes and performance requirements.

It is also important that public health organisations comply with the principles of publicly available information concerning health services and management. There are key legislative requirements concerning the recording, access and availability, storage and retention of public information which must be complied with as well as NSW Health policy directives.

Areas where a public health organisation may engage stakeholders and the community include:

- the development and implementation of a Community Participation Framework;
- development of a Communications Plan with key internal and external stakeholders;
- active engagement with community organisations and groups to promote positive health, quality integrated and co-ordinated care and the open exchange of information;
- community participation in the development, implementation and review of health service plans, operations and health programs;
- the development of strategic priorities and plans for the organisation;
- activity based funding programs and services;
- the integration of diversity and innovation into health services to reduce social disadvantages and to meet community health needs;
- working with the Aboriginal community and ACCHSs to develop and implement strategic and operational plans;
- the availability and provision of public health information including emerging health issues and public health trends;
- the outcomes of research and technological innovations and developments;
- participation in specialist technical, clinical and consumer forums;

The stakeholder engagement program should consider the participation of clinician, consumer, carer and the community in a wide range of activities such as:

- strategic planning and priority setting;
- health services planning and service delivery;
- finance/budget planning and the allocation of funds;
- local policy making and related procedures;
- specific service reviews and setting service standards;
- project working groups;
- quality and accreditation processes;
- advisory processes and other district committees.

Some of the types of stakeholder engagement involving clinicians, consumers and the community by local health districts and specialty networks are:

- Health services forums;
- Consumer advisory committees;
- Consumer and community groups;
- Aboriginal health councils and advisory committees;
- Community health participation forums;
- Community reference groups;
- Quality councils;
- Nursing, allied and clinical councils;
- Medical staff councils;
- GP liaison committees/Medicare Locals.

Principles for engaging and partnering with Aboriginal leaders, communities and organisations¹

Engagement with Aboriginal leaders, communities and organisations should always be culturally appropriate and respectful, and facilitate Aboriginal health governance and decision-making.

Best practice principles for engaging and partnering with Aboriginal leaders, communities and organisations are as follows:

- The impact of past and ongoing trauma experienced by Aboriginal communities is acknowledged
- The diversity, context and capacity of Aboriginal communities is understood, and that partnership and engagement practices reflect diverse and multiple Aboriginal voices
- Partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal communities are characterised by high levels of cultural safety, whereby engagement is culturally appropriate and respectful
- Partnerships that are mutually beneficial, where knowledge and expertise are shared in ways that benefit Aboriginal people and the department
- Capacity building through partnerships that support participatory governance and a willingness to share power
- Aboriginal people lead the monitoring and evaluation processes accompanying governance frameworks and strategic health plans.

¹ Referenced from Victorian Government's Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework (<https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-governance-and-accountability-framework>)

Stakeholder Engagement – Resources & References

Local Documentation

Documentation which demonstrates community consultation e.g. Community Engagement Plan; Communication Plans etc

Documentation which demonstrates consultation with and involvement of Aboriginal communities

- Refer to and complete Aboriginal Health Impact Statement:
https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2017_034.pdf
- Refer to signed partnership agreements