



# Recruitment and selection process for consumers



The process for engaging consumers at the higher levels is somewhat similar to recruiting staff, and is articulated here in a stepped sequence.<sup>1</sup>

## Step 1: Background work

- Identify if other staff could help you with recruitment. The recruitment of consumers may be time-consuming and you may need to engage other staff members to support the recruitment processes.
- Who is the most appropriate person to recruit the consumers? Some consumers would respond better to an invitation by someone who knows them as part of the health care team; others would respond better to an invitation from someone who they do not know.
- Find out if ethics clearance should be obtained for any work you are doing with consumers.

## Step 2: Position description

Develop a position description that includes background information about the group, committee or board as well as the role of consumers in the organisation as a whole. It should also contain the following information:

- the specific role and responsibilities of the consumer
- length of commitment
- what kind of characteristics, skills, attributes will be required
- application process.

## Step 3: Recruitment

Distribute the position description and information to relevant staff members and external key stakeholders.

The following recruitment strategies may be effective in recruiting a diverse mix of consumers. Generally the most effective strategy is the first—finding existing consumers from within your own organisation. Putting time and effort into this first approach is likely to be worthwhile in the long-run. Timelines for each strategy are included as a guide only.

Existing consumers from within your organisation (requires three weeks):

- begin with any consumers who have already been active within your service
- send a recruitment email announcement with an invitation for staff to nominate consumers
- directly approach relevant staff and ask them to nominate consumers who they consider appropriate for the particular role

Community networks (requires six weeks):

- send a consumer recruitment invitation to relevant agencies that work with your organisation and/or are key stakeholders

Broad networks (requires eight weeks):

- place announcements or advertisements in the public domain including local papers, articles in relevant newsletters of organisations that work with you and are key stakeholders
- ask state-wide organisations with well-developed mailing lists to post material to community members who they feel will be interested.

## Step 4: Application

Generally, recruiting for a consumer group, committee or board will require a process which is similar to a job application.

<sup>1</sup> This information is adapted from: Health Issues Centre. 2008. Getting started. Involving consumers on committees



1. Ask consumers to fill in a short application form, an expression of interest or send in a CV. Be careful not to make this a complex process as it may discourage some people from applying.
2. Arrange to meet and talk with potential consumer nominees at a place that is convenient to them.
3. If you already have a pool of active consumers, ask one or more of them to join this meeting, both to provide input to the consumer and to help judge the suitability of applicants.

### Step 5: Selection

Consumers need to be selected based on the best matching of the position description and the candidates' skills and experiences. In this sense, the selection process will be similar to hiring staff. But it is slightly different as in this case the candidate may already have a 'relationship' with your organisation as a past or ongoing consumer which could make it more difficult to turn them down if required. Also, as it can be challenging to find consumers to fill positions it may be tempting to accept a candidate despite hesitations.

However, placing a consumer on a committee or group for which they are unsuited can be damaging to the entire consumer movement within your organisation. If you have questions, organise a second meeting and get a second opinion, preferably from an experienced consumer.

Keep the following questions in mind throughout the selection process:

- How do this candidate's experience, knowledge and skills fit with the position description and Terms of Reference of the group?
- Has the candidate had a significant experience of the health system which will assist them in this role? Are they likely to be able to generalise that experience when thinking about consumer issues more broadly?
- Does the candidate have relevant professional experience, in addition to their consumer experience, which will assist them in this role?
- If relevant for the role, does the candidate have connections with other consumer bodies through which they can gain support and keep in touch with consumer views on issues?
- If this particular role is not appropriate for this candidate, are there other consumer roles within our organisation which might be a good fit for them?

Apart from this, the selection process will be similar to that for a staff member:

- If there are many applicants, prepare a short list of the most suitable candidates.
- Send a letter to those who did not make it to the short list.
- Arrange for a face-to-face meeting with those selected (include an experienced consumer in this meeting if at all possible).
- Send a letter to those who were not selected.
- Send a letter of acceptance and further information about orientation to those who were selected.