

Co-design and consumer engagement

Partnering with consumers

This fact sheet has been developed for health services to explain co-design as a consumer engagement approach. It outlines the benefits, key principles and the conditions needed for it to be effective.

Consumer engagement

Supporting health services to design and deliver care with patients and consumers is a key focus area of the Commission. To achieve safe and high-quality health care and under the [Partnering with Consumers National Safety and Health Service \(NSQHS\) Standard](#), health services need to partner with patients, carers, families and consumers in the design, delivery, measurement and evaluation of healthcare services.

There are many ways to partner with consumers, and co-design is one engagement approach you can use, depending on the type of initiative.

What is co-design?

Co-design is the practice of bringing healthcare consumers and professionals together to build a shared understanding of an issue and to work in equal partnership to create solutions. Designing solutions with people who have experience with the issue helps to deliver solutions that are more likely to meet people's needs, improve care, and create value for health services and consumers.

Principles of co-design

- Equal partnership – all participants share power and decision-making and have an equal voice in the process.
- Respect and understanding – all participants acknowledge and value the diversity of views and experiences of others and are open to new ideas and thinking.
- Transparency – all participants clearly understand the process and their roles and are focused on a shared goal.
- Representation and diversity – participants reflect the diversity of consumers, carers, and professionals impacted by the issue being considered.
- Accessibility and inclusiveness – the co-design environment and approach provide choice and flexibility for engagement, based on the needs of all participants, ensuring people feel safe and comfortable contributing.

The benefits of co-design

Co-design puts consumers at the centre of the design process, allowing for greater understanding of their needs and the development of services that are better aligned with community requirements and preferences. In this way, co-design offers benefits for both health services and consumers and can also help create services that are more culturally appropriate for communities.

When to choose co-design?

When deciding what consumer engagement approach to use for a particular project or initiative, you should consider if conditions exist that would allow co-design to be an effective strategy. These conditions include:

- support and leadership – there is explicit ‘buy-in’ and support from senior leadership and project teams to undertake co-design
- resources – there is adequate time and money to support the co-design process, including a commitment to recognise the value of participants’ contributions in a way that supports their involvement
- facilitation – experienced facilitator/s with proven skills and expertise are available to guide the co-design process in an impartial way
- environment – there is a safe and supportive environment with a focus on listening and learning, rather than control
- open-mindedness – there is no pre-defined outcome and/or solution, and a genuine commitment to the outcomes of the process.

Where can you learn more?

The Commission has developed a [co-design resource hub](#) where you can access a range of high-quality guidance about co-design. The hub contains resources with guidance about co-design, case studies, tools and templates that can be used during the process.

For more information

Please visit: [safetyandquality.gov.au/partnering with consumers](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/partnering-with-consumers)

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