

Consultation

INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY IN LOCAL DRUG ACTION

Talking and listening to your community is an important way of making sure your CDAT's activities are responding to the real issues and concerns.

John Della Bosca,
Special Minister of State.

The Drug Action Toolkit is designed to build CDATs' skills to help them work with their local communities. By developing their skills today, CDATs can sustain their activities into the future. This edition of the Drug Action Toolkit covers consultation practices.

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Why should CDATs consult with their community?

Consultation is crucial for CDATs. Finding out what issues your community thinks are important and some possible solutions will help your team to prioritise its work. A wider range of views from the community will better inform the views of the team.

Through consultation, CDATs have tackled many issues and delivered valuable products to their communities. CDATs have used consultations to: develop local drug action plans; design information and education resources; produce videos and radio ads; and organise community forums.

Consulting with a wider circle of individuals and groups can bring CDATs immediate and long term benefits such as:

- ✓ tapping into community ideas, expertise and resources

- ✓ involving a variety of stakeholders in long term positive change
- ✓ saving resources by working on the most relevant issues while they are current
- ✓ focusing on community strengths
- ✓ informing the community on drug and alcohol-related harm issues
- ✓ raising awareness of the role of the CDAT.



As a minimum CDATs are strongly encouraged to 'consult widely':

- while developing and reviewing Local Drug Action Plans
- in the early stages of projects
- before taking on any new issues
- when evaluating projects.

Definitions



Consultation

Consultation is when one group asks for information, views and/or advice from community members and groups.

Successful consultation is when information and feedback is two-way: information is requested and people speak and are heard.

Consultations can be about broad community issues e.g. *What are the drug-related issues facing our community?*. They can also be about practical issues e.g. *"Which alcohol and other drugs service contacts should be included in a local resource card?"*.

Not all feedback you get needs to be accepted. Some feedback will not be appropriate to the topic covered. The consultation process should indicate the important issues for your community.

Stakeholder

A **stakeholder** is anyone with an interest in an issue.



Important note

There are many opinions about the causes and solutions to drug-related issues. These can be sensitive and emotional topics for some people.



During a consultation, it is important to:

- respect the different views in your community
- inform people of the range of perspectives
- take the time and effort to find the common ground – don't assume everyone shares a common understanding of the issues
- clarify what information will be included and how it might be used.

Consultation is about hearing what people have to say, not pushing your own views onto them.

CDAT consultation activities

Consulting with the community can take place at any time during the life cycle of a CDAT, including during the evaluation process in the later stages.

The consultation process is ongoing, as can be seen in the following diagram showing the typical consultation life cycle of a CDAT.



Reviewing your Drug Action Plan

Ballina CDAT consulted their community during 2000/01. Among other things, they ran focus groups and conducted surveys at an Info Expo, to identify the community's drug-related issues. This information went into the five year *Local Drug Action Plan*. The team wanted the plan to be a living document, not sit on a shelf. They wanted to regularly review the plan so that they could see how they were going, what they had achieved and what still needed doing.

The five year plan informs the work of the team. For example, in 2003 they used it to connect drug and alcohol issues to an existing community event – the Art Express Exhibition. The *Local Drug Action Plan* is also linked into other activities and plans like the Council Social Plan. This means drug-related issues can be reviewed using other connected activities.

The plan provides useful information to guide the team's decision-making processes. They revisit the plan each time they complete a project or activity. The team takes into account the project's evaluation data and information received from the community and other sources to help plan for their next steps.

Moree Rap & Radio Ad messages – consulting with a specific group

Drug and alcohol issues for Indigenous young people were identified as a priority in the Moree Local Drug Action Plan. Moree CDAT used their plan to develop and deliver a number of 30 second 'Rap & Radio Ads' to the community. They used a simple consultation method asking various sectors of the community: "If you had 30 seconds on radio to deliver a message to the community on drug and alcohol issues, what would that message be?".

Each person wrote their responses on a piece of paper (one idea per page), read their message out and posted them onto a board. Some were written in professional bureau-speak, some in the first person, some even in rhyme. The messages were then arranged into categories like family/parental issues, health, public safety etc.

This method gave a quick overview of the main issues of concern and the messages people wanted delivered. The process is simple and fun and the facilitator does not need years of experience to lead it.

Step 1: Overview

Identifying drug-related issues in your community

See *Cummeragunja CDAT Family Fun Day*

Step 2: Planning

Developing a Local Drug Action Plan based on your overview

See *Taking the plan to the people*

STEPS IN CDAT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Step 3: Project/Activities

Using the Local Plan to develop and deliver projects

See *Moree Rap & Radio Ad messages*

Step 4: Review and Evaluation

Checking the success of your projects and identifying what needs to be done next

See *Reviewing your Drug Action Plan*

Cummeragunja CDAT Family Fun Day

Cummeragunja CDAT wanted to find out what their community knew about drugs and alcohol. The team felt that as their community was 'consulted out', their consultation should be 'fun'.

To enter the raffle at the Family Fun Day, people filled out a 10 tick-a-box quiz about the use of alcohol and other drugs.

One hundred and twenty people did the quiz. The CDAT now has a clearer understanding of alcohol and other drug misuse in Cummeragunja. This has helped the team develop projects that address community needs, and establish whether their current activities are on the right track.

Taking the plan to the people

Ryde CDAT held a stall at Top Ryde shopping centre to promote the team and to get feedback on the proposed aims of their draft Drug Action Plan. They asked one question "What drug and/or alcohol-related issue is most important for you?".

They set up a display board listing the following issues:

- fear of your kids getting involved in drugs/alcohol
- drug and alcohol-related crime
- public drunkenness/intoxication
- other (please specify).

Shoppers were encouraged to 'vote' by putting a disk into a corresponding tube. During the day disks (votes) accumulated to form a visual indicator of the community's high priority issues.

The team plans to use the results when conducting other consultations.









Some common consultation methods*

How to use this table

Consultation is defined as the potential (high, medium or low) for information and feedback to be two-way between the consulting team and the people consulted.

This table includes a selection of methods that your CDAT could use to consult with people on issues and/or activities. You can use the table to work out which method best suits your community and your issue. You could use more than one method for your topic to compare the information you get.

Adapted from Barnard, K. and Lowall, S. (1998) *We've got to stop meeting like this*. Toronto Health City Office.

Focus	Method	Description	Suitable for...	People participate by...	Outcome	Amount of time, costs and skill level required	Comments and hints
Community-wide	Town, community, and neighbourhood meetings	One-off meetings to discuss local issues, 50 to 200+ people.	A local single issue (e.g. perceived increase in drug-related crime).	Listening, discussing, questioning, offering opinions.	Topic discussed, some analysis.	Time – medium Costs – low/medium Skill level – low/medium	Favours confident speakers. People discuss issues – may not provide solutions. Lots of people may hear information, but only a few may speak.
Small group	Perspective Setting	Series of meetings that focus on long range issues.	Bringing all stakeholders' differing opinions together to develop action plans (e.g. developing Local Drug Action Plan).	Answering questionnaires, providing suggestions, attending meetings.	Showing the big picture, analysis, generating solutions.	Time – high Costs – medium/high Skill level – low/medium	Series can last several months. Requires preparation to deal with complex issues (e.g. questionnaires, consultation forums). Good opportunity for two-way information/feedback.
Small group	Focus groups	Small group (8 to 15) facilitated discussion on a specific issue.	Gauging community members' opinions (e.g. getting detailed feedback on a drug information resource pamphlet).	Engaging in discussion, offering opinions and possible solutions.	Gives overview, analysis and snapshot of concerns.	Time – medium Costs – medium/high Skill level – high	Conducting several groups with different target audiences can increase participation and engagement. Can be high cost if a facilitator is hired. Good opportunity for two-way information/feedback.
Individual	Key informant interviews	Interviewing key figures in community such as Elders, politicians, business people and others.	Gaining individual insights into an issue, legitimising it (e.g. assessing particular points of view on Safe Partying projects).	Contributing opinions, lending legitimacy to an issue, suggesting solutions.	Shows big picture, enlists key informants' support.	Time – medium Costs – low Skill level – low	Two way information/ feedback is high, but numbers are low. Should be used with other methods to avoid excluding people.
Individual	Surveys	Simple answer questionnaires on a single topic.	Gathering information on an issue or problem (e.g. researching community views on drugs).	Completing the survey.	Provides overview and information.	Time – medium Costs – low Skill level – medium	Improve return rates by handing out and collecting survey at community gatherings or doing short interviews.
							

* Visit www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drug_action for more details and information on consultation practices and methods.

Consultation Checklist¹

Your CDAT can use the following questions to plan your next consultation. You can also use these questions to review a previous project and establish your strengths and areas for improvement. Ask yourselves:



<p>Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Why are we doing this consultation? <input type="checkbox"/> What are we consulting about – identifying community perceptions (a general consultation) or canvassing an already identified issue (a specific consultation)? <input type="checkbox"/> When will we start and finish the process? <input type="checkbox"/> How will the consultation improve our final outcomes? 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 
<p>Inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Who are the stakeholders in this issue? <input type="checkbox"/> Will we target the whole community or specific groups? <input type="checkbox"/> How will we include stakeholders who are difficult to access e.g. young people, people from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the venue appropriate? 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 
<p>Method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Which consultation methods are most appropriate for this issue? (refer to the <i>Common Consultation Methods</i> table) <input type="checkbox"/> Which consultation methods are most appropriate for the participants? <input type="checkbox"/> Which consultation methods suit both? 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 
<p>Providing information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What information will we give the participants to help them make an informed decision? <input type="checkbox"/> How will we give them this information e.g. handout? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the information easy to understand and meaningful? 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 
<p>Timing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> At what stage of our decision-making process is this consultation taking place? (see <i>Focus</i>) 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 
<p>Responsiveness and feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has the decision-making process been made clear ie. do people know how much they can input? <input type="checkbox"/> How does the method provide feedback to the people consulted? 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 
<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> How much will the consultation process cost, including evaluation processes? <input type="checkbox"/> What are our potential sources of funds and materials? <input type="checkbox"/> Who are the groups/agencies that can help us? <input type="checkbox"/> What other consultations have already been done? 	<p>Notes</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 

¹ Adapted from *Community Consultation Resource Guide* Victorian Local Governance Association 2001.

Contact information



If you would like more information about the *Drug Action Toolkit*, contact the Central Office or the Senior Project Manager in your region, or visit the website www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

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Resources

Visit www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action for more details and information on consultation practices and methods.



Feedback

Drug Action Toolkit welcomes feedback. Please call **(02) 9228 3731** or email drugaction@premiers.nsw.gov.au

