



**Continenence
Foundation
of Australia**



Partnering with Consumers Framework

May 2021



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Who we are

The Continence Foundation of Australia is the national peak body promoting bladder and bowel control health.

The Foundation values the important contribution and lived experience of consumers and carers to all work that we undertake.

Our vision



An Australian community free of the stigma and restrictions of all aspects of incontinence across the lifespan.

Our purpose

Eliminate the stigma and restrictions of all aspects of incontinence through research, advocacy, solutions, consumer education and professional development.



Why partnering with consumers is important

The Foundation is committed to Partnering with Consumers to inform all elements of its work. Our shared framework will guide our partnership and enable a pathway to participation and engagement, for a diverse and valued consumer, carer and community collaborative, who are focused on enhancing health and wellbeing outcomes of individuals and the work of the Foundation.

The Foundation recognises that participation and engagement of consumers with a lived experience of incontinence and their carers in the activities of the organisation at all levels will add great depth of experience and enhance the shared value of our work.

This framework provides the Foundation and its stakeholders with guidance in relation to the key actions that can be implemented to ensure an effective consumer, carer and community focused partnering approach.

The Foundation will continue to work to strengthen, improve and promote partnerships with consumers, carers and members of our diverse community through a range of flexible, accessible and adaptable methods of partnered engagement.

Partnering with consumers and carers is empowering and respectful and also results in:

- responsive and accountable health focused organisations
- services that are more accessible and appropriate for consumers
- higher quality consumer focused information and resources
- ethical and democratic approaches to working together
- improvements in relation to quality, responsiveness, safety and accountability of our services
- the building of the capacity of all stakeholders
- improvements in relation to lived experience, daily activities, lifestyle and health outcomes.

The Framework provides guidance to consumers, carers and Foundation staff on how to support and facilitate consumer and carer participation and engagement within key areas of the Foundation's business and governance including:

- policy
- planning
- service delivery (which includes helpline, health promotion, special projects, education, marketing, and communications)
- research
- evaluation.

Definitions

The following definitions clarify what is meant by the term's used throughout this document:

Consumers are people who use, or are potential users, of the Foundations services including their family and carers.

Carers are any people who provide unpaid support to someone who needs help because of poor bowel and/or bladder control health and pelvic floor dysfunction. This broad definition is not restricted by age, gender or relationship to the person who needs assistance.

Health professionals are recognised as paid workers who are providing health focused assistance, care or support to an individual with a lived experience of incontinence or supporting a carer.

Lived experience refers to an individual's experience of health or illness together with the knowledge they have gathered from this experience. Consumers with a lived experience of incontinence bring a valued knowledge and understanding gained from their direct experience.

Partnering with consumers is the Foundation actively working with consumers with a lived experience of incontinence to ensure that our services and activities are reflective of people's needs. It is a partnership with consumers that is informed by dignity and respect, and where information sharing, participation and collaboration is actively encouraged and supported.

Engagement describes the way a consumer and/or carer interacts with the Foundation. Some engagements are for specific services or for information, whilst other engagements are longer standing or enduring and are informed by a commitment to participation in processes to inform decision making, policy, service delivery and evaluation to enhance the work of the Foundation.

Co-design is a focused service improvement approach of consumer-centred planning, decision making, co-production and design; where new services or service reviews are determined in partnership with consumers who use them and may be affected by them.

Participation refers to the process of involving consumers and carers in the planning, development, implementation and review of policies, services and practices which affect them.

Capacity building refers to the process by which consumers, carers and staff obtain, improve and retain skills, knowledge, tools and other resources that empower their understanding and decision making in relation to continence.

Services refers to all the public facing offers made through the program areas of the Foundation.

General principles

The Foundation is committed to Partnering with Consumers.

We see our shared work to involve decision making processes and collaborative engagements that will be informed in part by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model.

In addition to this approach we are guided by the following principles:

- mutual respect and value
- diversity
- enable through information
- leadership
- partnership and collaboration
- capacity building
- integrity and accountability
- be fair and transparent
- follow through on commitments
- evidence based best practice

We will also create a safe space to try new approaches and learn from mistakes to inform new and innovative approaches to our shared work. We will support partnerships that encourage all participants to fail safely.

In relation to this framework reflecting diversity means inclusion of often underrepresented voices and experiences of the broadest range of individuals with lived experience, groups and circumstances including but not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- People of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
- People living with a lived experience of disability
- Older Australians
- People who have lived experience of mental illness
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- People living in regional, rural and remote communities
- Children and Young people
- Health and illness conditions

Elements of engagement



The level of consumer partnering in our shared work will vary depending on the activity, project or body of work we are engaging in. Different levels of influence will be appropriate for specific activities.

The levels of engagement will range from informing activities which are more passively engaged approaches, through to more actively engaged co-designed work as part of an empowerment focused approach. The Foundation will work with consumers at the involve, collaborate and empowerment levels wherever we can.

Framework*

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide consumers and carers with evidence based, best practice information to assist them in understanding the support, opportunities and solutions available	To obtain consumer and carer feedback and evaluation of services provided	To work directly with consumers and carers throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with consumers and carers in each aspect of the decision-making process including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of consumers and carers
Outcome	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how consumers and carers influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how consumer and carer input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement your decision

*Based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*Based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Our Plan



Improve health & wellbeing of people living with incontinence

How

- Promoting healthy behaviours.
- Listening and learning.
- Being flexible in addressing consumer need.

Measures of success

- Increased participation and influence by consumers in our engagement activities.



Partner with consumers in all areas of our work

How

- Working in diverse partnerships.
- Communicating clearly with consumers

Measures of success

- Enhanced reflection of lived experience and consumer perspectives in Foundation governance, work and activities.



Work with consumers to develop & achieve our goals

How

- Using flexible strategies for engagement.
- Engage in respectful and inclusive ways.
- Providing pathways to participation to influence our work.

Measures of success

- Increased understanding of the strengths of our consumers.
- Stronger connections with people with a lived experience of incontinence.
- Consumers see themselves reflected in our achievements.



Communicate our partnership activities & learnings

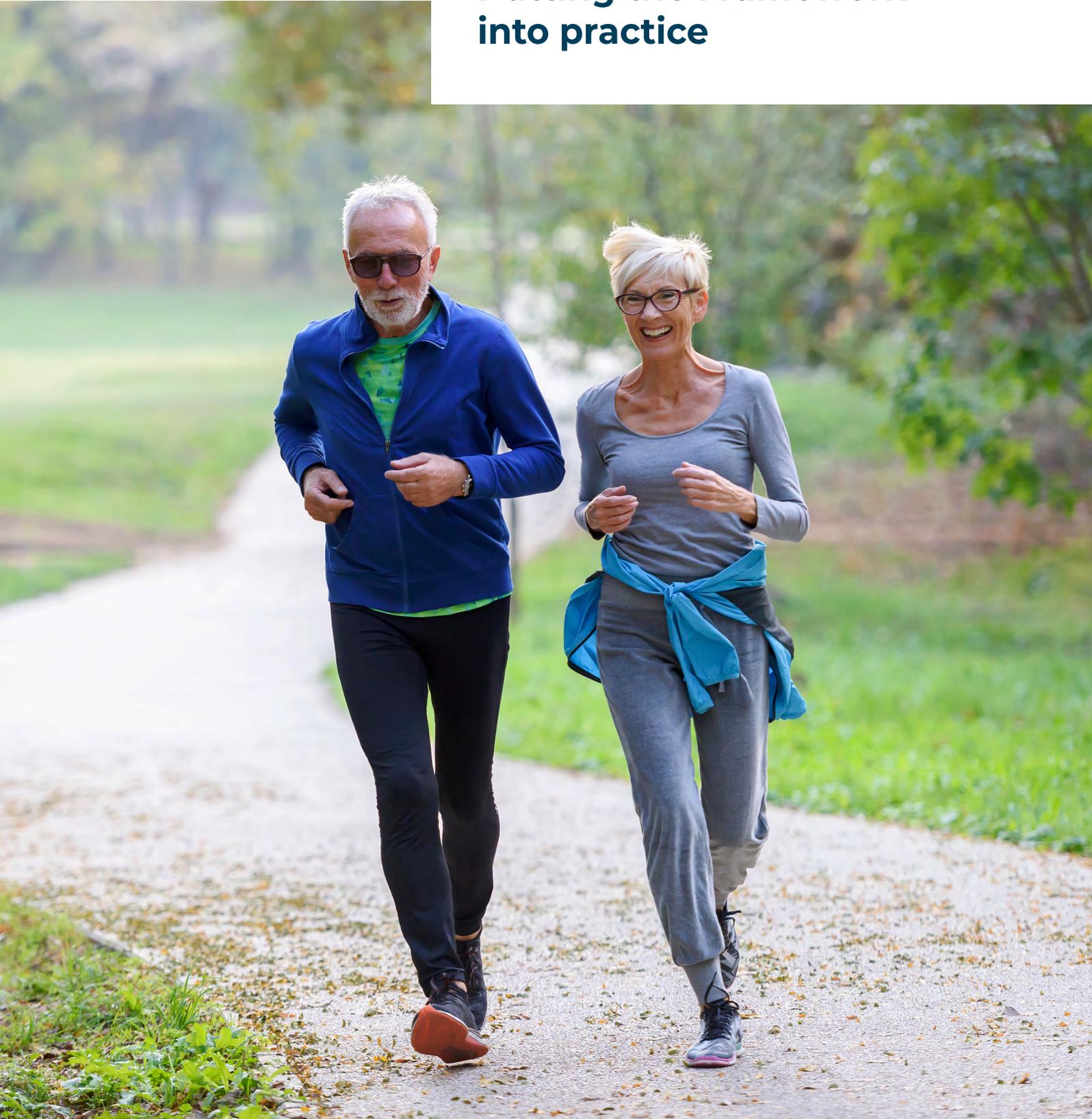
How

- Share consumer stories, lived experience and journey mapping to reflect success.
- Work with our networks to share information about our work.

Measures of success

- Increased awareness of Foundation activities by a more diverse audience.
- Increased impact of advocacy, behavior change and education activities.

Putting the Framework into practice



Communication

The Foundation will ensure pathways to communicate clearly with consumers.

We place value on enhancing communication approaches and pathways for all partners to participate in skills development opportunities to ensure success.

Effective communication that is respectful, informed and timely is a key element to support the success of our partnership approach. Two-way communication in our shared work is essential and will be enabled across our organisation.

Health literacy is an enabler of communication and our partnering with consumers approach will ensure opportunities to further enhance our support for this important work.

Online interactions are now a greater part of our partnership work. The Foundation will work to ensure that pathways to participation in activities that take place in an online/virtual environment are informed by appropriate accessibility principles.

Policy

Policy in this framework refers to the guidance documents which direct all aspects of the Foundation's operations.

The level of engagement will vary depending on the level of consumer partnering required and agreed.

Document	Description	Level of Engagement & Participation
Policy	High level organisational statements which incorporate the Foundations principles and industry regulatory obligations and standards.	Involve to Empower
Position Statement	Statements which help to clarify the Foundation's approach to emerging issues for the organisation and its communities of interest.	Involve or Collaborate
Procedures	Outline expectations regarding the management of a matter including the key requirements or a detailed description of all essential processes.	Up to Consult, depending on the issues covered in the procedure
Guidelines	Developed to support and guide staff to achieve the expectations outlined in a procedure or policy and offer additional detail and context.	Up to Consult, depending on the issues covered in the guidelines
Work tools	All other forms such as work instructions, business rules, enrolment forms, assessment tools, forms, flow charts, checklists, operating procedures etc. They may have business unit or organisational application.	Up to Consult, depending on the issues covered in the work tool

Planning

Planning refers to the processes the Foundation undertakes to set future directions and priorities at organisational level; the business planning processes at service unit level to implement the strategic objectives; and project planning around specific activities.

Planning Activity	Description	Level of Engagement and Participation
Strategic Planning	The strategic plan is reviewed and developed every 4 years and reflects the Foundations aspirations. The plan is developed by the Board and Senior/Leadership Management Team.	Consult, Involve or Collaborate.
Implementation Planning	The Implementation Plan is the work program for the first three years of the Strategic Plan, and it is developed and owned by the Senior Management Group. Each strategy is assigned to a Senior Manager and they are responsible for leading the strategy and providing a progress report to the CEO/ Board. The Implementation Plan is reviewed annually by CEO with subsequent adjustments undertaken if required.	Consult, Involve or Collaborate, depending on the specific strategy. Senior Managers must identify and justify the appropriate level to be implemented as part of their reports to CEO/Board.
Business Unit Planning (work plans)	Annual Business Unit Plans (work plans) are developed by the Managers. They identify the key projects, activities or tasks required to be undertaken to deliver the work identified in the implementation plan and funding agreements. They will include specific timelines related to the year of operation.	Up to Collaborate, depending on the specific project, activity or task. Managers must identify and justify the appropriate level to be implemented as part of the regular reporting arrangement.
Project & Program Planning	Projects within the Foundation can vary greatly in size, resource commitment, risk and strategic value. Projects need to align with strategic and business unit planning. Preparation, review, monitoring and reporting will be contained within the project plan and will vary from project to project.	Up to Empower. Managers/Project Officers must identify and justify the appropriate level to be implemented and include participation and engagement as part of the regular reporting arrangements.
Ongoing Management	At the business unit level, structures and processes exist that engage consumers and carers in hearing about and, as appropriate, participating in decisions. This may include Focus Groups, Reference Groups and/or committee participation.	Up to Empower. Managers/Project Officers must identify and justify the appropriate level to be implemented and include participation and engagement as part of the regular reporting arrangements.

Service Provision

Service Provision refers to all matters relating to the way the Foundation services are provided at the community/stakeholder/individual level as well as seeking and responding to feedback on service quality and performance to support continuous improvement activities.

Activity	Description	Level of Engagement and Participation
Program Delivery	This includes all interactions involved in delivery of services. We aim to achieve maximum consumer and carer input into the services we provide, within resource and funding constraints.	Up to Empower. Managers must identify and justify when alternate levels are implemented and include participation and engagement as part of the regular reporting arrangements.
Quality Improvement	Investigating service quality, measuring service satisfaction and implementing quality improvement initiatives.	Up to Collaborate. Managers must identify and justify the appropriate Level to be implemented and include participation and engagement as part of the regular reporting arrangements.

Research

Research refers to specific investigations to answer questions which contribute to our knowledge of a subject or to generate or test a theory.

The Foundation supports research to ensure programs are relevant and effective and to improve and influence the future direction of bladder and bowel control health.

The Foundation is committed to including the views of consumers and carers in identifying research topics, participating in research, promoting research opportunities as well as being researchers themselves.

All research proposals must be approved through the Foundation CEO and Board.

Evaluation

Evaluation refers to the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the programs, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.

It differs from research in terms of intent, purpose and intended audiences.

However, research and evaluation use many similar techniques and methods so the principles and practices around consumer and carer participation and engagement are similar.

The Foundation regularly evaluates programs and participates in externally mandated evaluations to ensure that we are continuing to meet the needs of consumers and carers and to test new programs.

Evaluation requires participation and engagement with relevant stakeholders, consumers and carers that will involve a variety of mechanisms.

We will seek to engage stakeholders, consumers and carers in a diverse range of partnering opportunities and will provide feedback on the work undertaken to inform future pathways to participation.

Processes for Engagement, Participation and Capacity Building

To support the implementation of this framework, the Foundation will review and consider the following processes:

Consumer Advisory Committee

The Consumer Advisory Committee will support a review of the framework and work with the Foundation to develop a range of recommendations to support consumer engagement and participation.

They will review their current terms of reference in line with the framework and support the implementation of consumer engagement and participation strategies whenever possible.

The Committee will continue to report to the Foundation's Management Team/Board and will be responsible for providing input on the user experience and the needs of consumers and their carers from their lived experience of incontinence.

Continence Consumer Network

The Consumer Network may be established to:

- Provide consumers with an entry point for participation in the Foundation.
- Provide a screening process for establishing consumers expertise and interest.
- Provide consumers and carers with a platform to hear and respond to Foundation initiatives (through specific projects or programs, sitting as representatives on committees etc)
- Propose new initiatives or changes
- Be available as a resource to "keep us on track"
- Be the "go to" people for advice on all matters that pertain to the development, review, and implementation of services
- Provide a consumer and carer voice in decision making

Training:

In order to build our shared capacity and knowledge base the Foundation will:

- Provide training to all staff and board to embed the principles of Partnering with Consumers with a focus on consumer engagement and participation.
- Provide skills development, support and training to consumers and carers to ensure they are well supported in their contribution to the Foundation.

Reimbursement:

All consumers will be fully reimbursed any costs expended related to their involvement with the Foundation. Appropriate reimbursement will be budgeted in all cost centres.

Ongoing feedback & reflection:

Consumers are encouraged to provide feedback in regard to their participation on an ongoing basis. Pathways to feedback will be clearly articulated and accessible.

In addition, an annual reflection opportunity will be provided to consumers participating in our partnering work. This will allow consideration of improvement and support opportunities for everyone participating in Partnering with Consumers.

Further to this we will:

- enable flexible mechanisms and safe pathways for consumers to provide feedback
- provide any information for consumers (in multiple formats) before, during and after consultation activities including feedback pathways guidance
- listen to consumers to ensure mutual understanding and resolution of presenting challenges
- continue to improve communication, so it is responsive to cultural, linguistic, cognitive and other needs.

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