

Community & Consumer Engagement Framework

Fostering healthier
communities

2025



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1. Introduction

COORDINARE is dedicated to fostering healthier communities. We collaborate to co-design comprehensive system-level improvements that reduce barriers to deliver seamless access to community centric care for everyone in our region, and especially those facing the greatest health inequities.

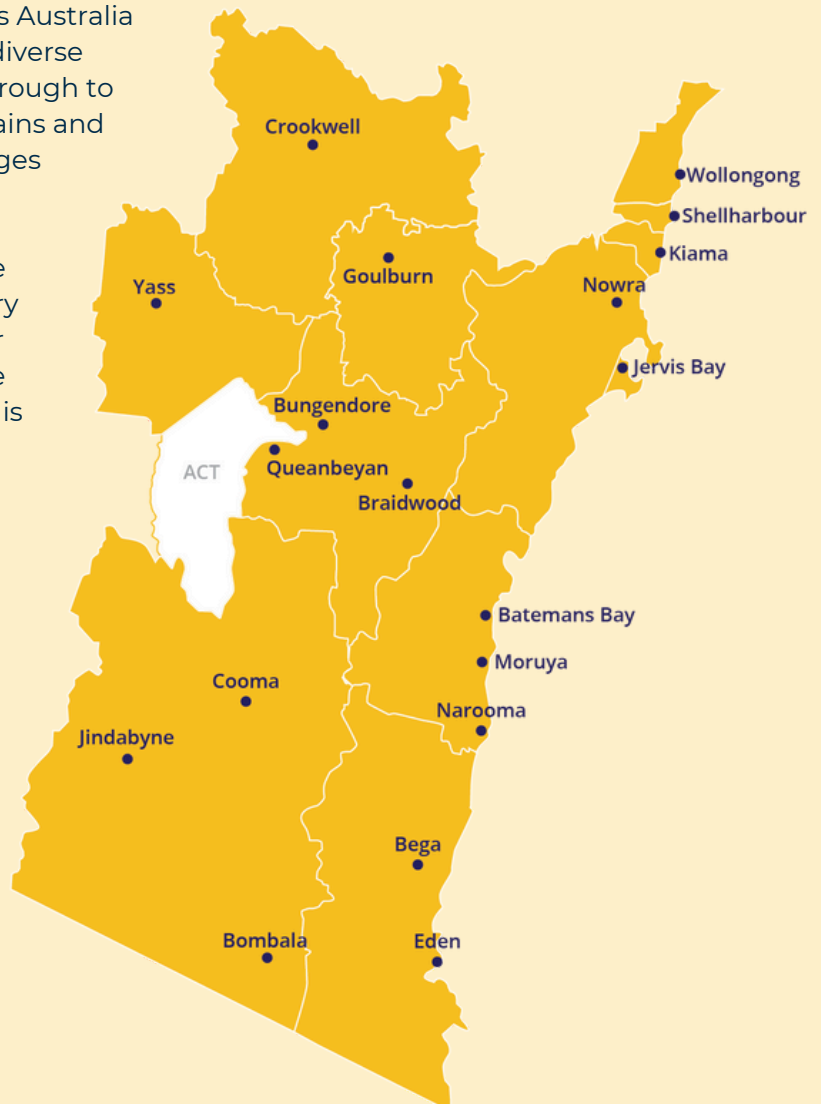
We believe that communities flourish when people can access health care and are activated to manage their own health, resulting in improved outcomes and a high-quality care experience.

COORDINARE - South Eastern NSW Primary Health Network (PHN) is one of 31 PHNs across Australia and one of 10 PHNs in NSW. We are a diverse region, covering metropolitan areas through to rural communities, from coast, mountains and tablelands, with more than 150 languages spoken.

More than 33,180 Aboriginal people live in the region, and we work with primary and acute care to integrate services for over 648,800 people. Subsequently the range of communities and consumers is diverse and our work to identify local needs and engage in health service planning, design, delivery, and evaluation should reflect this diversity.

We focus our efforts on those who face the biggest inequities to foster better and more equitable health outcomes across our region.

To do this, we collaborate with the community, general practices and other stakeholders to design solutions that make it easier for people to get the health care they need.



COORDINARE uses community and consumer engagement principles to:

- ensure that consumers and carers have every opportunity to contribute to an activated community, participate in their own health care and influence the development of primary health care services
- support a health system capable of delivering health outcomes that are informed by, and matter to, consumers.

1.1 Definitions

Consumer engagement

Refers to the systematic involvement of consumers and the broader community in the planning, decision-making, and evaluation of healthcare services. This engagement aims to ensure that healthcare services are responsive to the needs and preferences of those who use them (Health Consumers NSW - adaptation).

“Participation in formal or informal planning, delivery, implementation, and evaluation of all activities associated with health and mental health services (voluntary or paid), as well as in all processes which affect the lives of consumers and carers, through sharing of information, opinions, and decision-making power.”

COORDINARE'S definition of consumers includes:

- a carer, family member, or advocate
- a group of consumers or consumer organisations

Community

Refers to a group of individuals who share common interests, values, or geographic location, and who interact with each other to achieve shared goals and address collective needs.

Community engagement involves actively involving these individuals in discussions, decision-making, and activities that impact their collective well-being. This process aims to build trust, foster collaboration, and create solutions that benefit both the community and the engaging entity.

1.2 Why is engagement important

Community and consumer engagement is at the core of a people oriented health system. Healthcare is better when we listen, understand and respond to the people who use the health services we facilitate (Health Consumers NSW).

It provides an avenue to gain an improved understanding of the health system, including what is working well and what is not, and to organise care to meet the needs of consumers and our communities and thereby improve health outcomes.

Some populations are at greater risk of adverse health outcomes, including those with low socio-economic status, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and refugee communities.

Engagement gives communities and consumers the opportunity to:

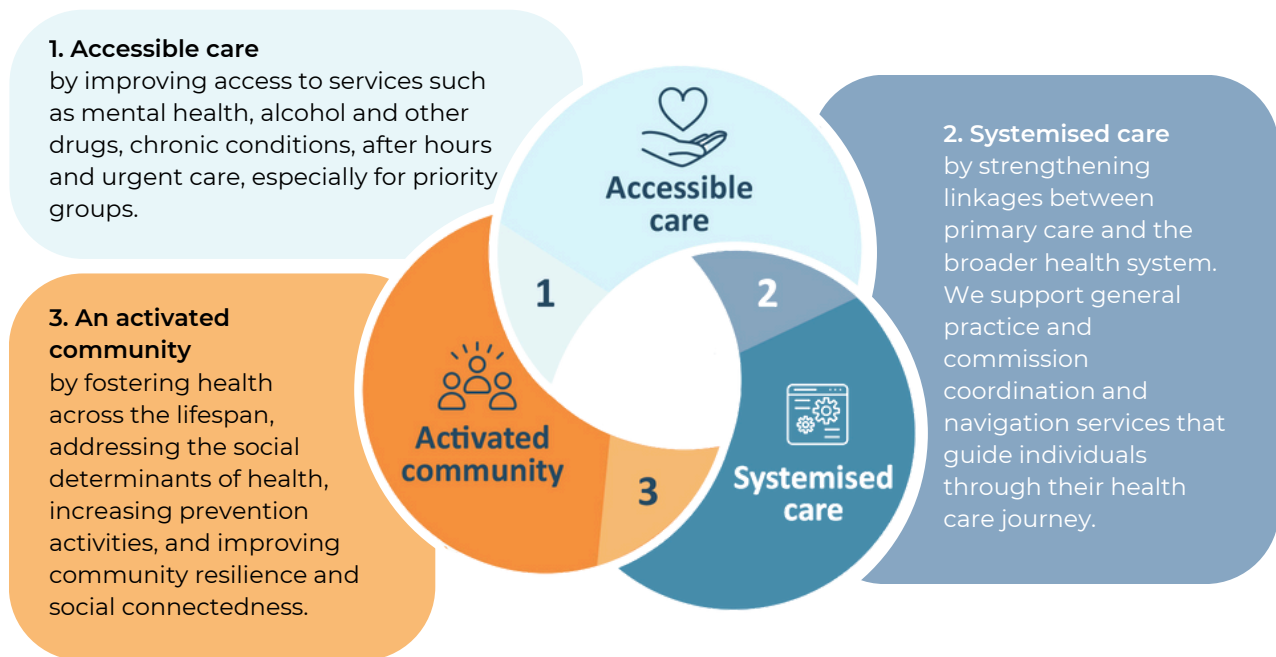
- have their needs understood and concerns heard
- contribute as experts through their lived experience
- participate in the processes to drive health service and system improvement.

COORDINARE listens to and seeks to engage people as active participants, valuing their lived experience, to understand the needs of local communities and how people prefer to use and access services. This assists us to:

- design better connected models of health care
- leverage available service providers to meet needs
- coordinate linkages across the health care sector.



Community and consumer engagement is a key ingredient for the organisation to utilise through:



1.3 COORDINARE's Framework

COORDINARE is committed to working effectively with community and consumers, to learn from past consumer experiences, foster consumer enablement and to involve consumers in the design, implementation, and monitoring of person-centred approaches to health care in south eastern NSW.

The framework will support all those in COORDINARE to:

- contribute to and utilise well planned and more informed policies, projects, programs and services
- facilitate effective collaboration and knowledge sharing
- create capacity and opportunities for community and consumer input and co-design
- understand how to involve consumers across the commissioning cycle
- continuously improve our engagement strategies.

2. Principles of practice for community and consumer engagement

COORDINARE's engagement activities are guided by the following principles:



Purposeful and impactful

Engagement is intentional, timely, and focused on influencing decisions and achieving measurable outcomes. Involve communities and consumers early and define clear indicators of success.



Shared leadership and partnership

Consumers and communities are recognised as equal partners with influence at all levels. Agree on participation methods and levels together to ensure meaningful involvement across systems and services. Contribute to building leadership capacity.



Mutual value and reciprocity

Engagement delivers value for all involved, fostering trust, resilience, and social connectedness. Maintain two-way communication and feedback loops throughout the process.



Empowering and capacity building

Provide ongoing, culturally appropriate tools, training, and resources to strengthen health literacy and enable confident, informed participation. Support individual choice by providing options for involvement and enabling informed decisions about participation.



Respect

Take a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach that ensures psychologically safe engagement environments and commits to “do no harm.” Listen actively and be humble and curious. Value time, experience, and existing community assets.



Trust and accountability

Build trust through transparency, consistency, and delivering on commitments. Set clear expectations, report progress openly, and be realistic about what can be achieved within available resources and scope of influence. Clearly demonstrate how input has shaped decisions.



Inclusive and accessible

Ensure engagement opportunities are flexible, culturally safe, and responsive to diverse needs. Remove physical, cultural, and digital barriers and meet people where they are. Use clear, plain language in all communications.



Equity and diversity

Reflect the region's diversity, prioritise voices from communities experiencing health inequities, and provide varied opportunities for involvement. Actively remove systemic barriers and resource participation for priority groups.



Learning and continuous improvement

Draw on lived experience, practice wisdom, and evidence to continually improve engagement practices. Embed evaluation and feedback into all engagement activities.

2.1 Community and consumer engagement as a whole of organisation responsibility

COORDINARE supports community and consumer engagement through the following enablers:

2.1.1 Governance

COORDINARE's governance structure includes Aboriginal Health Councils (AHC), Clinical Councils (CC), and Community Advisory Committees (CAC). These advisory groups advise the COORDINARE Board on a range of strategic opportunities for targeted engagement and communication with consumers and local communities including:

- providing considered approaches to determining and responding to health system issues and inefficiencies within local communities, from a consumer perspective
- recommending effective approaches to ensure community and consumer consultation and feedback is available and fit-for- purpose throughout the commissioning cycle
- identifying approaches to effectively capture, measure and understand the patient experience and then apply this information to influence quality and system improvement
- considering strategies to assist consumer navigation of the health system through, for example, health literacy initiatives, patient self- management approaches and/or system input for care coordination more broadly
- the advisory groups may also be asked to actively consider relevant strategic issues emerging across the general practice community and other clinical networks and/or community groups.

2.1.2 Operational support

Supporting systems and processes that support the principles of meaningful consumer engagement and experience across all aspects of planning, strategy development, service design, commissioning and evaluation. This may include:

- coordinating opportunities for community and consumer input to inform the work of the organisation as a 'business as usual' approach
- facilitating development and/or availability of key resources to support COORDINARE (individuals and organisational) and its providers in community and consumer engagement
- supporting an evidence informed approach to planning community and consumer engagement
- continuous monitoring and evaluation of community and consumer engagement and participation methods including through understanding both the reach and scope of engagement across organisational activities
- monitoring, measuring and evaluating community and consumer partnerships, through methods such as recording consumer experience, ensuring two-way communication flow, and feedback loops to ensure that the partnerships are meeting the needs of the community and consumers.

2.1.3 Internal policies, procedures and guidelines

COORDINARE's policies and procedures support effective community and consumer engagement. Examples include:

- Privacy Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Paid Participation Policy
- Media Policy
- Population Health Data and Information Governance Policy
- Data Breach Prevention and Management Policy.



2.2 COORDINARE'S model of engagement

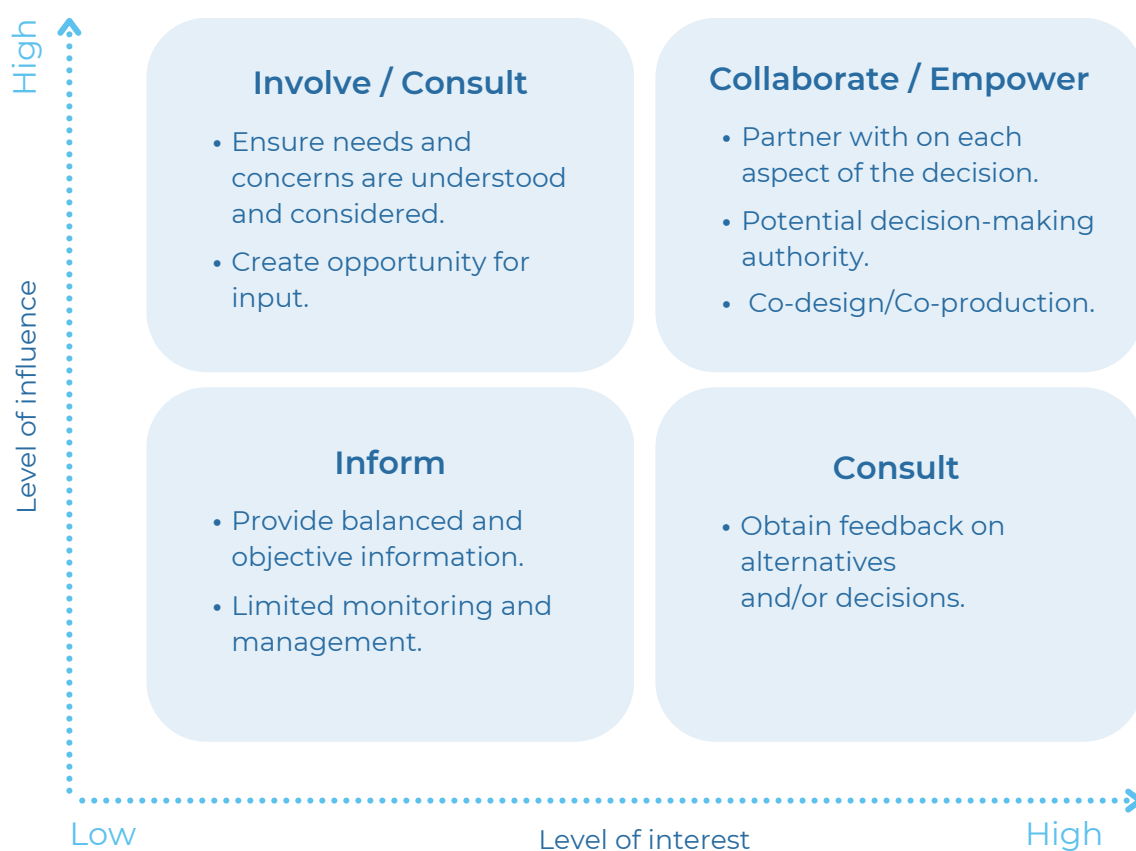
COORDINARE prioritises collaboration and the facilitation of purposeful community and consumer engagement. We actively facilitate active engagement across the commissioning cycle, and we ensure a perpetual cycle of community and consumer engagement via regular advisory group meetings.

COORDINARE uses an adapted version of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (www.iap2.org.au) as its model of engagement (See Figure 2 on page 12).

The matrix assists in selecting identifying the purpose of engagement and subsequently guides us in selecting an accessible method suited to the level of participation and subsequent engagement of engagement.

A carefully curated process of engagement enables us to collect the feedback required to inform and influence a project/program outcome (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Matrix - how to target engagement given interest and influence levels



Additional factors that may influence the participation levels are the organisation's goals, timeframes and resources.

The approach is adaptive, flexible, and creative in methods of engagement, and mindful of the need to embed culturally appropriate, lived experience and trauma informed approaches across the work that we do.

There are five IAP2 Spectrum levels of participation:

- 1 Inform:** information is a one-way exchange and occurs for the purpose of conveying facts, and decisions, and enhancing knowledge and understanding to inform decision-making and support engagement.
- 2 Consult:** consultation involves two way exchanges and is used to find out what communities and consumers think about an issue, their perspectives, and 'lived' experiences of health system policies, programs and services. Consultation provides communities and consumers with an opportunity to share views, needs, interests and aspirations from their perspective and to use these to enhance policies and services and increase acceptance of a decision or initiative.
- 3 Involve:** involvement is about shared decision making in planning, delivery and evaluation of health services, programs and policies. Community, consumers and COORDINARE jointly own the processes and outcomes. This may occur on an ongoing basis, a single health issue, a range of health issues or on policy matters.
- 4 Collaborate:** communities and consumers work together with COORDINARE and other stakeholders to develop solutions and initiatives and decisions are made within specified guidelines.
- 5 Empower:** stakeholders make decisions within specified guidelines and the decisions are then implemented.

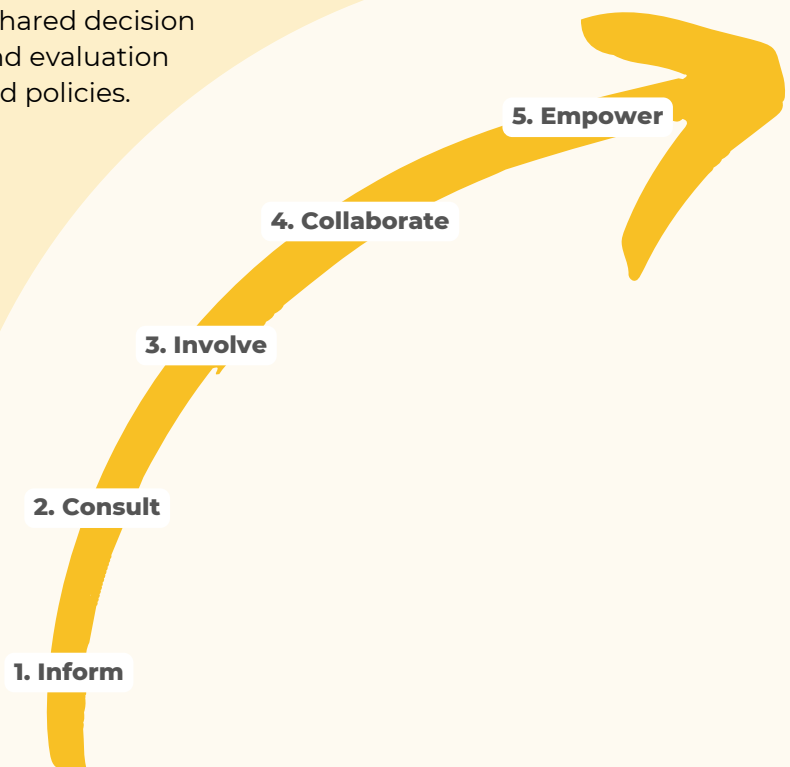


Figure 2: IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement

2.3 Applying the model

Table 1 identifies some of the current approaches that have been utilised within the model. Other methods of participation may evolve over time.

Table 1: Methods of participation

Community/consumer interest and influence	Engagement goal		Method of participation (for example)
Limited interest Limited influence	Inform	Seek to provide balanced, objective, accurate and consistent information to assist consumers to understand the organisation, the initiatives, the issues and the alternatives, including opportunities and/ or solutions.	Fact sheets
			Letter box drop
			Newsletters
			Media release, radio, newspaper, television
			On-site display
			Website updates
			Public presentations
			Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Vimeo)
High interest Limited influence	Consult	Seek to obtain input from consumers throughout the various stages of the commissioning cycle - needs assessment, planning, prioritising, implementation and evaluation.	Survey and opinion polls
			Focus group
			Interviews
			Online forums
			Aboriginal Community yarning circles

Community/consumer interest and influence	Engagement goal		Method of participation (for example)
Limited Interest High Influence	Involve	Seek to work directly with community and/or consumers throughout the process to ensure their concerns and needs are consistently understood and considered.	Workshops
			Focus groups
			Advisory Committees
			Commissioning Assessment Panels
			Aboriginal Community yarning circles
			Consumer training opportunities
High interest High influence	Collaborate	To partner with community and/or consumers including the development of alternatives, decision making and identification of preferred solutions	Participatory funding and reporting
			Reference groups
			Co-design projects
			Participatory decision-making
	Empower	To place final decision making in the hands of the consumer.	Community facilitation
			Advocacy
			Local governance
			Joint planning

3. Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement in approaches to community and consumer engagement is important. Participation will only remain successful if we continue to listen and respect each other as equal contributors to the engagement process.

We will continue to listen to the needs of our communities and consumers and proactively work together with people to jointly influence change.

Whilst continuing to consult on what the structural options for ongoing engagement with stakeholders will look like, COORDINARE will continue to make sure the way it partners with consumers is underpinned by the principle outlined in this framework, developed in consultation with the Community Advisory Committee.

IAP2 is currently working on strengthening its model to specifically include Aboriginal communities. The consultation and outcomes are due for release during 2025, and COORDINARE will review and update any significant recommendations from this work to its model.



4. Supporting documents

- COORDINARE's Strategic Direction 2024-2027
- COORDINARE Clinical Governance Framework
- COORDINARE Commissioning Framework
- COORDINARE's Reconciliation Plan
- COORDINARE's Aboriginal Cultural Protocols
- COORDINARE's Co-design Toolkit

4.1 Version history

Date	Version no.	Lead author	Approved by	Reason for update
Aug 2016	1	Jo Risk	Dianne Kitcher	<i>Original</i>
Jan 2019	2	Jo Risk	Dianne Kitcher	<i>Regular review</i>
Jan 2020	3	Jo Risk	Dianne Kitcher	<i>Update to align with new framework</i>
Jan 2023	4	Jo Risk	Dianne Kitcher	<i>Regular review</i>
Dec 2025	5	Juanita Murphy	Prue Buist	<i>Regular review</i>



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