

# Involvement of participants in the governance, operations and/or leadership of your organisation

This factsheet provides information about how providers afford participants with the opportunity to contribute to the governance of the organisation and have input into the development of organisational policy and processes relevant to the provision of supports and the protection of participant rights. This is a requirement of NDIS Practice Standard Outcome 2.1, Governance and Operational Management.

In considering how to invite, involve and work with participants to facilitate their involvement in the running of the organisation or in the goal-setting, planning and decision making for the provider, the NDIS Commission is clear that the ways this is done should be proportionate to the size, and scale of the provider and the scope and complexity of supports delivered.

Some examples of evidence to support meeting this Practice Standard indicator

- Policy on your genuine commitment to and belief in how participants help shape services and what processes you have in place for achieving that. At a minimum this should include those organisational policies and processes that focus on providing supports and for protecting participant rights.
- Policy on reasonable adjustment (reducing a persons disability has on their ability

to participate) to ensure decision making processes are inclusive.

- Examples of the changes or decisions that have been made or directions set for the organisation, as a result of participant involvement. I.e. documents relating to the review and development of a strategic plan, consumer representative committees, participant involvement on the board (e.g. agenda and minutes).
- Staff orientation (for new) and training (for current) includes how participants are involved in organisational decision making. This could be co-facilitated with participants.
- Responsibilities for fostering participation is documented in staff job descriptions and performance reviews.

## Elements to consider in your participation strategy;

### **Be clear about what participation is and how participation occurs in your organisation**

Participation is when participants are actively involved in decision-making and participate in developing, designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programs and services which impact their lives. It can occur at all levels within your organisation, from the Board, to staff recruitment, project evaluation, resource development to advisory groups. Identify where the business decisions take

place and then investigate and design ways of achieving better access to those situations.

There is no one correct strategy to achieve participation of participants. It usually requires a mix of strategies. Different participants will bring a variety of skills and levels of interest, so a range of opportunities may need to be created. Involvement in decisions can take many forms, including house meetings, participant committees, advisory committees, participant representation on interview panels for staff selection and participation in external reviews.

### **Have a plan of how you will establish and maintain a culture of inclusion**

Establishing a culture of participant inclusion in organisational decisions includes promoting and embedding a culture of respect, shared learning, deep listening and a commitment to action and change. This might involve committing to inclusive training for staff and the Board, changes to policies and procedures and removing barriers to participation.

### **Understand what limits participation and address these barriers**

Reasonable adjustment is the key to meaningful participation of people. For each of the ways you decide to enable participation, it is important to understand the support needs of the people who choose to participate. One of the first steps is to ask them about their access requirements. The importance of providing alternative formats, providing information with enough time before the meeting, the provision of support staff or assistive technology when needed, are some strategies people find useful. You may need

to review the way you communicate amongst those involved when decisions are made and what information you provide and how this is provided. You may want to start with simple decisions and build to more complex ones to allow people to learn about decision making processes. It may be that people need a support person to assist in understanding the content of information presented before a decision is made. Ask participants what involvement they would like and how best to meet their support needs to enable this to occur.

### **Encourage and welcome participation**

Whatever way you decide to include participation, ensure participants feel welcomed and included. This means reaching out to them before the event, ensuring that they feel valued during the event and following up with them after the event. Some settings can be intimidating. Other aspects that can assist people to be meaningfully are for organisations to consider to cover the cost of transport and pay people for their time, many organisations provide a voucher or at least a nice morning tea.

### **Review your meeting practice to ensure everyone is included**

The way you conduct the meeting, how people speak and the speed of conversation can all have an impact on access.

### **Find ways to give everyone a say**

You may consider checking in with everyone that their views have been heard before a final decision is made and you move to the next agenda item. If a participant feels intimidated, lacks confidence, or if the conversation skips ahead before they've had a chance to reflect

and respond, their input can be lost.

### **Check if what you are doing is working for everyone**

Evaluating what you do is important to ensure it is meaningful for everyone. Ideally you will measure the short term impacts and the longer-term outcomes.

## Resources to Assist

### **A Voice at the Table**

The Voice at the Table (VATT) website provides practical information and resources for organisations to ensure that people with cognitive disabilities are given a real and equal voice at the table. The site contains valuable resources to assist making participation work.

[voiceatthetable.com.au](http://voiceatthetable.com.au)