

CREATING A CONSUMER ADVISORY COUNCIL

The inclusion of consumer representatives in AF4Q Alliances is crucial to ensuring that the Alliance's efforts and end-results meet the needs of consumers. Consumer representatives also can serve as agents of change, working alongside other stakeholders to advance the goals of the Alliance. To effectively engage consumers in the work of AF4Q, Alliances should seek out representatives that truly represent consumers. A consumer leaderⁱ could be a patient with a chronic condition or a representative of a consumer advocacy organization that serves a specific population.

Once you have identified the appropriate consumer representatives to engage in your Alliance, it is important to ensure that they have a role in both the leadership and implementation of AF4Q. One way to do this is by adding a council, board, or body to your Alliance governance for the purpose of including the consumer perspective when shaping and advising AF4Q initiatives. Specifically, some Alliances have adopted Consumer Advisory Councils, Consumer Advisory Boards, Consumer Engagement Taskforces, and Expert Panels to serve in various capacities. This fact sheet outlines a set of best practices to help guide you as you create any form of a Consumer Advisory Council (CAC). These practices can be customized to your AF4Q Alliance's specific needs.

- I. **Alliance secures buy-in from existing Leadership Team and Board members to create Consumer Advisory Council.**
 - Raise awareness about the importance and value of a CAC to the AF4Q initiative among existing Alliance leadership.
 - Alliance leadership is necessary to build political will to achieve real and sustainable impact from consumer engagement. The Leadership Team and Board members' positive working relationships with consumers will result in more patient-centered efforts and improved health outcomes.

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ⁱ Please see the *Defining Consumer Representation* fact sheet for more information about how to identify appropriate consumer representatives to engage in AF4Q Alliances.

ⁱⁱ Please see the *Consumer Engagement in a Multistakeholder Group* fact sheet for more ideas on how to ensure that consumers are equal partners.

- Alliance meets with Leadership Team and Board members to solicit feedback about creating a CAC.
 - A CAC can only be effective if it is supported by the Leadership Team and Executive Board. Alliance should determine the appropriate process in order to best incorporate the CAC's decisions, recommendations and voice into the strategies and activities of the AF4Q initiative.

II. Alliance and consumer leaders collaborate to determine the roles and responsibilities of the Consumer Advisory Council.

- It is important to discuss with the consumer leaders their skills and interests and then craft CAC roles and responsibilities *with them* to maximize their effectiveness and sustain their involvement.
- Recognize the challenges consumer leaders face—
 - Consumer leaders already engaged with the Alliance can share insights into what factors may hinder their engagement e.g. limited time and resources, and any strategies the Alliance can use to offset those factors e.g. eliminate meetings held during the evening.

III. Alliance formalizes the role of the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) by creating a written document to outline its principle functions. Once the Alliance, consumer leaders, and other stakeholders have determined the roles and tasks appropriate for the CAC, they should formalize those roles in a written document (i.e. charter).

- Important considerations include—
 - How often will the CAC meet? Where will it meet?
 - How long will member terms last? What types of positions and how many will be available?
 - Are members appointed or is there an application process? How does the Leadership Team select the membership?
 - How will CAC recommendations be communicated to the other stakeholders?
 - What processes can be formalized to ensure that consumers are equal stakeholders?
- Develop ground rules for CAC membership and meetings—
 - What if a member is unable to fulfill the agreed upon expectations?
 - What is the preferred method of communication? Will there be a listserv?
 - CAC members should agree upon policies to ensure effective meetings. These policies could include something as simple as turning off all PDAs during meetings or something more significant such as how to solve internal disputes.ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ Please see *OnBoarding Materials* for more information on orienting consumer leaders.

^{iv} Please see *Consumer Engagement Survey* as an example of measuring meaningful engagement.

IV. Alliance identifies a decision-making process for the CAC and from the CAC to the broader AF4Q initiative.

- Designate seats on Alliance Leadership Team and workgroups, and if possible the AF4Q grantee's Board, for select CAC members—
 - The CAC should not function as a silo, but as an integrated part of the Alliance's governing bodies. Consumer leaders should be empowered to provide feedback and recommendations on AF4Q deliverables. They should be active partners in the Alliance, involved in decision-making, strategic planning, resource development, and outreach to the community.ⁱⁱ
- Implement a formalized decision-making process within the CAC to ensure all CAC stakeholders have an opportunity to engage meaningfully.
- Communicate to the CAC and the broader AF4Q bodies the process by which CAC decisions and recommendations will be reported to Alliance decision-making boards and bodies. Ideally, these boards and bodies will include CAC members and/or consumer representation.

V. Alliance orients all stakeholders to the goals of the Consumer Advisory Council and its members to AF4Q and the Alliance's goals and mission.

- Make sure council members possess a thorough understanding of the AF4Q initiative and its priorities and overall goals.
- Make sure CAC members understand and can carry out their CAC roles and responsibilities.
- Help council members understand the CAC charter, the decision-making process, available support, and CAC ground rules.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Orientation is not only for council members, but other stakeholders as well. Educate the stakeholders on each team about strategies for meaningful engagement and deliberately let them know how to make the inclusion of consumers successful. Ensure that all stakeholders and staff know why the consumers are at the table so that they can make the new council members feel welcome, solicit feedback from them, and benefit from their involvement.

VI. Alliance designates staff to support and maintain the membership of the Consumer Advisory Council.

- Provide CAC members with relevant quality and AF4Q content to enhance their knowledge.
- Brief CAC members regularly on all AF4Q initiatives and deliverables, solicit feedback, and invite CAC members to assist in shaping these efforts.
- Conduct survey to gauge the CAC members' experiences with the CAC and the overall AF4Q project. Survey findings should drive the Alliance's governance and multi-stakeholder facilitation improvement processes.^{iv}

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