AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY NETWORK

10 TIPS for Inclusive Consultation



When you make changes to policies, services or workplaces, you might ask employees, customers or communities for feedback. Are people with disability and neurodivergent people part of that? If not, now is a good time to start. When consultation is accessible, more people can take part, you spot barriers early and you make better decisions.

These tips will help you consult in a respectful and inclusive way.

1. Plan for inclusion early

Think about accessibility before you invite people to take part.

- Identify who needs to be involved and if there are any barriers to participation.
- Budget for accessible formats and adjustments, and allow enough time.
- Choose accessible venues, channels and ways to give feedback.

2. Invite different perspectives

One person cannot speak for everyone with disability.

- Include people with different disabilities, roles, backgrounds and experiences.
- Reach beyond the people who usually volunteer.
- Respect each participant's individual experience.

3. Explain what people can influence

Be clear about why you are consulting and what you expect it to influence.

- Explain the purpose, key questions and expected outcomes.
- Be upfront about decisions that are already fixed.
- Tell people how their feedback will be used.

4. Ask about access needs

Give everyone the chance to participate in a way that works for them.

- Include a question about access needs in invitations and registration forms.
- Offer options such as captioning, interpreters, quiet spaces or bringing a support person.

5. Check that your approach works

Test consultation materials and activities before you begin.

- Check surveys, documents, venues and online platforms for accessibility.
- Ask people with lived experience to review your approach.
- Have another option ready if technology or access arrangements fail.

6. Share information in advance

Give people time to read, think and prepare.

- Send agendas, questions and background information before the session.
- Use plain language, clear headings and accessible documents.
- Explain any technical words, charts or images.

7. Offer different ways to take part

People communicate and contribute in different ways.

- Offer in-person, online, written or verbal options where possible.
- Allow time to think and provide feedback after the session.
- Avoid requiring cameras, public speaking or immediate answers.

8. Make conversations welcoming

Help people contribute without pressure.

- Explain how the session will run and agree on respectful ways to participate.
- Ask one clear question at a time and avoid interruptions.
- Invite different views without putting anyone on the spot.

9. Value people's time and expertise

Make participation respectful and fair.

- Pay external contributors fairly when seeking their lived-experience expertise.
- Explain payment arrangements and reimburse agreed expenses promptly.
- Allow breaks and respect people's privacy and choice about what they share.

10. Show people what changed

Let participants know how their feedback made a difference.

- Share the main themes in an accessible format.
- Explain what changed, what did not change and why.
- Thank participants and provide updates on next steps.

Inclusive consultation is more than asking for feedback. When people can take part in ways that work for them, and see how their input is used, consultation builds trust and leads to better decisions.

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