

Introduction

Background

The government supports improved transparency, accountability and consumer engagement in the health system.

Community engagement in the delivery of healthcare is supported and facilitated through a range of activities. Open access board meetings are one way health services can increase community engagement and provide information about the health system.

The board of a health service, hospital or multi purpose service is required to hold at least one open access board meeting per year that the general public are able to attend.

Open access meetings will be in addition to the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Aim

Open access board meetings should foster interaction between boards and the community, increase awareness and understanding of health services and provide a forum for information sharing.

The aims of open access board meetings are to provide the public with an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and to gain an understanding of the rationale, context and environment for board plans and decisions.

Principles

Purpose

An open access board meeting should be designed to focus on areas of community interest. Examples may include plans for capital developments and service delivery changes. The board should determine the format and appropriate board representatives, as it may be most appropriate for community engagement with a relevant board sub-committee rather than the full board.

There are some matters that are not suitable for an open access board meeting including human resources, client issues, litigation, and matters of an industrial, confidential or commercial nature.

Whilst the open access meeting is intended to be an additional meeting to the AGM, there is no barrier to the open access meeting being held prior to or immediately after the time of the AGM, for example if this is convenient for participants or enables the efficient hire of a suitable venue.

Participation

The intent of the open access board meeting is to provide an opportunity for members of the public to engage with the work of the board. However, boards have the discretion to determine the scope and guidelines for public participation.

Notice

Reasonable notice should be given to members of the public about an open access board meeting. As a guide, the notice period used by a board for the AGM could be adopted.

The open access board meeting should also be scheduled for a time of day that encourages public attendance.

Local knowledge and experience will guide boards in the most effective approach to undertake and promote an open access board meeting. This could include the use of a health service's website, a community service announcement in local press, community radio stations and through local community groups.

The board should consider whether registration or notification of attendance is required.

Agenda

The agenda for an open access board meeting should be made available prior to the meeting and any promotion of an open access board meeting should explain how an agenda can be obtained.

To manage public expectations, the agenda should include the time and duration of the meeting and clearly specify the scope of public participation.

Meeting summary

The board should consider public release of information discussed at the open access board meeting.

Managing the meeting

Boards should consider how best to accommodate the number of people expected, meeting format (for example, if small groups are being used) and governance matters including guidelines which clarify the scope of public participation.

Evaluation

Health services should evaluate open access board meetings as part of their ongoing improvement activities and community engagement.

Evaluation of the open access board meeting may also be included in the board self-evaluation process.

Health service should also invite public comment on the open access board meeting.