

Community participation in the recruitment process

A case study

What did we do?

HealthWest developed a process to enable community members to participate in and inform the recruitment of staff members at HealthWest.

Initial screening was conducted using HealthWest's established application and interview process. Preferred candidates were invited to a second interview. The second round interview required each candidate to work with community members to complete a specific task. An example interview agenda has been included as an appendix.

Candidate performance was assessed based on:

- Performance on the task, and
- Feedback from community members after the interview.

This process was developed and piloted for recruitment to a position which would require the staff member to work with community members regularly. The community members involved were experienced in community participation.

Why did we do it?

HealthWest values community as vital partners in our work. We chose to include community members in this selection process for two main reasons:

1. HealthWest often includes key stakeholders in our recruitment process. Where a new hire will be working closely with community, it is fitting for community to have input into selecting this person.
2. The ability to work with community is a key component of many roles, however it is difficult to assess this ability simply by asking about skills and experiences. Including community members in the process allows the selection panel to observe how candidates interact with community members in a specific situation.

HealthWest has invited community members to be part of more traditional interview panels in the past. While useful in some situations, it was felt that a different process would enable more effective and relevant input by community members.

When would this be useful?

This interview process, or a modified version of it, would be useful in the following situation:

- Community participation is an important part of the role.
- Questions during the initial interview are either too complex or too specific to allow a community member to have effective input.

- Other stakeholders need to be involved in the interview process and including a community member in the initial interview would make the panel too large.
- You have two excellent candidates and need help separating them.
- You have a small or weak pool of candidates and want to make sure that the preferred candidate is the right fit for the position.

It should be noted that this process places additional demands on the community members, the selection panel and especially the candidates. The expected benefits should be weighed thoughtfully against these demands when considering and planning this process.

What was the outcome?

Feedback from the **selection panel** was positive. This activity provided more information and clarity around candidate abilities and strengths. This included how candidates approach and manage tasks as well as how they interact with community members.

- Interviewers felt more confident in their knowledge of the candidates and ability to make a good hiring decision.
- It was noted that a decision might not be clear if different candidates excel at each interview stage.

Feedback on the process from **community members** was overall positive.

- Community members appreciated the chance to be involved and contribute their thoughts to the selection process.
- Community members felt relatively comfortable participating in the task. It was noted that more information on what is involved and any preparation they should do would help them to feel more comfortable. Allowing more time to complete the task would allow community members to share their experiences more fully.
- Community members noted that they felt some initial worry that what they were saying would affect a candidate's future. They felt more at ease when they understood how and why their feedback would be used in the selection process, and that the final decision would be made based on a range of criteria.

"Your approach for a new way of recruiting will, in my opinion, have a very positive result in the quality of the work... Well done. And thank you for the great experience."

– Interviewing community member

Feedback from the **candidates** indicate that they found the task to be challenging. They found it stressful and commented that it was difficult to do the task within the limited time frame. A longer time limit or a simpler task will be considered in future.

What did we think overall?

Overall, this process was positive for HealthWest. It provided the selection panel with valuable additional information, enabling them to make a better informed decision. We plan to use a similar method to facilitate community input into the recruitment process for relevant positions in future.

For more information please contact HealthWest at info@healthwest.org.au.

Conducting a task-focused interview

Steps	Considerations
Preparing for the interview	
Plan a specific task that is relevant to the role. Consider how you will assess performance of the task. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. a presentation followed by question and answer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task should be straightforward and able to be performed within the time frame. Assess aspects that are relevant to the role. Consider pilot-testing the task and instructions with a staff member not involved in the process.
Contact the candidates to schedule a second interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about the process. Discuss what you are looking for and why. Answer any questions the candidate has about the process or the specific task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear, easy to understand instructions about the task. Some tasks cannot be communicated in advance. In this case, invite the candidate to arrive at the interview 30 minutes early to read detailed instructions.
Recruit community members to participate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear information about the process and expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members should have experience with HealthWest and/or the project. Community members should be reimbursed for their time.
Plan logistics of the interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who will do what before and during the interview? Has enough time been allowed? Do you need to book additional rooms or organise catering?
Conducting the interview	
Prepare interview space(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide candidates and community members with everything they might need.
Ensure interviewers and community members understand roles and expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss desired outcomes. A prepared interview template can help this process.
Make the candidate comfortable. This is important so you can assess the candidate's true abilities.	To help you do this, you might: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let the candidate know prior that casual dress is fine. Show the candidate to a private room to wait and prepare. Make the candidate a cup of tea. Answer any questions the candidate has. Provide nametags.
Conduct the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an agenda with clear time allocations (see example agenda in appendix).
Seek feedback from community members after the candidate has left.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the candidate perform – what knowledge and skills did they display? How did the community members feel working with the candidate? Did they feel valued and listened to? Was the community members input reflected in the final outcome?
Update community members on the outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing feedback is always important when working with community participants.

Interview agenda

Meet and greet

5 mins

- Introduction of panel, community participants and candidate.
- Explanation of task, answer questions.

Consultation and co-design task

40 mins

Candidate will work with two existing community participants to:

- Learn about their experiences and identify gaps in a current community participation model.
- Co-design one strategy to improve the model.

Considerations:

- *Strengths of community participants*
- *Sustainability of the strategy*

Report back to panel

15 mins

- Candidate will present the strategy to the interview panel and community participants.
- Questions from the panel and community participants.
- Explanation of next steps in interview process.