

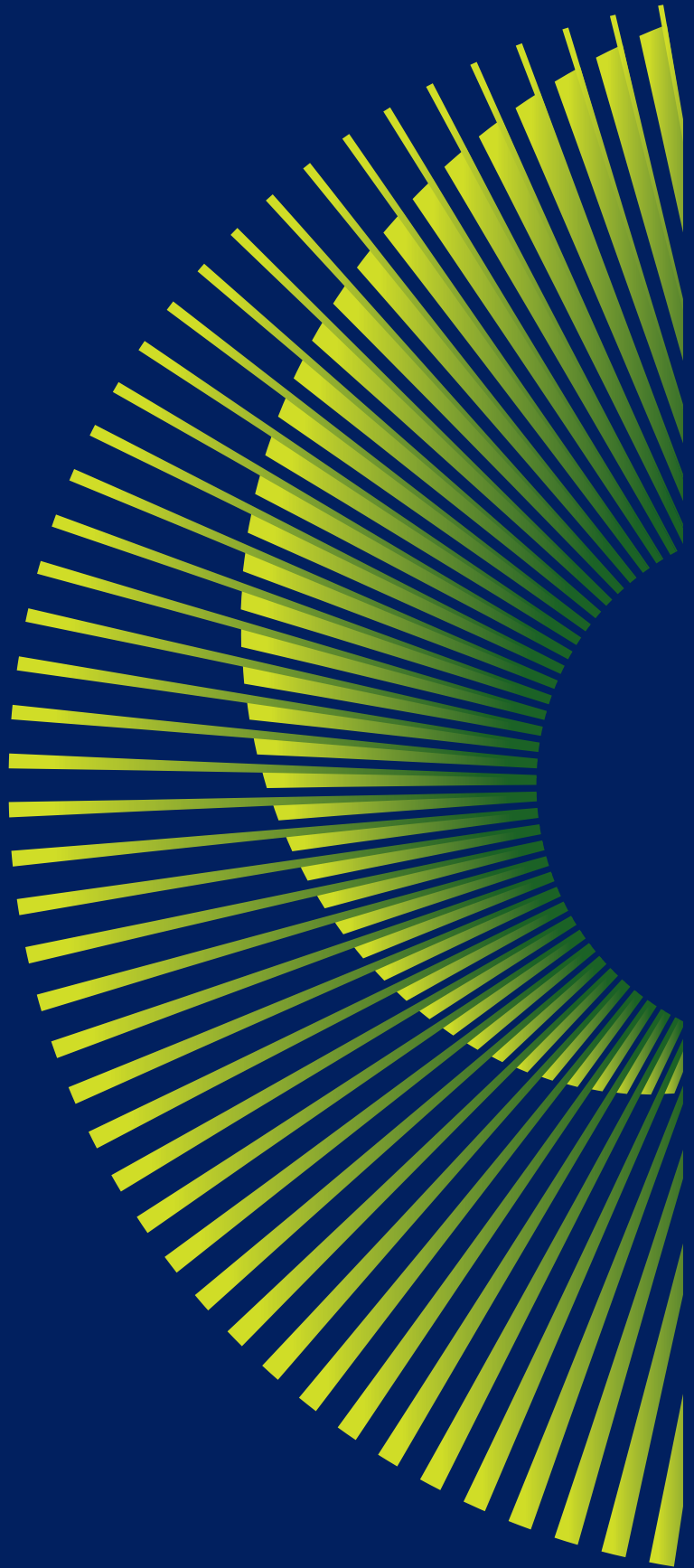


THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Faculty of Medicine,
Dentistry and Health
Sciences

MISCH *Hub*

Methods and Implementation Support
for Clinical and Health Research



Co-Design and Consumer Involvement *Node*

Co-design and Consumer Involvement

Consumer involvement has many benefits including improving the quality and relevance of research, generating practical solutions grounded in both research evidence and lived experience, and motivating professionals to make sustainable improvements in healthcare responses. Consumers are generally considered to be people with lived experience of a healthcare issue as well as carers, family members or other support people. The Co-design and Consumer Involvement node offers expertise and guidance to support consumer involvement using participatory approaches across the research cycle.

What does this node offer?

We support researchers, policy makers, and funders to bring evidence and experience together with a central focus on the knowledge and expertise of those living with, and directly impacted by, specific healthcare concerns.

We provide expertise to support consumer involvement across the research cycle using a range of participatory approaches and drawing on frameworks relevant to experience-based co-design, implementation science, and participatory evaluation.

Design stage – It is important to connect with participatory researchers and consumers early in project initiation and study designs. We can collaborate with you to identify opportunities to consult with consumer groups in the design stage, support you to determine the appropriate level of consumer involvement for your project and select suitable methods for your needs and contexts. We can also help you apply health equity principles to engage with people experiencing social marginalisation and disadvantage in addition to relevant healthcare needs. If you are applying for funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Medical Research Futures Fund (MRFF), we can support you to align with expectations for consumer involvement outlined by those schemes.

Execution stage – Our role in the project depends on our agreed level of involvement on a spectrum ranging from fully executing a co-design or participatory study framework through to providing background mentoring support if you already have some experience using participatory approaches and wish to enhance your skills and knowledge with our guidance along the way. As we encourage consumer involvement across the research cycle, we can help you execute participatory approaches across co-design, implementation, and evaluation stages.

Completion stage – Depending on our agreed level of involvement, we can support qualitative analysis of participatory and co-design research results, writing up plain language summaries and technical reports, and co-author publications for peer-reviewed journals.

Translational stage – We can help promote study findings, particularly with the consumer groups and services directly involved with and/or impacted by your study results to enable them to use the findings in their own advocacy and healthcare improvement projects.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is co-design?

Co-design is an iterative and participatory process that brings people together to design and implement innovative solutions to a known problem. It is part of a family of participatory and collaborative methodologies that intend to overt and equalise the power differentials between researchers and the people impacted by the health and wellbeing issues under investigation.

People with lived experience are central to the co-design process as their insights and expertise are essential for innovating practical and equitable 'real world' solutions to the issues they face. Depending on the nature of the project, co-design processes may also include practitioners, policymakers, specialists, and other key stakeholders to bring in the perspectives of those who may support, implement, and sustain co-designed interventions.

What can I expect from my consultation with this node?

During your initial consultation, we aim to understand the context and needs of your project before we suggest suitable participatory approaches and methods. Importantly, participatory approaches, such as co-design, require substantial resourcing and preparation and a commitment to power-sharing and iterative activities over time. We will discuss the implications for your project to enable genuine engagement and appropriate budgetary considerations. We will also discuss our level of involvement across the research cycle ranging from direct execution through to background mentoring and support. If you decide to collaborate with us, we will complete an agreement outlining our involvement, which we will ask you to review and sign prior to commencing work.

Can I just be trained to do co-design and consumer involvement research myself?


Consumer involvement is increasingly an essential requirement for healthcare research initiatives, and we all need to improve our capability to work effectively in this area for the benefit of Australian society. We therefore encourage anyone interested in co-design and consumer involvement to engage in training and professional development. At the same time, skilful use of participatory approaches, particularly co-design, often requires years of practice and personal capabilities to guide people through iterative processes, manage complex power dynamics, and engage in ethical self-reflection. All of this may be new to you or outside of your area of expertise. As such, you may like to use our services to bring our established expertise into your project while also supporting you to improve your own understanding and capabilities.

Why is it important to name the node researchers as investigators in your project?

We ask that you include us as chief and/or associate investigators in your project materials and publications to recognise our role and responsibilities in the project, support career development, and future opportunities. Additionally, grant assessors for NHMRC, MRFF and other funding schemes evaluate whether the team of investigators have the requisite qualifications and experience to deliver the project. Increasingly, these schemes require consumer engagement across the research lifecycle and assessors will expect to see appropriate methodologies and key experts described in your proposals, such as participatory research specialists, and representative consumers and community members.

Contact us

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