



Recommendations to Improve Consumer Engagement in Quality Measurement

In this resource, we summarize the potential solutions identified in the report: [Engaging Consumers in the Quality Measurement Enterprise](#). The nine recommendations for quality measurement leaders and the four for consumer advocates presented below can help to improve consumer engagement in quality measurement.

Recommendations for Quality Measurement Leaders

Clarify the Goals of Quality Measurement

When convening consumers and other stakeholders to participate in a quality measurement process, it is important to begin by articulating the end goals of the work. Offering information to all participants about both the “big” and the “little” pictures of quality measurement will help to start the process off on the right foot. The big picture includes clearly identifying the position of the current effort within the life cycle of quality measurement: setting priorities, creating measure concepts, specifying measures, testing and endorsing measures, using measures, and maintaining measures. The little picture includes information about the specific stage currently being worked on.

Affirm the Importance of Consumer-Centeredness to Their Work

The rationale for involving consumers in quality measurement should be made clear at the outset to every participant at the table. The playing field cannot be level unless both consumers and other stakeholders understand and can describe the special expertise that consumers bring to the table: consumers are experts in their own preferences and experiences. This kind of expertise is critical to the success of consumer-centered quality measurement and should be acknowledged throughout the course of choosing, validating, implementing, and assessing quality measures.

Emphasize Openness to New Views

When opportunities to prioritize areas for measure development arise, policymakers, providers, health plans, researchers and other stakeholders in the process should signal their preparedness to hear what consumers say about the concerns they have and the types of measures they would most like to see. Specifically, leaders of a quality measurement effort should remain open to concepts that might be challenging to develop into measures (e.g., because few legacy measures exist) but that are meaningful to consumers. Newer measures might round out the existing set. These include measures of patient experience, consumer choice and control, and quality of life.

Offer Financial Support

The involvement of consumers is easier to sustain when consumers are compensated for their time and reimbursed for their expenses. This enables a consumer to join discussions without the opportunity costs of missed income or other important pursuits. The advocate who represents other consumers requires time and support to get the lay of the land, meet the players, understand the content areas, and see the whole quality measurement process from start to finish. This is especially important because the time frame of measure development can last so long. Quality measurement organizations and institutions might consider sustaining consumer engagements not only over the terms of individual projects, but over even longer terms covering many projects.

Ensure Adequate Consumer Representation

Establishing balance in the representation of consumers and other types of stakeholder groups is critical, including both the weight of consumer voices relative to others in a multistakeholder panel and to the diversity of consumers who are brought to the table. Some of the most vulnerable or marginalized communities may face the greatest challenges in getting their voices heard. While long-standing relationships with community organizations can help in determining whom to invite and how to get them there, it is important to note that the location, timing, level of effort, and format of participation will influence who is willing and able to attend.

Involve Consumers Early

It can be especially valuable to invite consumers to weigh in from the beginning of quality measurement process, when other decisionmakers and stakeholders are invited. Consumers know what their own concerns are, and their concerns are especially relevant when selecting priorities for measurement, the first stage of the life cycle. Not involving consumers at this stage leaves them out when they can perhaps be most helpful.

Train Consumers and Offer Technical Assistance

Quality measurement leaders, managers, and consumers can work together to offer additional support and resources that prepare consumers for their involvement. Additional support might include co-developed training in the fundamentals of quality measurement, holding a peer-led planning meeting to prepare for interaction with other stakeholders, or other activities. Further, consumers would benefit from access to real-time technical assistance and support to help them advocate their priorities. This includes advice about available measure concepts and measures and technical information to help advocates respond to the challenges that are brought up when they propose use of particular measure concepts or measures. Consumers also could benefit from peer-to-peer support in understanding how to be more effective in this challenging environment.

Develop Tools to Support Ongoing Consumer Input

Like any activity in health care, consumer involvement can become unnecessarily resource-intensive for both developers and consumers if attention is not given to efficiency and process improvement. Quality leaders should partner with consumers to look for opportunities to develop tools and resources that support ongoing consumer input that is rapid and efficient, and they should review existing processes to understand how these could be changed to overcome barriers to consumer participation. Examples include electronic platforms for recruiting, connecting, and involving consumers; establishment of an infrastructure that enables measure developers to consult with a permanently established network of consumers; and gaining consumer input through interviews, focus groups, and partnerships with consumer organizations. With all of these approaches, it will be important to assess their ability to engage hard-to-reach populations.

Assess and Learn from Experience

The path to reaping hoped-for benefits of consumer involvement is littered with pitfalls and challenges. One of these is the external time line that is often imposed by policymakers who are not involved in the process at a local level. Time lines and budgets are critical to ensuring the success of any effort, but may also represent external constraints that put so much pressure on the process that consumer involvement becomes a resource cost that local leaders cannot afford. Measure development contracts may be structured to allow “no option but forward” in measure development, even when an approach that is more consumer-centered would favor revisiting an earlier step in the measure development process. To maximize chances of success, quality leaders might approach these challenges like any other in health care, by committing to a continuous process of assessment and learning from experience. Leaders should support independent assessments of the impact of consumer and stakeholder engagement activities. Further, the assessment should point to real changes that can be implemented to improve the outcomes of consumer involvement each time a new effort is undertaken.

Recommendations for Consumer Advocates

Focus National Attention on Consumer-Centered Quality Measurement

Consumer advocates can support measure development around consumer-centered priorities by engaging in national conversations around priorities and pushing for the research needed to drive measure development in these priority areas. However, there is a core piece of infrastructure that is needed to truly advance consumer-centered quality measurement. We note the absence of a national consumer equivalent of the national provider, payer, industry, and policy associations that focus on quality measurement. As a result, it can be difficult for consumers to contribute to measure concepts that ultimately move into the later steps of measure development. Such a national consumer organization could look critically at the quality measurement enterprise as a whole and understand where changes to the system and the “ground rules” might facilitate more effective consumer involvement on an ongoing, long-term basis.

Assess the Extent to Which Quality Measurement Processes Are Open or Closed to Consumers Nationally

Some quality measurement discussions are closed to consumers but it is not clear how extensive this practice is or how extensively it varies from plan to plan and from provider to provider. Understanding the extent of variation from place to place in how open or closed the quality measurement process is could help clarify where the opportunities are for more consumer input. It is possible that in many instances (e.g., negotiations between health plans and providers), consumers are not explicitly excluded, but working without consumers is viewed as the natural way of doing business. By looking closely at quality measurement processes that have successfully opened doors, consumers might know better where there are opportunities to change closed quality measurement processes.

Convene Independent and Public Reviews

Consumer organizations can take independent action when not invited to the table by convening their own information-gathering activities and making them known. Activities might include convening a town hall meeting, organizing focus groups, hosting conference calls with a membership base, and inviting online feedback. This strategy can be effective even when the process is friendly; it can help to send individual representatives to a public meeting armed with information about what their community says is most important.

Build and Share Knowledge and Technical Expertise

Consumers contributing to quality measurement often have similar priorities and face similar challenges. Technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning can help consumers successfully make the case for consumer-centered priorities, measure concepts, and measures. Because the effort involved to “get up to speed” to feel comfortable in quality measurement arenas can be significant, it is important for consumers to have opportunities to share information, draw from a clearinghouse of customized resources, and be able to tap expert advice on performance measurement when needed. Even as consumers “learn the rules,” they also have an important role to play in assessing and challenging those rules when they prevent meaningful consumer engagement.