

Community Partnership Program (CPP)

Introduction

The Community Partnership Program (CPP) is an initiative of the Doherty Institute's Community Engagement Program (CEP). The Doherty Institute CEP formally involves community partners in research. There are two key initiatives in the CEP, the Community Advisory Board (CAB) and the Community Partnerships Program (CPP). The CAB provides governance, guidance and support to the design and running of the CPP.

Community partners are recruited for the CPP through community networks and independent expressions of interest. The community partners involved in the CPP will be connected to specific research projects or groups to develop long-term and collaborative partnerships. The CPP will benefit health and research outcomes by providing community perspectives on the work of the Doherty Institute. This may include increasing mutual understanding, bringing community priorities into research considerations and improving relevance and communication of research.

Terms of Reference

As part of the Community Partnership Program, community partners will contribute their perspective and advice on the following:

- Research design - aims of the research and how this will be achieved
- Clinical trials - design, conduct and result dissemination
- Funding and grant applications
- Research communication – plain language and Easy Read research summaries to communicate findings and results to the community
- Research translation - converting results into clinical practice and health service delivery
- Identifying overlaps, synergies and gaps in research

Measures of Success

The measures of success of the CPP will be:

1. Successfully match 15 community partners with research groups at the Doherty Institute by mid-2025
2. Establish and maintain a registry of community partners who can be contacted for short-term projects or future CPP partnerships
3. Establish and maintain a registry of research groups (and researchers) who would like to be involved in the CPP
4. Increase proportion of research groups in the Doherty Institute with community engagement in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) statement
5. Establish and maintain a range of communication mechanisms to provide updates and promote the CCP internally and externally

Community Partner Key Responsibilities

- Active participation in meetings (online or in-person) and working on mutually agreed upon tasks. This includes reading and other preparation that is required prior to and after meetings and following up on agreed actions in a timely manner
- Participate in development activities and seminars to support full and active contribution in this role
- In collaboration with project group, provide input, feedback and advice on matters related to research group's projects or initiatives
- Flag need for additional support or training to enable participation where needed with research partner or CEP Project Management Team

Research Partner Key Responsibilities

- Participate in development or seminars to understand the role of community engagement in research and how researchers can support the participation of community partners
- Communicate clearly and regularly with community partners through agreed channels
- Create a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where community partners can express feedback and share decision-making
- Actively engage with community partners to seek and discuss their views and experiences
- Provide regular progress and administration updates to CEP Project Management Team on partnership (achievements, challenges, activities and hours)
- Provide adequate funding to support the ongoing and long-term nature of the partnership (see the remuneration guidelines for further information)

CEP Project Management Team Responsibilities

The CAB, CEP Project Manager and CEP Project Officer will support the operations of the Community Engagement Program within the Directorate, by:

- Facilitating the establishment of the CPP, including recruitment, pairing, on-boarding, development, and introductions between community partners and research groups
- Facilitating the governance of the CPP, including coordinating agreements, remuneration, reporting and evaluation
- Facilitate day-to-day coordination of the CPP including scheduling meetings and facilitating group activities
- Providing ongoing support, communication, and development opportunities for community partners and research groups as required

Research groups

Research at the Doherty Institute covers many areas, including:

- Public health research
- Epidemiological research
- Clinical research
- Lab research

Within these broad research areas, community partners will connect with research groups who may be focused on:

- Specific pathogens, viruses, or diseases
- Specific immunological disorders/conditions
- Clinical trial groups that include co-design and require community input on recruitment and research

Membership

The CPP aims to represent the diversity found in the wider community and is recruiting for community partners with a mix of gender, age, disability, sexuality, geographical location, and ethnicity among other attributes. Representation from the following groups is encouraged:

- People who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People who have experience living with cancer, a blood-borne virus (HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HTLV-1), long COVID or tuberculosis
- People who have cared for someone with one of the above conditions

Engagement Principles

The CEP values, supports and respects the diverse cultures, knowledges, experiences and perspectives that community partners contribute to the program. The CEP also recognises the importance of cultural safety when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Cultural safety is an ongoing process that requires continuous learning, reflection and change. The CEP will support the development of trusting and respectful partnerships in a culturally safe environment by:

- Recognising there is more than one way to do and understand things
- Utilising culturally appropriate approaches to engagement
- Providing all partners with development opportunities to support meaningful participation
- Valuing skills and knowledge from outside academic and professional settings
- Work towards shared decision-making between community and research partners

Recruitment

Community partners will be recruited via a public application process. The CPP may also engage community associations, such as the Consumers Health Forum of Australia, or key advocacy groups or peak bodies to connect with potential community partners. Individual applications will be submitted via an online form. The form will include open-ended questions about motivation to join the program, perspectives and experiences that will be applied to the role, and research areas of interest. Applications will be assessed by the Community Engagement Project Manager, Project Officer and the CAB.

Research group pairing process

Community partners will be paired with research groups by the CEP Project Management Team with support from the CAB. Consideration will be given to topics/areas of interest identified in EOI, experience and background of the applicant, and what relevant infectious diseases or immune-related research groups/ projects are available.

Development

The CAB and the CEP Project Management team will develop and provide onboarding and development to community partners with additional support provided where appropriate. The CEP Project Management Team will be the ongoing point of contact for any queries.

Engagement guidelines

The CEP Project Manager and Project Officer will oversee initial meetings between researchers and community partners.

The research group primary contact is responsible for maintaining regular communication with the community partner. This includes providing required preparation materials in a timely manner, clearly communicating deadlines, and informing community partners of relevant updates on research projects, initiatives and activities. Research groups are also responsible for communicating the impacts and outcomes of feedback and advice contributed by the community partner.

Community partners are encouraged to work with the research group on agreed upon activities on a monthly basis, with a suggested minimum of 1 hour and maximum of 5 hours. Activities will include meetings, preparation and development. As the engagement may change over time, there will be some periods that are busier than others. Engagement that exceeds the suggested maximum hours needs to be considered by the Community Engagement Program Manager and Project Officer.

Remuneration

CPP members will be remunerated based on their time and effort spent on each engagement. Our remuneration structure is designed to fairly compensate CPP members for their contributions. Guidelines for this process will be provided in a separate document.

Evaluation and Reporting guidelines

The CPP will be evaluated annually, with the first evaluation to be completed in July 2025. Community partners and research groups will provide feedback through a survey created by the CAB and CEP Project Management team that will assess:

- Community partner involvement (types of projects, amount and frequency of engagement)
- Communication between partners (during and outside meetings, e.g. is the communication valued by both parties, constructive, respectful)
- Time commitment of researchers and community partners
- Impact of the partnership on research processes and outcomes (any notable achievements, adaptations of research)
- Adequacy of support provided by CEP Project Management Team
- Opportunities for improving the program

The Community Engagement Project Officer will be responsible for checking in via phone/video call regularly with community partners and the research group's primary contact to check:

- How are they doing?
- Is the role what they expected?
- Do they have any feedback?
- Do they need additional support/ do any adjustments need to be made?

Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the CAB and CEP Project Management Team periodically and at a minimum of once a year.