

The California HealthCare Foundation

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Community Participation In Action: The use of advisory groups in grant making and evaluation.

Community involvement and participation are integral components to an effective conversion foundation. The California HealthCare Foundation uses community advisory committees to involve the larger community in the thinking, planning, and implementation of major initiatives. This process assures public involvement in the foundation's work.

The Program for Elders in Managed Care, one of the first initiatives launched by the California HealthCare Foundation, uses a twelve-member advisory committee. Committee members represent diverse organizations, perspectives and experiences in order to provide invaluable insight and guidance to the program. Members of the advisory committee include three geriatricians (one university-based, one from a staff model HMO, and one from an integrated health care system), four executive directors of community-based long-term care agencies, a representative of an area agency on aging, a representative of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), a California-based consumer advocate, a representative from the federal Health Care Financing Administration, and a gerontologist and public policy expert from a major California university.

The advisory committee played an active role in all aspects of the grant making process. The committee's involvement began by commenting on and reviewing drafts of the Request for Proposals (RFP) that was used to solicit proposals under the Program for Elders in Managed Care. Committee members also reviewed all letters of intent and full proposals received by the foundation under the program. Committee involvement also expands to advising the foundation on other projects that support the goals of the program.

The California HealthCare Foundation now uses advisory committees in many of its programs. Although it is often difficult to recruit committee members from out-of-state, the foundation does not preclude advisory members from applying for the grants themselves.

Community advisory committees provide ongoing representation of community interests. As a permanent structure, the committees serve as a link between the board and the community. In summary, community advisory committees are an effective means to connect the conversion foundation with the public it serves.