

# A GUIDE FOR HEALTH PROMOTERS:

Working with Communities to  
Participate in the Submission Process

## get involved

Promote health  
make submissions speak up discuss tell our story  
advocate support  
engage communities take action  
participate influence policy partner  
make change share ideas work together  
get organised get our voice heard  
consult give feedback  
inform



# Introduction

## 1. Who is this guide for?

This guide is for health promoters who work with community groups, leaders and individuals.

## 2. What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide is designed to help health promoters work with communities wanting to participate in government consultation processes and make submissions. Making a submission is one way for communities to have their say and health promoters can encourage this.

While there may be differences between parliamentary and central and local government consultation processes, this guide provides general advice that applies to many submission opportunities. In particular, the guide is designed to help you work with communities to identify their concerns and responses on a particular issue and prepare and deliver their own written and oral submissions.

**‘Health promoters can explain the kaupapa of the submission process.’**

This guide explains the submission process and answers some common questions. You can use this information to help community groups and individuals understand and participate in the process.

This guide might also help you include community perspectives and opinions in your own submissions.

There are many other ways that communities can participate in the policy development process that are not covered in this guide, such as submitting petitions, meeting with council members or speaking at council related meetings. The information in this guide can be applied to other situations.

## 3. How to use this document?

First, read through the entire guide and decide how you will engage with community groups. You can help a community have greater impact and voice in the process by working with the community to help them prepare their own submission. While this does take time and resources, don't limit your engagement with the community to simply including community input in your own submission. There are a variety of ways to support the community to make their own submissions depending on your resources.

There are 4 parts to this guide:

- Part 1 provides information explaining the submission process and submission templates as well as the role of health promoters.
- Part 2 covers the planning process before engaging with the community.
- Part 3 is about planning workshops for the community to identify their views and prepare and submit a submission.
- Part 4 lists key points to consider when preparing a submission.

You may also consult policies and managers in your own organisation. These procedures might be helpful and govern how you engage with communities in making a submission.

# Part 1: Understanding submissions & opportunities for community participation

## 1. What are submissions?

When a public body such as a local council or Parliament, wants to hear what people think about an issue and what can be done to improve or solve a problem, they may organise a consultation process. This process involves asking the public for feedback, or a 'submission'. Local, regional and central government as well as Parliament and individual agencies may organise a consultation process and call for submissions.

A submission is a way for a person, group of people or organisation to express their views and concerns about a particular issue. Any individual, group or organisation can make a submission. You do not need to be an expert to make a submission. Submissions can be made in English, te reo Māori or sign language.

Submissions related to parliamentary issues are usually directed towards select committees and may be related to parliamentary bills, specific inquiries or other parliamentary issues. Regional and local councils may request submissions on new proposals, large resource consents, Long-Term Council Community Plans and other policies.

Other organisations and agencies may also conduct consultations that include opportunities to make submissions. For example, District Health Boards sometimes ask for feedback on their draft plans and health service proposals for their district.

Submissions are usually done in written form by email, online, post or sometimes even by Facebook or Twitter. It is usually possible to also make an oral submission to further explain or reinforce the written submission. Typically a person must first make a written submission including a request to make an oral submission. If the submitter is then invited to make an oral submission, they will be given a specific day and time to speak to committee or at a hearing, usually open to the public and media.

## 2. How can communities participate in the consultation and submission processes?

A consultation process will usually include a consultation document providing an overview or summary of the issue. If the consultation is related to a specific bill, a draft copy of the bill will be provided. The information will also include how to give feedback and set a deadline for responding to the call for submissions. Often there will be specific questions and a template to help people organise their ideas when putting together a submission.

There are many ways that community individuals or groups can participate in the process. Some options to be involved might be to:

- Write a submission and/or ask to give an oral submission as an individual.
- Work with other people to make a joint submission.
- Tell other organisations, groups, family, friends or neighbours about the opportunity for submissions and encourage them to make a submission.
- Encourage their employers and organisations, clubs and community groups to make a submission.
- Find out who else is making a submission and ask if they would include community input.
- Write a letter of support endorsing someone else's submission.

Since health promoters often write submissions, you might also ask for input or share your draft with community groups to seek their feedback.

### 3. Understanding consultation documents when making a submission

For many people who are new to the submission process, the documents explaining the submission can be intimidating. Sometimes the documents are lengthy and use technical language. You can support communities by helping them understand the submission process and how the issue relates to their daily life.

You can help make a question more relevant to community groups:

- Explain why the consultation process is happening and why feedback is being sought on the particular issue.
- Define key words or topics.
- Provide a 'Frequently Asked Questions' or brief (two pages or less) summary about the submission.
- Use diagrams to explain the submission process.
- Provide a clear call to action with a specific deadline.
- Break complex questions down into smaller questions.
- Rewrite the questions using more familiar words.
- Link the question to their daily lives or experiences and give examples.
- Help the community prioritise a small number of questions that are most important to them.
- Describe a scenario that explains how the topic of the submission might impact on their daily life.
- Provide a sample submission.
- Provide a list of key points to consider.
- Provide copies of the submission template or prepare a template that is briefer or uses more familiar words.

Make sure the information you provide is brief and clear. This can make the submission process less intimidating. Once you have offered information let the community decide what they will say or choose as their focus.

### 4. What is your role as a health promoter?

As a health promoter your role is to build confidence in community groups and individuals. They need to know that their voice is important and that it's easy to make a submission. You can:

#### Get the message out

A key role for health promoters is to inform communities about submission opportunities. This information includes the topic, deadline, available information, resources and ways to give feedback. It can be helpful to prepare a brief one or two page summary in easy-to-read language. Also, think about getting the summary translated into other languages. Ask a colleague to help out if the submission topic isn't your area of expertise. Think about highlighting the key aspects of the issue that apply to the community; then invite them to comment on those or raise other concerns.

You'll need to identify various groups and communities to inform and then identify the best ways to share information. Consider email, social media, cold calling, radio and TV promotions, one-to-one conversations and established community groups. Utilise the contacts, networks and relationships you already have or ask a colleague to introduce you to key contacts and groups. Often it's more important that you have an existing relationship, than whether you've worked on the topic of the submission.

### **Make it happen**

Making a submission might be new to some people. They may need a lot of encouragement and hands-on support. You can make it practical and easy for people to make a submission. Consider making copies of the written submission forms, handing them out, collecting them and sending them in. Follow-up with people after you first tell them about the opportunity to make a submission. Ask if they have made the submission and if not, why and what help might be useful. Encourage people to request to make an oral submission and offer to support them in preparing. Make a clear call to action that is reasonable and achievable for the communities you work with.

**'When they told me they hadn't done the submission, I asked why and they said they didn't like the paper form so I helped them get it done online.'**

### **Run a community workshop**

As a health promoter, you will be familiar with some of the issues communities face and the views they have. You can offer to run workshops to help a community group identify their views on a particular topic and work through what they want to say. Be sure to read Parts 2 and 3 of this guide which provide more detailed information about engaging with the community.

Whatever role you have, negotiate this with the community. Different community groups and individuals may want different levels of involvement. You may write the submission after facilitating the discussion for one group; but another group might just need you to explain the process and let them take responsibility for making their own submissions.

## Part 2: Planning for community engagement

Working with the community requires time and thought to ensure a successful process and an effective submission. While this may be a short-term opportunity, it can affect your long-term relationships. Consider the following planning stages before you reach out to the community.

### 1. What resources and skills do you have to offer?

Be certain of what you can actually offer and communicate this right at the beginning. Consider the following questions:

- Do you have expert knowledge about a particular topic? Or do you know someone who can provide that advice?
- Do you have experience preparing submissions?
- How much time do you have and how can it best be used?
- How fast can you organise to work with the community to respond to a call for submissions?
- Can you organise a workshop? Facilitate a group discussion?
- Are you willing to sit down side-by-side with community leaders to write a submission?
- Can you meet with individuals who want to practice their oral submission?
- Are you available to answer questions after organising a community workshop?
- Do you already have relationships or contacts in the community?
- Do you work with groups whose voice is often marginalised, such as youth?
- Can you use a few minutes of an existing meeting? What other existing activities can you use to promote the submission opportunity?
- What skills or resources are available in your own organisation?
- Can co-workers commit to engaging with their networks and contacts about the submission opportunity?
- If you can't do any of these things, can you organise or facilitate someone else who has the skills and time?

### 2. What is your goal?

Be clear about your goals and expectations. Communicate this right at the beginning. Consider the following questions:

- Are you seeking input to include in your own submission?
- Are you only able to let the community know there is an opportunity to make a submission? Or can you offer more specific help?
- Are you hoping to encourage the community to make a submission?
- Do you have a specific message that you want the community to agree to?
- Will you support the community to make a submission even if it contradicts your organisation's views or messages?
- Do you want as many submissions as possible? Or one submission endorsed by key community organisations?
- Is it important for the community group or individuals to make an oral submission?

### 3. Who will you work with?

Ideally you will already have strong community relationships and can draw on your existing networks. Consider the following questions or ask your community contacts directly:

- Who might be interested in the issue?
- Who will be affected by the issue?
- Who may not know about the issue?
- Whose voice is essential to include?
- Whose voice may be marginalised or often not included?
- Who do you have relationships with?
- Are there established groups or just a few key individuals in the community?
- Are there well-respected leaders in the community?
- Will they want to work with you and your organisation?
- What is the best way to reach-out to your contacts, by email, phone or in-person?
- How much time or resources do they have to dedicate to a submission?

**‘We may be the only person who has the time and ability to work with kids in making submissions’**

Also consider what barriers and conflicts might arise and how you and the community can work together to address these.

There may be additional considerations when working with young people. Don't let this stop you. Health promoters who already have relationships with schools and youth groups may be one of the few resources to ensure that young people's voices are represented in a consultation process.

### 4. What is the best way to work with the community?

Depending on your goals, resources and who you will work with, there are many ways to work with a community. Think about whether you will inform, consult or engage.

- Inform: Will you inform the community about the submission opportunity?
- Consult: Will you ask for feedback to include in your organisation's submission?
- Partner: Will you work together to present a joint submission?
- Support: Will you support the community to lead and develop their own submission?

If you have the time, resources and support to engage with the community, consider if you will meet with just a few people, organise one workshop or maybe arrange several meetings. There are many styles and activities you can use to engage with community groups which are not covered in this guide. For ideas and guidance, see the resources section at the end of this guide.

## Part 3: Planning for community workshops

It can be helpful for community groups or individuals to work out their concerns and recommendations before preparing a written or an oral submission. Often discussing the answers to these questions will make it easier to complete a template, or they may choose not to use a template. The discussion can also help the group think about whether to make a single joint submission or many submissions.

### 1. What are the community's viewpoints about the issue?

There are many questions that can help start a discussion on this topic. Depending on the issue, the community might consider:

- How will/does the issue of the submission affect them?
- What are they worried about? What are the main problems or concerns for their community?
- Are there opportunities to improve or change something for their community?
- If a change is being proposed, how do they feel about the proposed change?
- What positive or negative impacts might result from a proposed change?
- Are they supportive of the proposal and if so, why?

**'I gave the teens 3 scenarios and then they could pick one to write their submission about'**

It can help to kick-start a conversation by giving examples of how the changes might look in their community and invite the group to discuss their reactions.

It's just as important to submit in favour of a proposal as it is when a community is not supportive of a proposal, because the decision makers will want to get a balance of views.

After the discussion, the group or individuals should select key messages and then identify reasons and evidence that support those messages. It's important to focus on being clear, concise and well-researched when identifying key messages and arguments to support those messages. They should also talk about what is the best way to have the biggest impact. Will it be better to provide one submission, many submissions with the same messages or a number of submissions with a variety of different perspectives?

A community may have direct personal experiences with the issue that is being discussed. As a result some discussions can be emotionally charged and challenging to work through. In some cases, individuals might disclose personal concerns such as past experiences with violence or substance abuse. If you anticipate that the topic of discussion might be sensitive, plan ahead for how you will facilitate and manage the discussion. This will have particular importance if you are working with a group of children or youth.

Remember that a community is made up of a range of different voices and viewpoints. You can help facilitate the discussion and help the community identify a shared view that can be communicated to policy- and decision-makers. However, communities can be diverse and it may not always make sense or be possible to have a shared view. In that case, your role might be helping the community manage conflict during the discussions and find solutions.

## 2. What are the community's proposed solutions or recommendations?

This is an opportunity for people to say what they think will work best for their community. Communities can often think up creative and new solutions. It's important to propose solutions and recommendations that are achievable. Public agencies may be limited by funding and existing legislation and policies. Proposed recommendations should also fit within the bigger picture of all communities who will be affected by the proposal. You can help the community identify solutions that are possible by being knowledgeable about current legislation and policies, funding, what is being done in the wider community or in government, and the viewpoints of other organisations and communities.

To help start this discussion, people can discuss:

- What is working well for their community?
- What could be working better?
- Should things stay the same?

It's important in this section for the community to:

- Clearly identify what they think should be done.
- Back up these suggestions with evidence from their experience.
- Be sure the solution matches the topic of the submission.
- Explain why their ideas are relevant and how they relate to others.

## 3. Who is making the submission?

It is important to clearly state who is making the submission and whose opinions are being represented:

- Organisations should identify the services they provide, the populations they work with and their expertise in the area.
- Networks should describe the range of services they represent and the communities they serve, such as how many people live in the community and key characteristics about the community related to the submission topic.
- A group of individuals or an individual representing their community should describe their community as well as how the issue directly relates to their community.
- All groups should include a statement about anyone consulted or the process used to inform or decide the key points of the submission. Also include information about organisations endorsing the submission.

A submission may be published in print or online and available to the public to view, including the name of the person who made the submission. Discuss this with the community when helping them decide who the submission is from. For example, students from a primary school might want to sign a written submission 'On behalf of students from (name) Primary School', instead of listing their individual names.

## Part 4: Submission tips

Written submissions often have more impact if a representative also appears in person to make an oral submission. In particular, community groups and individuals can often have the strongest impact by giving an oral submission and speaking from personal experience. However, it's important that people are well prepared and practice before speaking. The oral presentation should make the decision makers want to get out the written submission and read it again.

Usually groups must first request in writing to make an oral submission and then the committee will determine if a group will be invited to make an oral submission. You can help ensure community individuals and groups who want to make an oral submission, request to do so before the deadline. You can also offer encouragement and build confidence.

### Regardless of whether the submission is written or oral, there a few things to keep in mind:

- Use your own words and examples when preparing a submission.
- Be positive.
- Brief is best. Stick to the point.
- Back up points with evidence.
- Use direct, clear language.
- Photos and diagrams can help make submissions effective and memorable.
- Be accurate. Make sure to check the facts.
- Be clear about the recommendations.
- Do not miss the deadline for submitting a written submission or requesting to make an oral submission.
- If sending a written submission or request to make an oral submission by post, send it a few days before the deadline so it arrives on time. Be sure to have the correct address.
- If a written submission is longer than two pages, have a summary of main points on the front page. Get someone to check it for grammar and spelling.

### Preparing for an oral submission

- Find out in advance what the procedures are for the hearing and ask questions about anything that is unclear.
- The speaker/presenter should be 100% sure of what they think, what they would like to happen and what they would like government to do about it.
- There is usually only time to make a few points briefly. Speak to the most important points from the written submission.
- The people hearing submissions will be hearing lots of people on the same day. Make the submission interesting and engaging.
- Think about using pictures, props or a handout for the committee if appropriate.
- Practice the presentation in front of someone.
- Time the presentation to be sure it will not run too long.
- Include time for questions within the time that has been allotted. For example, in a 15 minute slot, speak for 10 minutes, and leave some time for questions.

- If representing a group, remember to speak only to the issues the group agreed on.
- Be prepared for questions from the committee.
- On the day, be sure to arrive early. This allows time to prepare and be ready in case the schedule of presentations changes. It is also helpful to hear how others present their submission.
- The speaker should be sure to say who they are as well as who they represent.
- Request in advance, when making the written submission, if the oral submission will be made in te reo Māori and identify any tikanga Māori that should be addressed during the oral submission.

### **After the submission**

- Keep all the papers to help with the next submission.
- Respond to any questions in a timely manner.
- Follow-up on the outcome of the submission and let people who participated in the process of developing the submission know the outcome.
- Depending on whether the recommendations were acted on, think about follow-up actions.
- Find out if and how other organisations responded to the submission.

## Examples

### **Green Paper for Vulnerable Children: 'Every Child Thrives, Belongs, Achieves'**

This was a large submission process organised by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in 2012 which included 43 proposed questions which focused on every child thriving, belonging and achieving. The consultation documents identified many key issues including truancy, avoidable hospitalisations, family violence and child abuse. A public health physician coordinated an internal submission for the local Public Health Unit (PHU) bringing in perspectives from staff across the service and the District Health Board. As word spread through the community about the consultation and the activities going on within the PHU, several community organisations asked for help in understanding and preparing their own submission. The public health physician organised a workshop and facilitated a discussion among community agencies to both explain the consultation and help the community work out the issues for the focus of their submission.

### **Proposed Local Family Violence Death Review Process**

In 2009 the Family Violence Death Review Committee of the Ministry of Health invited submissions on a proposal to develop local processes for death reviews. The health promoter informed her networks about the consultation and opportunity to provide a submission. Initially none of the individuals from the network had planned to make a submission. After the health promoter shared the final draft submission of the PHU with her networks, several individuals found the messages in the PHU submission sparked ideas about their concerns and opinions. As a result, three individuals went on to make their own written submissions.

### **Hutt Valley Local Alcohol Policy**

In 2013 local councils around the country have been conducting various consultations around the development of Local Alcohol Policies (LAP) which address the sale and supply of alcohol. Several health promoters engaged with their existing community contacts to encourage submissions. The CAYAD public health advisor developed a one-page summary about the main issues in the consultation and shared this by email with her networks. Two other alcohol focused public health advisors used this sheet to present information about the consultation to a kaumātua network and senior Māori leadership groups. Then they passed around the submission forms, waited for them to be completed and collected them at the end of the meeting. A Health Promoting Schools public health advisor met with school student health committees. At one school, the public health advisor facilitated a discussion with the student committee and then typed up their statements in the form of a submission. At the other school, the public health advisor explained the submission opportunity and process to the student committee; the students then either prepared their own submissions or worked with other students to write a joint submission.

## Resources

### Short videos to learn more about how a law is made and oral & written submissions:

60 seconds Civics Videos

<http://vimeo.com/60scivics/videos>

### Written guides on making oral and written submissions:

**Making a Submission to a Parliamentary Select Committee (available in English & Māori)**

<http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/>

**Aotearoa Youth Voices Toolkit**

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/resources-and-reports/publications/aotearoa-youth-voices-toolkit.html>

**Have Your Say: How to Make an Effective Submission**

<http://www.upperhuttcity.com/store/doc/UHCC-Have-Your-Say-190809.pdf>

**Guide to Making a Submission -**

<http://www.huttcity.govt.nz/Documents/a-z/Guide%20to%20making%20a%20submission.pdf>

**An Everyday Guide to the Resource Management Act Series 5.1: Making a Submission about a Proposed Plan or Plan Change**

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/everyday/plan-submission/>

**An Everyday Guide to the Resource Management Act Series 5.2: Appearing at a Council Plan or Plan Change Hearing**

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/everyday/plan-hearing/>

### Where to find information online about submissions, consultations and other ways for the community to contribute to local Council policy and plans:

**Ask your local city council**

<http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/>

**NZ Parliament & Legislation**

<http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/get-involved/>

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/>

### Additional resources for engaging with the community:

**Good Practice Participate**

<http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/Good-Practice-Participate>

**Ready Reference Engagement Guide: Supporting government agencies to engage effectively with citizens and communities**

[http://www.dia.govt.nz/Pubforms.nsf/URL/ENGAGEMENT\\_GUIDE\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/Pubforms.nsf/URL/ENGAGEMENT_GUIDE_FINAL.pdf)

**CommunityNet Aoteaora – How to guides**

<http://www.community.net.nz/>

## ■ Appendices

### Getting involved in healthy public policy

#### A 7-step process



<p>What are the key issues, questions or problems?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you know it's a problem?</li> <li>• OR what makes you think it's an opportunity?</li> </ul>	
<p>What principles or values are you going to use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What principles or values does your organisation, team, whānau have?</li> <li>• What frameworks might you use (eg Te Pae Mahutonga)</li> <li>• To help find your values - ask "how would you know if you were happy (or unhappy) with a policy idea?"</li> </ul>	
<p>Get the information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you already know?</li> <li>• What do you need to find out?</li> <li>• Who can you get information from?</li> </ul>	
<p>What are the choices?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do some brainstorming</li> <li>• Be radical!</li> <li>• Come up with a range of ideas</li> </ul>	
<p>Decide on your key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use your principles and values to look at the choices and see which fits them best</li> <li>• Don't just raise concerns, try to offer solutions</li> </ul>	
<p>Turn your points into clear messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you best make simple specific points?</li> <li>• Who are you trying to convince?</li> <li>• What's most likely to convince them?</li> <li>• What evidence, stories or experience can you support your points with?</li> </ul>	

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## Getting involved in healthy public policy

### Preparing to present our submission



<p>What are the <i>three</i> key points we want to make in our presentation?</p>	
<p>What messages could we use? <i>What's going to get councillors or MPs listening?</i></p>	
<p>What's our 'unique selling point'? Why should they listen to us? <i>eg our long community experience</i></p>	
<p>Who could help us present a submission – to support the points we want to make or answer questions <i>eg our Chair/a parent with experience/a local health professional</i></p>	
<p>What questions are we likely to be asked?</p> <p>So what information will we need to take to help answer questions?</p>	

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## Getting involved in healthy public policy

### Responding to a policy issue – the ten-minute plan



Get some people in a room with a whiteboard or a piece of paper - ideally keep it a 'stand-up' meeting – and work through these questions.

- Is this important to us? Why is it important enough for us to put the time in?
- When does it need to be done by?
- What resources do we have – information, people, ideas, time?
- What are the Terms of Reference or other questions that we need to focus on?
- So what are the main steps we're going to take?
- By when?
- Who's going to take the lead and make sure it's done?

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