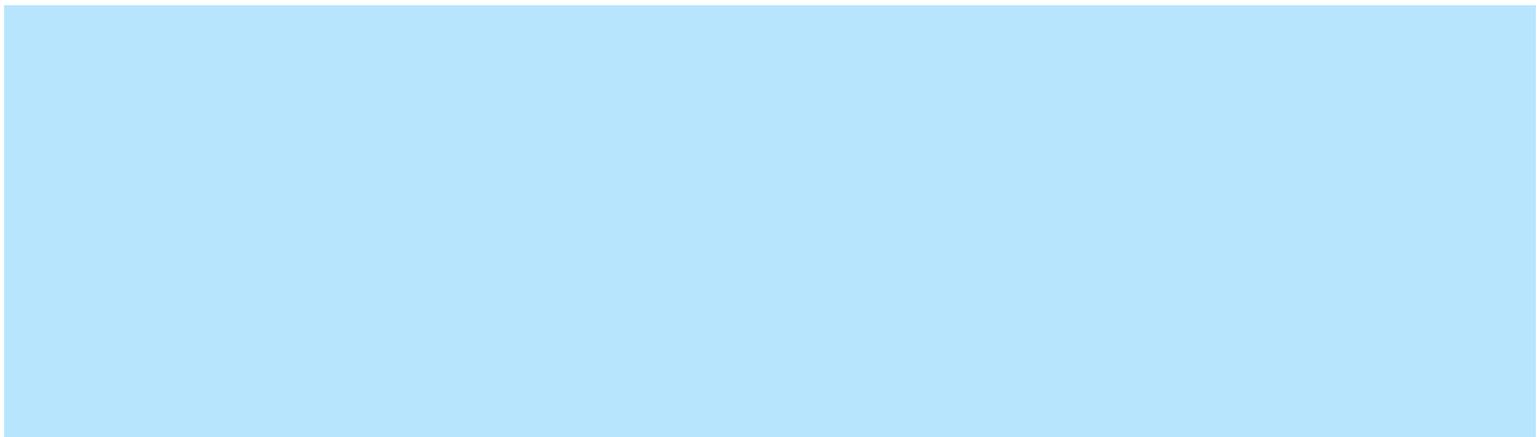




Collecting Ethnicity Data

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Purpose of Tool

The aim of this tool is to provide guidance on *why* collecting ethnicity data is important, and *how* to collect this data in your daily work. The tool is designed to be applicable to all programs within your organisation and will also be relevant to staff at all levels. The ultimate purpose of this tool is to contribute to and promote a consistent best practice approach to ethnicity data collection across the whole of organisation.

The information presented in this tool will focus on two main areas:

- looking at *who* is out there in the region you are working in, thinking of the nature of your program; and
- looking into who you are currently servicing as consumers on your programs. If there is a discrepancy between who is out there (planning data), and who you're servicing (usage data), then it is time to proactively address that gap.

Essential Information

Moving towards person or client centred service delivery models in the disability sectors, it is imperative that your organisation develops a systemic and consistent approach to collecting ethnicity data to reach potential communities and individuals who should be accessing services, but are currently not.

It is also important to remember that collecting data is everyone's business. Staff working directly with consumers should be responsible for asking appropriate questions to receive the right response and record consumer data correctly into data management systems. Management should be responsible for quality checking consumer data and organisational leadership team should ultimately champion robust data collection to provide a strong evidence base for service planning and evaluation.

Before we look into the details of *how* to collect community profile, demographic data and consumer data, it is important to understand the benefits of appropriate data collection, and the risks involved when these systems and practice do not exist. The table below explains some benefits and risks;

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What if we do? (Benefits)	What if we don't? (Risks)
Provides direction in building up a workforce that is reflective of the consumer base;	Vulnerable communities might not be pinpointed, and run the risk of not being linked to services;
Informs staff in providing culturally competent services;	Contributes to a lack of organisational understanding of what issues and barriers some vulnerable culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities may be facing;
Creates an evidence base to use for funding and tender opportunities;	Provides no evidence base to promote services to potential consumers;

What you need to do

It is important to find out who you should be targeting in the first instance (planning data) against who you are currently servicing within your programs (usage data). It is important that you don't start from scratch, but instead draw upon any existing appropriate data that the organisation has already collected and ensure this is up to date. The below tips will provide some guidance around how to get started. Keep in mind that your approach will be different based on whether your office and service reach extends to low, medium or high CALD density areas. Also, considering the nature of your program is essential in employing a targeted approach to data collection. For example, you wouldn't necessarily be searching for the number of 0-5-year-old CALD children in your area if you are delivering an aged care service.

Planning Data

Some key sources in collecting community profile, demographic and other planning data, include: the following;

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- **ABS Census Data:** This source will show the essential demographic makeup of the areas, age groups you wish to build a profile of. This data can also be cut very specifically to meet your aims. You can source ABS census data here: <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/data>
- **Settlement Data:** This source allows you to access up to date data based on migration status to give you an indication of the communities who have recently arrived in the areas that you are working in, and what visa stream they are in. These include numbers and ethnicity data for communities who have arrived on family, humanitarian or skilled visas. You can source settlement data here: <http://www.immi.gov.au/settlement/srf/>
- **Available literature and research:** It is important to contextualise statistics and quantitative data with data that will uncover more detail on service access issues, and barriers that some communities may be facing. Where you find this information will depend on what program you are working within.
- **Epidemiologic data:** When working in the social services sector, it is also important to have a good grasp on the health needs of CALD communities. Looking at epidemiological data which unpacks patterns, causes and effects of health conditions within certain communities can also provide insight into the specific health needs, social determinants of health, and service access concerns that may be prevalent in the population within the catchment. Overlaying this will be the available literature and research you delved into when researching sector based issues for people with disability, and ageing CALD communities, for example.

Usage Data

The following questions should be asked of consumers in order to capture the recommended minimum data set that you need. Questions include;

- A. What is your country of birth?
- B. What language do you speak at home?
- C. How proficient are you in English?
- D. When did you arrive in Australia?

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Other essential elements to consider when collecting in house usage data include looking at;

- Background information and needs identification through intake/assessment;
- Demographic information through intake process and program registration;
- Client feedback forms/surveys (formal and informal);
- Client participation rates;
- Logging front desk enquiries;
- Referral in and out data.

When you have developed, or have got access to a snap shot of the potential client base of who should be accessing your services, it is then important to compare these figures to the number of clients who are currently accessing your services.

The Northcott 'Diversity in Disability' fact sheet entitled 'The Importance of Understanding CALD demographics and Data Collection' provides a clear and short outline of questions to consider when comparing planning and usage data:

- What groups are accessing your service and which groups aren't and why?
- Over time, has this data changed and is the gap between your potential and actual client base is decreasing?
- It is also imperative to consider what resources are needed and also how you will update relevant CALD data and demographics in order to feed into service planning and design in a continuous fashion. Think about who will be responsible for updating this data. At what intervals will the data be revisited and updated?

The complete fact sheet can be found here:

<http://www.diversityindisability.org/leadership-for-cultural-diversity/>

Good Practice Tips

Every piece of data captured correctly adds up to create a big picture narrative. Data collection may seem difficult or time consuming or 'outside of the job' – but done correctly, it benefits clients through identifying relevant issues and/or barriers to access. If you are working in a seemingly low CALD density area, it is also important to remember that there could be more 'hidden' communities within your area. If they are not walking through the doors to the service, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are not there