

## Finding Your Voice as a Consumer Leader:

### Four Tools to Help You Make a Difference in Your Alliance and Your Community

*We are helping to drive the bus and are at the decision making table for our communities.*  
-Consumer Leader

As a consumer leader, your active participation is critical to ensuring your Alliance's efforts to improve health care are effective and relevant. This document describes results-based leadership skills, which can help Alliance members work collaboratively to achieve results. With these skills, you can find and leverage a seat at your Alliance's leadership table, enabling you to influence decisions, contribute to strategies, and mobilize others.

#### What Can a Consumer Leader Do?

As a consumer leader, you represent people who use health care. By developing your leadership skills, you can use your unique background and experience to help other stakeholders understand the diverse needs of consumers. You can focus your Alliance's efforts on the health and health care experiences of your community's members, and mobilize consumers to influence issues and take action.

#### What Tools Can Help You Become an Effective Consumer Leader?

Working with leaders from other sectors can help you define the roles, opportunities, and challenges you may face in integrating consumers' insight and influence into the work of Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q). The tools in this document can help you to do the following:

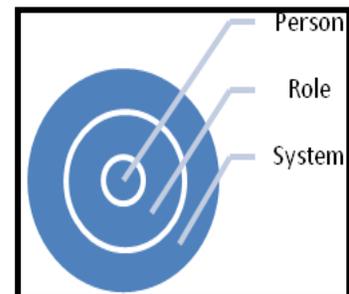
1. Describe the leadership roles you can play and other ways you can contribute to the Alliance's work, with the **Person-Role-System Framework**;
2. Create win-win solutions with **Interest-Based Negotiation**;
3. Reach consensus on decisions with **Proposal-Based Decision Making**; and
4. Hold yourself and others accountable with the **Accountability Pathway**.

### Tip #1: Define Your Role with the Person-Role-System Framework

*Understanding your AF4Q role is essential to making progress.*

#### 1. Identify your formal and informal roles.

As a consumer leader, you, like leaders from other sectors, can assume many roles within the Alliance. Formal roles include serving on consumer advisory boards, steering committees, and work groups. Informal roles include acting as liaison to groups you influence, mentoring other consumer leaders, and sharing insights about the needs of consumers. As a consumer leader, you also bring talents and relationships to the table from your role as an advocate or a representative in your "home" organization, as a patient with personal health care experiences, or as a member of your community.



#### 2. Define your role by answering these questions:

- Person: How do your values, beliefs, and experiences help you exercise leadership in health care quality improvement, access, and/or equity?
- Role: What is your role (formal and informal) in the Alliance? How do you define success?
- System: How do you apply your leadership roles in the Alliance? How have you contributed to AF4Q and influenced decisions? How do you envision doing so in the future?

**3. Work with other Alliance leaders to help you align your authority, roles, and tasks with those of other Alliance leaders.**

During this conversation, you may ask for help in defining the biggest opportunities and barriers to making contributions to Alliance efforts. You may better understand how to fulfill your role by identifying the relationships you have with others in their roles. Some consumer leaders have defined their contributions in their Alliances by using the following structure:

Sample Person-Role-System Framework for Consumer Leaders		
Role	Authority	Task
<b>Individual Consumer</b>	Can tell personal story in forums or participate in outreach efforts	Provide personal connection to patient population by sharing experiences with health care information systems and services
<b>Advocate and Messenger</b>	Can share Alliances’ strategic messages to external groups and elicit feedback  Can be sounding board to provide consumer perspective on products (e.g., website) or topics (e.g., what disabled consumers need)	Encourage authority figures to use Alliance resources and get their attention by using a powerful voice to represent consumers
<b>Work Group Member</b>	Can help develop strategies and tasks  Can represent, influence other consumers	Leverage relationships to support the group  Advocate, educate, persuade
<b>Decision Maker</b>	Can inform, contribute to decisions by being selected to represent a group	Help group reach consensus; develop strategies; take appropriate, collective action

**Tip #2: Achieve “Win-Win” Solutions with Interest Based Negotiation**

*Interest-Based Negotiation emphasizes collaborative problem solving to achieve mutually beneficial (“win-win”) solutions. Successful solutions help group manage differences and strengthen relationships. The following outlines steps by which consumer leaders and other Alliance members can approach a given Alliance challenge: Identify the relevant parties. Describe the issue. Answer these questions:*

- What is the clearest way you can explain the challenge?
  - Who are the other parties involved?
  - What are their points of view about the issue? What do you want? What do they want?
1. Identify and explore each other’s interests, which reflect their needs and values and form the reasons we care about the issue. Be specific about your own interests, and be curious about theirs. Recognize that each party has multiple interests and that the most powerful interests are basic human needs.
  2. Create options that meet many interests. Be creative, seeking to address your needs and others’ needs.
  3. Agree on criteria to evaluate options and develop the ones that provide mutual

*The ability to listen, speak, and make something happen within a network is powerful.*

*-Consumer Leader*

gain.

4. Work together and pick options that meet the criteria. Who will do what and when to implement the options?

### One Consumer Leader's Experience

A consumer leader became involved in her Alliance when invited to be in a focus group. Soon, the Alliance invited her to be on the Consumer Advisory Board (CAB). While on the CAB, she leveraged her own relationships and resources as Chair of the Latino Chamber of Commerce. Using her influence and networks, she mobilized Latino consumers to use the Alliance website to understand and identify quality care. Soon after, her Alliance elected her to be the CAB representative on the Alliance Board.

## Tip #3: Make Consensus Decisions Quickly

By helping groups converge around choices that everyone can support, **Proposal-Based Decision Making (PBDM)** moves Alliances to action. The steps are:

1. Create a proposal of your own or summarize a proposal discussed by the group. Explore whether others want to add to the existing proposal or make new proposals. The following are examples of PBDM:

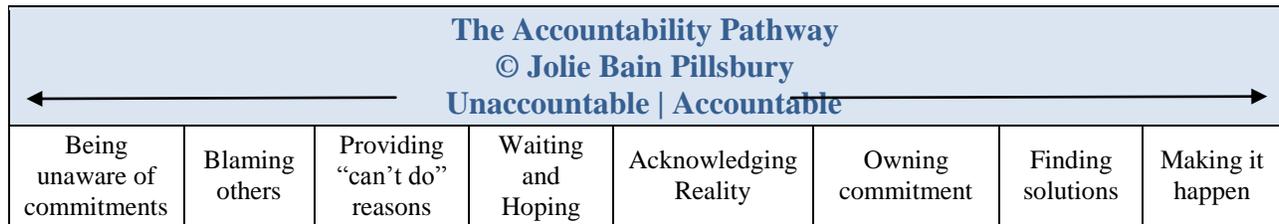
Stalled conversations	Proposal language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The meeting devolves into a circular discussion and pointless conversations.</li><li>• You have been sitting too long and you are bored.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I propose we review the issues under discussion and say what we want to accomplish under each issue.</li><li>• I propose that we take a break so that we can return with renewed energy and decide what to do next.</li></ul>

2. Ask people to express their position through a show of thumbs (*i.e.*, support: thumb up; not sure: thumb sideways; oppose: thumb down).
3. Ask people whose thumbs are sideways or down: "What will bring your thumb up?"
4. Listen to their issues, encourage other proposals, and remind people that this is not a time to advocate but rather to build on the ideas of others, and invite people to find common ground.
5. Adopt a proposal when all thumbs are up or when those with their thumbs sideways are ready to go forward. Document decisions in notes so that the group does not need to revisit the same issue.
6. Move to action by deciding who will do what and when. Presenting the following chart in the meeting notes can be helpful:

Who	What	When
Persons 1, 2	Meet to explore Consumer Advisory Team roles and partners	June 5, 2010
Person 3	Provide content to Person 4 on health equity	June 31, 2010

## Tip #4: Hold Each Other Accountable

*The **Accountability Pathway** provides consumer leaders and other Alliance members shared language for discussing accountability and their commitments. The Accountability Pathway helps leaders discuss their progress, and determine what they need in order to make and keep commitments.*



Alliance leaders can discuss the progress on their commitments at meetings. By having honest conversations about where they are on the pathway below, they can explore how to move from being *unaware*, *blaming others*, or *waiting to acknowledging the reality* of what it will take to *find solutions* and *make things happen*. Using this tool to have candid conversations about commitments and to maintain accountability fosters trust and action.

**Conclusion: Consumer Leaders Can Be Active, Equal Participants**

You can enhance your effectiveness as a consumer leader by being clear about your roles and using your skills to facilitate action-oriented decision-making and accountability. Serving as an active part of your Alliance’s efforts can accelerate improvements in the health of your community.

**Additional Resources**

- Jolie Bain Pillsbury, *Results Based Leadership Applications*. [www.rbl-apps.com](http://www.rbl-apps.com)
- Roger Fisher and Danny Ertel, *Getting Ready to Negotiate*. Penguin (1995)
- National Partnership for Women & Families Web site: [www.qualitycarenow.org](http://www.qualitycarenow.org)