

Link Person Role Statement

Background

The Link Person role is a key CRC for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) function within each Partner organisation. It provides a mechanism for involvement with, effective contribution to and information flow within and between Partner organisations and the CRAH. The role can also facilitate the development and strengthening of positive and effective collaborative relationships and partnerships. In realising its potential, the role requires the support of both the CRAH and the Partner organisation within which it sits.

The agreement between the Commonwealth and the Partners outlines the commitment made by each Partner to contribute to the CRAH objectives. In Schedule 1 of this agreement, it is stated that the CRAH “will utilise designated Link people within Partner organisation as the key conduit of day-to-day feedback and information to core partners.” The Link role should complement the work of the Board member. Board members are responsible for overseeing the operation and management of the CRAH and determining its strategic direction. The Link people are responsible for providing the operational support to achieve the CRAH objectives.

As a group, the Link people bring together perspectives from a range of organisations and provide an excellent opportunity for communication and capacity exchange. The group facilitates the sharing of information between Aboriginal¹ and non-Aboriginal people, between research organisations, government departments and health service providers, and between researchers and administrative staff.

This position can also be used to promote the employment of an Aboriginal person with appropriate skills, in line with the CRAH commitment to strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal people in health research. Some Partner organisations may choose to select two people to share the role and facilitate succession planning and capacity development.

Criteria for Link People

1. Excellent liaison and negotiation skills
2. Awareness and understanding of Aboriginal health issues.
3. Ability to gather, use and disseminate information resourcefully.
4. Ability to develop and maintain networks of people of diverse backgrounds and disciplines, including Aboriginal community representatives, public servants and researchers.
5. Ability to work effectively and sensitively in and/or with an Aboriginal governed organisation.

¹ Throughout this document, ‘Aboriginal’ should be understood to include Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Responsibilities of the Link Person role include:

1. Act as the first point of contact for the CRCAH within Partner organisation.
2. Encourage and promote the CRCAH within the Partner organisation by disseminating information on CRCAH activities, such as programs, education and training activities: This might include some of the following:
 - Regular reports at staff meetings
 - Newsletter articles
 - Email updates
 - Target people to keep updated on a one on one basis
 - Convene a CRCAH reference group
 - Organise a CRCAH workshop or information session
 - Disseminate good news stories
 - Liaise with internal communications people and/or Aboriginal studies unit about CRCAH activities
 - Promote CRCAH at organisation's open days and other functions
3. Provide advice to the Partner organisation about how to positively engage with CRCAH processes. This includes liaison with staff at all levels, which will vary depending on the organisation, but might include academic staff, students, administrative staff, health practitioners and managers.
4. Identify projects, courses and students who might become part of CRCAH program work.
5. Provide the CRCAH with updates and feedback from Partner organisations. This includes assisting with the collection of monitoring data and in-kind reports.
6. Liaise between the Partner and CRCAH staff to assist in organising CRCAH events at Partner organisations, including Showcases, Board meetings, and other ad hoc meetings such as the Education and Training review.
7. Actively build collaborations with other CRCAH Partners and relevant industry/community groups by sharing information and encouraging participation in CRCAH activities such as Convocation.
8. Attend meetings of CRCAH Link Persons Group (one or two face to face meeting per year and three or four times per year by telephone or video conference.) These meetings are valuable for building the relationship between Partners, sharing information, and providing an opportunity for feedback to the CRCAH regarding the development of projects, processes and procedures.
9. Liaise with the Partner's CRCAH Board Member on a regular basis. The Link Person should provide information to the Board member on any significant issues which may have come to light in Link People meetings or other CRCAH communications.

Responsibilities of the Partner Organisation include:

Appoint the Link Person:

1. Nominate a “Link Person” with the appropriate skills, experience and level of authority, and support their effective involvement in the CRCAH (as outlined in Schedule 1 of the Commonwealth Agreement). It is recognised that there may be slightly different internal arrangements within each of the Partner organisations and that, for example, some Link People will have strengths in research and others may have strengths in administration. The CRCAH’s main concern relates to the deliverables not to the internal process of how these might be achieved.
2. It is helpful if Link people have good knowledge of the Aboriginal health activities within a Partner organisation. However, where they are not across the whole organisation’s activities, particularly in large organisations, it is important that they are supported to facilitate consultations on relevant issues.
3. While CRCAH associate Partners will not require link type activities to the same extent as core participants, it is important that they also nominate a person to undertake these types of tasks to the extent they are required.

Support for the Link Person:

4. Allocate reasonable time and/or funding for Link people to carry out the role. Past experience has indicated that an effective Link person might devote between 10% and 30% of their time to these activities. Larger organisations, with more demanding internal communication mechanisms, will typically need to devote more time to their CRCAH link duties. These costs will then be counted in the Partner’s in-kind contribution.
5. Provide support to Link people to identify people to be involved in the CRCAH such as attending Convocation and putting forward in-kind projects.
6. Provide an appropriate level of authority for Link people to liaise with organisation staff in order to support the organisation to meet obligations such as in-kind collection, data provision and identifying in-kind projects.
7. The Board representative should liaise with the Link person on a regular basis to exchange information and support. This might include providing the Link person with a copy of Board papers, where appropriate.
8. Provide administrative support where necessary, such as in collecting in-kind information and organising travel and accommodation for face to face meetings.

Responsibilities of the CRCAH include:

1. Keep in regular contact with Link people to ensure they are up to date on relevant CRCAH information, decisions and activities, and that they have reasonable opportunities to provide feedback.
2. Develop and maintain effective communications tools to provide relevant information to the Link people about the CRCAH and specific Link activities. This includes tools that will support Link people in promoting the CRCAH. Tools might include:
 - Link people meetings
 - Email circulars
 - Newsletters
 - Website
 - Annual reports
 - Promotional brochures
 - Research reports
 - Policy and procedures documents
 - Convocation (the annual meeting of the CRCAH community)
 - Seminars and Workshops
 - Network of Interest
 - Guidelines
3. Provide guidelines, timelines and reminders for Link activities such as in-kind information collection.
4. Assist Link people in accessing and understanding CRCAH policies and processes.
5. Respond to requests and feedback in a timely manner.
6. Identify and implement strategies to build the capacity of Link people to carry out their roles, and to encourage the appointment of Aboriginal Link people.
7. Liaise with Link people about capacity development issues, including organisational development to strengthen Aboriginal research capacity within organisations.
8. Ensure that the Board and Partner representatives are aware of and support Link people in their role.
9. Provide an induction to the CRCAH for all newly appointed Link persons.
10. Fund travel and accommodation to Link people face to face meetings.