



ZN ADVISORY
ACHIEVING COMMUNITY
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Resource Hub

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Turning ideas into results

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION



Guide

Running Successful Community Engagement Session

Why You Should Care

The purpose of a community engagement session is to gather community members together and capture their unique voices to support project planning and implementation. To successfully run a community engagement session, you will need a qualified facilitator with a solid understanding of community culture, values, and missions. The collective inputs received at the engagement session informs community leadership of essential steps to advance a given project while ensuring the project development aligns with the community's vision.

Guide

Agenda Setting

Inform: Clearly define and communicate engagement session objectives

- Define the problems that need the community's feedback on
- Understand and update the community on the current project (issue) status. Knowing where you are at now will help inform where you want to go.
- Gather all necessary background information to help the audience understand the issue at hand, including key findings and data if applicable, visual representation, or personal testimonies.

Consult & Involve: Develop key questions that help you understand the community's needs, vision and priorities. Understand where community members want to go in future, especially in relation to the following aspects -

- Mental
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual

Collaborate: Plan and design engagement activities to encourage participants to share their knowledge and opinion on presented topic areas. Be sure to provide multiple avenues for engagement (not everyone is an extrovert and enjoys speaking their mind in front of a crowd).

Empower: Those that attended the engagement sessions expect their voices to be acknowledged, heard, considered and incorporated into project decisions and planning processes. This will not only strengthen the trust between leadership and community members, increase community buy-in on a project, but also empower your community.



Checklist

The Dos & Don'ts

Do this!

- Include all members during the process of project/program planning and creation.
- Prioritize iterative and direct engagement
- Practice shared decision-making by the community
- Invest in informing community members on topics discussed, prior to attending any engagement sessions.
- Create transparency throughout the engagement process from setting objectives, to explaining the process, discussions and communicating outcomes.
- Foster an environment for mutual respect and open communication by removing or reducing barriers. Please see examples of focus areas:



Sense of Worth – ensuring all people, especially those living in poverty or with disabilities, women, minorities, people of colour, and all marginalized groups' voices are uplifted



Time – respect people's time and consult participants on best times for engagement



Transportation – consider accessibility of the engagement venue. If it's done in-person, is it easily accessible via transit?



Social and cultural access - host events at and place communication in areas known to reach your audience with specific cultural needs and varying socio-economic statuses



Economic access – honorarium or incentives to attend the sessions.



Language – providing alternate language options for participation if your participant(s) prefer engaging in their native language.



Age – Youth and the elderly should be included and accommodated in engagement



Disability access – physical and communication needs of those living with disability are accommodated

Don't do this!

- Do not offer a single mode of engagement if you are looking for interactive participation from a diverse group of people with various preferred methods of engagement (written, verbal, post-session direct communication, etc)
- Do not treat “community consultation” as a checkbox and actually incorporate community input into decision-making
- Do not ONLY engage group representatives
- Do not cut corners on the process of informing and give participants time to digest and truly understand the content using a reasonable timeline
- Do not seek approval for a pre-determined concept, choice or decision
- Do not bore or disengage your audience – use plain language and make the sessions concise, interesting and engaging.

