A Guide to Community Engagement

For Houses, community engagement is a process which facilitates and maintains a connection between the House and the community. Effective community engagement can have a positive impact on governance within the House and the delivery of services to the community. It can involve different levels or methods of interaction between the community and the House: Information (“inform”), consultation (“consult”) and active participation (“involve”).

Definitions

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Conducting business in a manner which is open to public scrutiny</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Ensuring that the business conducted is in accordance with the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>intended purpose of government funding to address community need</td>
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<td>Information</td>
<td>Communication from the House to community</td>
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<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Two-way communication where the House provides information and</td>
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<td>obtains feedback from community on specific issues</td>
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<td>Active participation</td>
<td>Continuous dialogue and involvement between the community and the</td>
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<td>House relating to governance and service delivery</td>
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What are the benefits of community engagement?

Effective community engagement can result in a range of positive outcomes for the community and the House, including:

- increased community awareness of the House
- increased community ownership in development and implementation of the House’s strategic directions
- equitable access to services for participants and community
- continuous improvement in service delivery incorporating feedback from participants and community
- strengthened accountability and transparent governance practices.
Strategies that strengthen community engagement processes in Houses

As stated above, there are different levels or methods of engagement between a House and community including information, consultation and active participation. A number of specific strategies can be identified to strengthen community engagement practices in Houses.

Promoting the House's services
- Advertise the services provided by the House to the broader community.
- Represent and promote the House in network meetings.

Strengthening governance
- Promote membership drives and Annual General Meetings to the broader community.
- Communicate the House’s Strategic Plan to the community.
- Invite broader community in governance training, where appropriate.
- Review the appropriateness of communication techniques used for informing community of key governance meetings, e.g. management committee meetings, AGMs, etc.
- Facilitate input from key stakeholders, clients and the broader community into the strategic planning process.
- Build relations with elders to ensure broad representation of the community on the Management Committee.

Improving Service Delivery
- Engage the broader community and/or target group in the planning of a new service.
- Promote the House’s Service Charter.
- Develop and promote a participant/community feedback mechanism to collect critical feedback from participants and the community on service delivery.
- Provide opportunities that allow community to identify their needs and service delivery gaps.
- Provide opportunities for the community to assist the House with reviewing service delivery, service systems and policies and procedures.

Prior to commencing an engagement process identify:
- What is the purpose of engaging with the community?
- Are there any issues or challenges to engaging?
- Scope (is it specific to a group – or a much broader community issue?)
- Who are the stakeholders who should be involved in the process?
- What will be the best method for engagement?
- What level of engagement is required (information, consultation, active participation)?
- How will we get feedback from the community?
- How will we evaluate the success or failure of the engagement activity?