TOOL | CREATING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

TIME REQUIRED: 1 HOUR

The process of creating principles for engagement allows you to thoughtfully consider the unique needs of and relationship you want to have with your community. Once created, use these principles as a guide and checkpoint during the planning and implementation of your community engagement activities.

USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:
- Make explicit the kind of relationship you want with the communities you are engaging
- Align on values with your colleagues and the community to ensure consistency

OVERVIEW

Principles help us to:
- Enable flexible adaptation to community context
- Reflect on and assess our actions
- Set a vision
- Make our assumptions explicit

So what makes a good principle? According to Michael Quinn-Patton's Principles-Focused Evaluation Guide, a good principle offers guidance, is useful, inspiring, encourages development, and is measurable.

Consider these sample principles as a starting point:

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
Advancing Knowledge, Solving Human Problems

People over knowledge
Responsibility to wellbeing of the people we study and work with supersedes the goal of new knowledge

Ensure no harm
Do everything possible to ensure that research does not harm safety, dignity, or privacy

Determine and respect wishes for anonymity
Determine whether people wish to remain anonymous or receive recognition and help them understand the potential impacts of those choices.

Quality of consent is more important than format
Informed consent is dynamic and continuous. Make sure that the people you work with understand the implications of consent.

Obligation to reciprocate
Recognize the debt to societies we work with and reciprocate in appropriate ways.

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Principles of Community Engagement

These six guiding principles are the basis for best practice community engagement:

1 **Demonstrate integrity, trust and transparency**
- The levels of community influence and process for engagement must be clearly communicated from the start.
- Consultation and higher forms of engagement must be genuinely purposeful and not tokenistic.

2 **Show respect**
- Value all contributions made and the time given.
- Provide timely feedback on the results of specific consultation.

3 **Be inclusive**
- Ensure a diverse and representative range of stakeholders is engaged.
- Offer a range of accessible engagement opportunities to ensure that all people who may be affected by, or interested in, the outcome can participate.

4 **Educate**
- Information provided should be clear, consistent and use common language wherever possible.
- Always educate the community on the relevant legislative, strategic and local context to allow them to make informed decisions.

5 **Work together**
- The goal is to 'do with' the community rather than 'do for' the community.
- Foster relationships with partners and the community by developing a solid understanding of mutual obligations and reciprocal responsibilities and benefits.

6 **Plan well**
- Strive to select a project scope and engagement activities that align with your objectives.
- Engagement requires informed judgement and planning in its approach and implementation to be effective, practical and suitably resourced.
- Make it simple and convenient for the community to engage in the project. Engagement does not need to be complex but does need to achieve the identified engagement objectives.

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Our Guiding Principles

Include Everyone & Embrace All Ideas

Encouraging an eclectic mix of ideas and hearing from a widespread audience allows for expanded visions, develops diverse possibilities, and contributes to comprehensive decision making. Working with the community rather than simply for them, will allow residents to take ownership of their future.

Reciprocal Support & Respect

Creating change requires citizens and Town leaders to see past the structures that separate society and look towards a common goal. Considering all sides to a story and adopting another's lens will reduce apathy, encourage equity, and create a clearer picture of the united community we continue to become.

Informed & Communicative

Sharing information early and keeping the community in the know will work to strengthen a deeper understanding and allow others to make meaningful contributions. Always educating the community on relevant legislative, strategic and local context will allow them to make informed decisions.

**Demonstrate Integrity, Trust & Transparency**

Remain clear about the level of engagement required, the role of residents, and how their input will be used. All engagement activities must be genuinely purposeful and sincere. Ensuring an accepting mindset and providing equal opportunities to participate will help establish authentic partnerships.

Measure Outcomes & Share Successes

Following up with participants and sharing outcomes will allow them to recognize the value of their contribution and as a result, prolong their efforts to engage. Closing the loop and evaluating engagement methods will not only solidify our projects but also strengthen our commitment to the community.

Committed to Continual Improvement

In order to be our best selves, we need to take risks and recognize that fearlessly pursuing new ways to work is what will lead us towards new opportunities and successful outcomes. Constant evaluation and a ceaseless desire to improve is what drives us to challenge ourselves and continue to grow.

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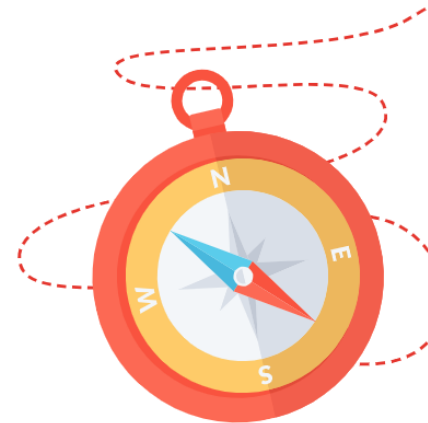
THE TOOL

This tool can be used within a team when thinking about how to engage specific communities, or as a developmental activity with peers who are not connected with your work. It's often helpful to have someone external to your work ask probing questions to help you understand more deeply the kind of relationship you are fostering with your communities.

Step 1 – Individually or in pairs, review the example principles provided. Identify the principles that resonate for your work (10 mins)

Step 2 – In small groups, discuss and capture (25 mins)
- What principles are most important?
- Discuss: What is missing, but important?

Step 3 – Individually or in pairs, draft and adapt (25 mins)
- Draft any new principles needed
- For each principle you have in your list, give an example of what following this principle looks like in action in your context.

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