



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Component 1: Coursework: Essay

Name: Kristian Nash

Student ID: 2130196

Module: Community Engagement

Module Code: LCBB4002

Lecturer: Dr Molly Jack

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Introduction

In this essay it will be explained how the community project was started. As a community engagement practitioner, we started a journey to help fix a issue in my community, we wanted to find a way to help the local youth to stay away from the different dangers of the streets, like knife crime and trouble which is on the rise (Allen, G. and Harding, M. (2021)). The solution was to start a football club that would be every Tuesday and Thursday evening, it would provide the youth a positive alternative to express themselves while helping them feel a part of a team.

The objectives of the project were simple, it was to create a safe and welcoming environment for local children and teenagers giving them football training sessions. The primary stakeholders included the youth themselves, parents, local schools and the wider community. All of them would play a role in making sure the project would succeed. The potential benefits were reductions in street loitering to long-term improvements in physical fitness, teamwork skills and personal development.

In this report, we will go into the details of the community project, the best practices in community engagement, stakeholder involvement and the role of social media in helping the project. We will explore how the project promoted community participation, collaboration, diversity and inclusion leading to cultural involvement and collaboration. We will explain the importance of adopting a forward looking approach in educating community members about what influences community development.

Main Body

Our community project, the establishment of a local football club that meets every Tuesday and Thursday evening, aimed to address critical issues affecting our neighbourhood's youth. The project was designed to offer a safe and engaging alternative to the streets, helping to stop knife crime and other negative activities. In this section, we will explore the project's implementation and focus on the best practices in community engagement, stakeholder involvement and the role of social media in supporting our efforts.

Community Engagement Principles and Best Practices

Community engagement stands at the very core of our project's achievements. To achieve this, we had conversations and surveys to better understand what they enjoy and what they are looking for. This approach allowed us to tailor our project to their preferences, making sure that it would be something they would come to. (Eden Project Communities. (n.d.))

In our commitment to inclusivity we asked loads of different people for their opinions. We made a point to have conversations not just with the young people but also with their parents, the schools and the community leaders. This inclusive approach gave everyone an opportunity to voice their thoughts and ideas. (dtascommunityownership.org.uk. (n.d.).)

Transparency and open communication were our guiding principles. We believed in honesty and open discussions sharing information about the project's progress, plans and updates with everyone. This transparency helped create trust within the community and encouraged more participation.

Our project's success was made in the idea of involving and communicating with all stakeholders like the youth, their families, schools or community leaders. To make sure that every voice is heard and we work together as a united team. This way, we created a shared vision and a strong sense of togetherness.

Stakeholder Involvement and Their Roles

Stakeholder involvement was very important in shaping the project. The primary stakeholders included the youth, parents, local schools and the wider community. The youth were central to the project's success. They participated in the football club, helping to its growth. Their role was not just to be players but also to becoming leaders and supporting the project within their groups. (enddrowning.org. (n.d.).)

Parents played an important role well. They were encouraged to volunteer, support and actively participate in the project. Their involvement created a sense of shared responsibility and commitment. Some parents also took on leadership roles helping with logistics and organising events.

Local schools also helped. They promoted the football club to students and parents, further helping the project's reach. This collaboration helped in recruiting young members and maintaining a continuous flow of people to join in.

The wider community also played a supporting role. They provided encouragement and offered resources, such as field access, which were crucial to the project's success.

Social Media's Role in Outreach

In today's world, we have amazing tools to help us reach out to our community and one of the most powerful tools is social media. We used platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to tell everyone about our project. (Panel®, E. (2019).)

On these social media platforms, we shared a lot of information about the football club. We told people when and where we met, what fun things we did and how they could join us or help. We also posted stories about the kids and teenagers who were part of our club and how the project was making their lives better.

The great thing about social media is that it can help us connect with many people really fast. This was important for our project because it meant we could reach not only the young people but also their parents, teachers and other community members who wanted to support our cause. So, social media played a big role in making our project known and getting more people involved.

Promoting Community Participation and Collaboration

Our project was driven by the principles of community participation and collaboration. By actively engaging community members, parents and local schools we created a sense of responsibility that went far beyond the football pitch. The success of the club was celebrated as a shared achievement making create a feeling of community and belonging.

Community participation extended into various aspects of the project. Community members were helped contribute to our journey. They came to matches, offered their skills and resources and provided valuable feedback that helped improve our project.

Parents played a important role as they were the backbone of our project. They volunteered their time, expertise and resources to support the project, helping its growth and sustainability. Their active involvement created a strong support network, spreading our message of collective responsibility.

Collaboration extended to local authorities. The support we received for field access, permits and resources was a massive benefit to give us the infrastructure for our football club.

Fostering Diversity and Inclusion

In our project, making sure everyone felt welcome and included was a very important thing for us. We wanted the football club to be a place where anyone could come, no matter if they were a boy or a girl, no matter where their family came from and no matter their background. (Ku.edu. (2018).)

We made a big effort to make sure everyone knew they could be part of our project. This meant that lots of different kids and teenagers joined in. They came from different places and had different stories, which made our group really diverse. This diversity helped us learn from each other and become friends, making our group even stronger.

We didn't stop at just our club. We wanted our whole neighborhood to be like that. So, we asked people from all around our community to join us. We wanted to bring people together from different backgrounds and create a friendly and welcoming place for everyone. This way, we built a more inclusive and diverse community where everyone felt they belonged. (Reader, S. (2022))

In wrapping up our project journey, building an inclusive and diverse community was very important and was something we thought about at every stage. Making sure that everyone, regardless of their background, feels a sense of belonging was one of our principles. The football club served as an example of the vision for our community. Efforts to support diversity and inclusivity within our project went beyond the pitch, touching the lives of individuals from different backgrounds.

As our diverse group of kids and teenagers joined in, they brought with them a their stories and experiences. This rich diversity became the backbone of our community, creating an environment where learning from each other was a natural and ongoing process. Friendships grew and the bonds we built became the driving force behind the strength of our collective group. (Steps 4 Change (2022)) (Phillips, K. (2017))

Our vision didn't stop at the football club. We aimed to extend this sense of inclusivity and friendship throughout our entire neighborhood. Inviting people from every corner of our community to join us In doing so we succeeded in constructing a community that embraced differences, making everyone feel valued and appreciated.

In the following section, I will conclude our exploration of the community engagement process within our project.

Having a Forward Looking Approach

Our project was built on the idea of having a forward-looking approach. This means that we didn't only focus on what's happening right now we also considered how our actions could make our community even better in the future. (Plan-bleu : Environnement et développement en Méditerranée. (n.d.)) .It was important to teach everyone in our community about the things that can either help or harm our neighbourhood.

One of the most important things we wanted to make clear was how our project could bring long-term benefits. We showed that by keeping young people engaged in positive activities, we could reduce the chances of them getting into trouble with knives or behaving badly. We wanted everyone to understand that what we were doing wasn't just for today it was an investment in a safer future.

With this forward-looking approach, we aimed to inspire our community members to see the bigger picture. We encouraged them to view our project as a way to build a better tomorrow, not just for the youth but for the whole community. This view helped create a sense of ownership and commitment among everyone, ensuring the success of the project and leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

In the following section, we will conclude our exploration of the community engagement process within our project. We will provide a summary of our journey and offer recommendations for future projects.

Conclusion

In the course of this essay, we have gone through the start and implementation of a community project that was created to address issues facing our local neighborhood's youth. The creation of a football club meeting every Tuesday and Thursday evening was our answer to the pressing concerns of knife crime and the getting kids off of the streets. Our goal was to provide a safe, engaging and positive alternative for the youth, allowing them to express themselves on the pitch while creating a sense of belonging.

As community engagement practitioners, I used a range of practices that proved to help a lot in the success of our project. I prioritised community involvement by actively seeking input from community members, parents, schools and local authorities. Transparency and open communication were key principles that helped create an environment of trust and participation.

Stakeholder involvement played an important role in the project's success. The youth themselves were not just participants they became leaders and supported the project within their friend groups. Parents, local schools and the broader community all contributed to its growth and sustainability, resulting in a strong sense of shared responsibility.

Social media played a crucial role in spreading the word about the project. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allowed us to reach a broader audience faster. We shared success stories, encouraged volunteers, and showed the positive impact of the project.

By having community members, parents, and local schools on the team we built a strong sense of community, where the success of the football club was celebrated as a collective achievement, collaboration included the local authorities.

Making a diverse and inclusion was very important to the project. The football club welcomed participants from various backgrounds, helping create a more inclusive atmosphere and cultural integration.

Our community engagement project, the local football club, proved to be a good solution in addressing the challenges posed by street-related dangers and knife crime in our neighborhood. The success of the project was supported by community engagement principles, stakeholder involvement, the use of social media, collaboration, diversity and inclusion. A forward looking approach to community development was the final piece of the puzzle helping create a lasting and positive impact on our community.

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