

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT 2

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Introduction

Community engagement is an approach to guaranteeing community members access to valued social activities and settings, feel they can contribute seriously to those exercises, and foster practical abilities that empower them to completely take part.

In assessment 1, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) in the Bristol area was discussed. It was a regeneration programme that was led by the government of the United Kingdom and focused on England's most vulnerable areas. It was one of the best area-based initiatives that aimed in reducing the gaps between some of the poorest communities and the rest of the country. The programme was supervised by a neighbourhood renewal unit with the department for local government and local communities. NDC programme focused on addressing major challenges such as unemployment and lack of education accessibility. The main programme stakeholders being the community, local government and the national government. The programme observed all the principles and standards of a community engagement programme but still had its obstacles to attaining its objectives. In this assignment, I will reflect on how I would effectively conduct my community engagement programme by comparing it to the New Deal for Communities programme. I will focus on how different my engagement programme will be from the NDC so as to achieve its objectives.

Comparison to New Deal Community Programme

Compared to NDC, my project would focus on a smaller area, the target population being way smaller than any NDC and over a short period of time. I would carry out a household survey to ensure that all the ideas regarding my programme questions were provided by members of the community. I would also carry out focus group discussions to get a better understanding of the common ideas provided by the community. This would make it easier to reach out to members of the community to get to hear their challenges and opinions from a one on one perspective and also enable my stakeholders to provide ways for them to support the programme. In my

SME project, I would ensure that I already have the necessary financial support I need for the project before starting to ensure that it does not collapse before the estimated timeline due to lack of resources. I would ensure that all stakeholders share in the project's objectives and goals so as to gain loyalty from them as compared to NDC where most partners were loyal to other businesses and the government.

Principles, standards guiding community engagement

Comprehensive preparation and planning. NDC project has been designed as an all-inclusive to all participants within the community. My project's design would ensure an all-inclusive approach enabling all community members to participate in the project regardless of their gender, religion, or race among other factors.

Shared purpose and cooperation. The New Deal Communities programme ensures that all the stakeholders have an agreed purpose and they collaboratively work as a team (Tallon, 2020). I would ensure that in my project the stakeholders share my goals and objectives so as to improve the community and make the project successful by coming up with better ideas and solutions to SME challenges.

Inclusion and demographic diversity. My project would have an all-inclusion motto that will ensure people from all walks of life will participate and benefit equally. The NDC programme also had the inclusion of the youths, people living with disability, and women among others all working together as a team to better the programme and community.

Transparency and Learning. In NDC, the community ensured openness by providing a clear process on how activities are implemented to the general community beneficiaries. This helped them become accountable at each level in the programme. The SMEs programme would also provide a clear and detailed step by step process of how the project is carried out which will

help every stakeholder be accountable on their side and also provide learning as the project continues.

Participatory culture and sustained engagement. Milliken et al., (2015) argued that participatory and sustained engagement principles help stakeholders ensure that there is collaborative participation which promotes sustainability during and after the programme. With this principle, the community is able to achieve a quality ongoing community engagement process. The SMEs programme would ensure that all participants are continuously encouraged to take part in the project's activities with will create sustainable engagement providing quality results.

What could have been done differently and why

The NDC programme could have started on a smaller scale and then gradually expand to all the other areas so as to acquire a rough estimate and idea of how it would survive and if it would hit the target set. The financing of the project was not well planned hence at a given point it became problematic to attain the programme's objectives. This could have been avoided by ensuring that the project's funds had already been acquired and set aside from all other funds. The NDC programme had many partnerships which were not that beneficial since some were unable to deliver on their required expectations for the project. This brought delay when it came to delivering results hence partnerships should have been less and more invested in the programme's objectives and goals. Partnerships also did not represent the diversity of interests in the Bristol area, instead represented the government and other businesses' interests leading to a certain degree of failure of the programme. Stakeholders should have been selected by ensuring that they had the programme's interests at heart and their loyalties would be to the programme and not other private and public bodies.

Differences active consultation, effective communication, stakeholders' participation, and inclusion can make in community engagement

Active consultation

This refers to obtaining the community's feedback, analysis of the programme, and other alternatives on decision making to help better the effectiveness of a programme. The NDC programme had active consultation with the community and stakeholders through the NDC household survey, NDC partnership survey and NDC beneficiary survey where the programme was critically analysed, feedback was provided and decisions were made with regard to how the programme would be managed and the objectives met.

Effective communication

Communication is key for every programme to be successful. Effective communication ensures that information is shared among all members of a programme on time and in a detailed form which helps address any rising issues and challenges. In my project, I would ensure effective communication so that information and rising issues reach the community, stakeholders and me within a short period of time. I would use WhatsApp being the easiest way of communication for suggestions and inquiries, Twitter to post trending activities regarding the programme, and Facebook and Instagram to keep people in the know about the project. This would ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Stakeholders' participation

Community participation targets to benefit the community in solving the identified problem as well as building sustainable impact (Gann et al., 2019). Stakeholder participation enables a programme in identifying people or groups that may not support the project hence proving a clear understanding of where their loyalties lie, ensuring conflicts and issues that could ruin the project are avoided.

Inclusion

Inclusive community engagement shows that everyone has a role to play in the project and there will be diverse ideas from people of all walks of life making it more successful and able to achieve its objectives easily Weaver (2021). Putting in mind all the community's diversity, a project should be able to put in place tools to ensure that every single person in that community can take part in the project.

Strategies suitable for stakeholders' engagement using various social media platforms.

Castelló, Etter and Årup Nielsen, (2016) contended that it is vital to comprehend partners' organisations to help in distinguishing successful correspondence stages for commitment. Local area commitment expects everyday sharing of data to guarantee that all partners are functioning collectively and are state-of-the-art on the program progress. In light of NDC program partners' planning, it demonstrates that the venture covers a more extensive region and the nearness is enormous and accomplices come from various segment regions thus the requirement for various correspondence stages (Cho, Furey and Mohr, 2017). In any case, they have a decent working relationship that is described by cooperation, coordinated effort mutual perspective. In my programme, community mapping will indicate a smaller area to work within, with small proximity but partners and stakeholders will come from different areas hence requiring good and effective means of communication. Thus, a portion of the social media platforms that can be utilised to upgrade commitment include:

Twitter; This platform facilitates the trending of the information through hashtags that can promote the company in sharing the information to many people in a single post.

WhatsApp; this platform is easily accessible to almost everyone in a community hence it will enable me and other stakeholders to share information easily and avoid the inconveniences of planning for face to face meetings it has both voice and video calling. It is also cheap because

it cuts the cost of transport, and venue planning among others. There is also an option to create a group which includes all the project members and stakeholders where they can share updates on the project, and share photos, documents and videos (Ahmed, Kumar and Kumar, 2018). The group founder can also control the activities of the group by limiting wrongful participation by removing an individual or limiting those that can engage in a discussion.

Facebook; being both an entertainment and business platform, is a great way to help source for stakeholders since the project information is available in the bio and community members are able to access and track the projects on its page.

LinkedIn; This being an all professional site, helps many projects create connections on the partnership, sourcing for funds among others since they post their achievements and milestones. It also helps track the progress of a project.

Social media platforms facilitate both audio, video and messages which can be utilised by project stakeholders in sharing the information, activities and other significant information in a timely manner. Some of the advantages include the ability to reach out to many audiences at once, and the ability to create a connection with the partners hence supporting multiculturalism and social-cultural integration. Additionally, Castelló, Etter and Årup Nielsen, (2016) argue that these platforms help in the creation of traffic to the company website hence promoting information availability and accessibility as well as the ability to evaluate performance based on feedback. Therefore, such platforms facilitate the level of success being achieved by an organisation.

Conclusion and recommendation

Community engagement provides sustainable solutions to the community's socio-economic challenges. Understanding the communities' needs leads to community development and socio-economic empowerment. Every community engagement programme should have a

reasonable approach so as to be able to attain its objectives, otherwise, it may fail. Based on New Deal for Communities programme, it is noted that the programme was too ambitious which was clearly reflected in the weaknesses of Area Based Initiatives (New Deal for Communities national evaluation phase 2, 2015). The project also lacked a clear statement in relation to the expected outcomes objectives. Also, the programme was subjected to too many principles which included the community taking the heart of the programme which was not the best mechanism strategy in a long 10 years project. The community representatives were more interested in immediate outcomes that solve their poverty challenges and unemployment issues. Representatives were more interested in immediate results which means the long-term goal was not achieved.

All projects should focus on achieving their objectives both short-term and long-term. For a more successful community engagement, all plays in a programme should have the project's interests at heart and work together to ensure they are attained quality success. Based on the New Deal for Community programme, community members, stakeholders and partners who worked together ensured the success of the programme as some people were able to acquire good housing among other achievements. This led to community empowerment. It is also important to consider a more precise project that covers a small scope to ensure that the expected objectives are met.

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