

## LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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## **Reflection on How to Effectively Co-ordinate a Community Engagement Programme**

My assignment in designing community engagement process has equipped me with the necessary skill to help the community to accomplish its undertakings. The assignment has taught to perceive community engagement programs as service-us initiative since entails the people in the community dedicating our own efforts and time towards realization of a certain goal. Another thing that I came to learn is that community engagement is a very effective tool that if properly executed will transform most communities and enable them to grow in many ways imaginable. However, the process is very dependent on the relationships between all the stakeholders in a community engagement process since it is through solid partnerships and trust that it is possible to mobilize resources and motivation to get tasks accomplished. Community engagement processes are not only guided by strategies, there must be various stipulated principles and approached to help steer the processes towards positivity (Mulinge, 2020). I passionate believer of giving the people power to determine and rule their destiny. Similarly community engagement processes ensures the members have been duly consulted, informed and involved.

The proposal mentions some of the best practices that need to be incorporated to the community engagement process. The best practices is a combination of programs, standards and principles that ensure there is a smooth working of the community engagement process. Cultural anthropology, public policy, organizational development and socio-psychology among other are the principles in which build community engagement proposal (Aho, Hamalainen & Salomon, 2020). I drew the main concepts from classwork and from various existing literatures on community building and engagement. The knowledge acquired will go a long way in imparting me with the necessary skills to lead in community engagement projects since I feel I have begun to master the art of community leadership. I have also come to learn that it is not only about skill

and incentive, it also take persistence and relentlessness to have people focused on a certain goal. Coming up with the human resource and the funds for a community engagement projects is a serious problem; this is where the lead team has to make serious strategies including deciding on how issues arising will be resolved. Information takes the center stage in any community engagement process, the community members need to be fully informed on timely basis. Also it is important to conduct extensive research so as to dig out enough information as possible to help in the designing of a community engagement plan.

Of all the basic pillars of community engagement process, I find “people” to be the most important. People in community engagement project refers to the community members. It is from community members that we can develop the best lead team to spearhead community engagement projects since community members are very conversant with the problems the community is facing. The lead team is responsible with running the day to day activities on behalf of all community members. Secondly the rest of the community members are likely to trust people they know compared to new faces. Second pillar that I think is crucial to the community engagement process is practice. Practice comprise of actions forming the basis for operation (Adhikari et al., 2019). I learnt that proactive measures have to be taken to ensure the proposal adheres to the goals and disciplines of the community. It is also important to ensure practicability of the proposals, the resolutions and goals set for the community should be attainable meaning that they should be within reach. Last but not least, evaluation of performance is another pillar of community engagement process. It is through evaluation of performance that we can measure whether things are going according to plan. The best approach here is used of SMART technique to evaluate performance also the SWOT analysis can be handy in evaluating performance of the

projects. There must be room of altering the plan through consensus to maximize the potential of the community engagement process.

To make the community engagement process more decision-oriented, it is important give all the stakeholders an opportunity to participate in every step of the community engagement process. Though such kind of involvement, it will be possible to draw an overall conclusion to be used to decide the way forward. Allowing for public participation in the community engagement process also serves to bolster decision-making process making the whole activity decision-oriented (De Weger et al., 2018). I also made sure that the proposal is goal driven. One challenge of any community project is lack of concentration which might result to drifting the course from the goal. To overcome this challenger it is important to have mini-goals aside from the main goal, the mini goals will act as stepping stones towards the bigger goal. The small victories achieved from surpassing the mini-goals will be motivators to ensure that the lead team doesn't lose focus (Leidig & Oakes, 2021). It is also essential to make the community initiative to be value-based. I believe we achieved this in our proposal by ensuring that the dreams, hopes and opinions held by the community are factors in the plan. During the initial stages of planning we collected as many opinions as possible from the public concerning how they wish their community. The views and opinions collected will be the compass that directs the lead team on which direction they should take. Making a community engagement initiative value-based helps identify a common ground in instances where there is disagreement on what approaches to be taken.

The goals and initiatives of a community engagement process should be sustainable. By sustainability, I mean that the community engagement process need to be cater for the environments, financial and the socio-cultural aspects of that particular community. In terms of environmental sustainability, the proposed community project must be able to conserve the air,

water and habitat of animals, insects and birds in that particular area. Community projects that endanger the lives of living organisms or cause pollution are shut down during the consultation step of community engagement process. Financial sustainability is where we consider whether the community has the capacity to afford the cost of implementing the proposed project. Socio-cultural sustainability ensures that the proposed changes should not conflict with the culture and social lives of the community members. Communities differ in terms of customs and beliefs, I had to research extensively by factoring anthropology in order to devise ways of meeting the cultural demands of the community. To eliminate any forthcoming problems, there is need to come up with policies that are sensitive to the socio-cultural structures of a particular community to (Williamson, 2022). I can comfortably affirm that my proposal managed to balance all the spheres of the community engagement process guaranteeing an overall sustainability of the process.

The principle of inclusivity gives the community members an opportunity to be part of the planning and execution process. Multicultural approach allows the community engagement lead teams to apply a framework that account for the social lives of the community members. The approach includes consulting the community leaders on various directives to enable the community to adapt to proposed changes (Zhang, Warner & Firestone, 2019). I also recommend needs assessment to help identification of best methods and practices to best suit the situation community. I also thing the inclusion of campaigns to increase awareness and the need to focus on betterment of the community. Vigorous campaigns serve to lecture the community on various improvement initiatives that will bring positive change to the community. When different people come together, there is conflict of interest but the same can be an advantage since it will birth different ideas hence making the community more inclusive. The changes will be accompanys by pressure to keep up hence the creation of new support systems to facilitate the change. By

increasing public relation activities a community engagement initiatives become easy to apply. Accountability and transparency enables the stakeholders to be fully conversant with what is expected from them. By failing to accomplish their roles the overall outcome of the community engagement process will be derailed (Wetli, 2019). In the proposal, I suggested the importance of timely communication as it enables information to reach all the stakeholders in an understandable manner. It is also through effective communication that we can establish a trustworthy environment with the stakeholders which is essential for the community engagement process. An environment that allows space for mutual respect helps us to create an environment that values the interest of the people by embracing divergent views.

The process of consultation and involvement affect relationships and expectations of the community members. During the consultation step of the community engagement process we have to listen to the concerns and aspirations. Our aim in the consultation stage is ensure that ideas of the community members are added as input that will contribute to making of decisions. We can also get feedback through the consultation process since we invite the public to give their views. Secondly, involvement step in community engagement ensures for the concerns and aspirations to reflect in the decision making process. Our goal here is to make all the community members to be part of engagement process. We can still improve in promoting collaborations by encouraging the teams to forge better working relations with the members of the community. Collaborations gives rise of alternatives that can be applied to bring more desirable solutions in the long run. The main aim that makes us focus more on collaboration is to ensure that fruitful deliberation are held between the community engagement teams and the members of the community in their respective capacities. Empowering the community requires the lead team to reiterate to the community the importance of the proposed project and how that are set to benefit from it. In this step, the public

should also be reassured of the safety measures that will accompany the proposed changes. By empowering we tend to create a support structure that enables the community to work collectively towards achievement of a certain goal.

Conclusively, I think the role of personnel in community engagement process need not to be overlooked. Having the right persons for the job is one takes the community forward towards realization of the set priorities right (Fraser et al., 2019). The community engagement team is tasked to preside over the initial processed of community engagement process through consultations and deliberation. I think that it is also the obligation of lead team to form collaborations with community members to ensure their view are incorporated during community engagement. It also the work of the lead team to handle logistical challenges such as tenders and proposals (Barnes & Marlatt, 2022). The members of the public are very crucial team of the community engagement proposal since they contribute ideas to be incorporate to the plan. The general public can also server as oversight to monitor the progress of the project. As a lead-team works I proposed projected is important to advocate for equal rights for all persons living in the community engagement process. We also invite people with divergent views to give the pinion about the whole process. As we edge the end of the community engagement it is important for any community since it ensures that any input contributed towards the set goals.

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