



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

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

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?

derived from <http://communitydoor.org.au/voice>