

Creating a Community Engagement Plan

Description:

This tool provides guidelines on the steps and process of engaging with your community and a spectrum diagram.

How it can be used:

Community engagement activities are an important element of your health service integration initiative. It is an effective process to determine priority areas for programming and create a more engaged and mobilized health community. It will also help assess whether or not your health service integration initiative is effectively responding to the needs of your community.

It is important to have a plan for engaging with your community as it will likely be required as part of your health service integration initiative planning and funding.

Answer the questions below to identify the key elements of your community engagement plan. Consider the necessary features of community engagement and where on the spectrum your engagement activities with each stakeholder should be placed, ensuring a participative approach to your health service integration initiative.

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1. Why are you engaging? What is the goal of your engagement process?
 - a. Is this a requirement for obtaining information around your health service integration initiative?
 - b. How does this align with your community health priorities?
 - c. Has this been mandated as an external requirement? (e.g., through a funding agreement)
 - d. Are you required to engage with a certain number or type of community member?
 2. Upon what subject/topic are you engaging with stakeholders?
 - a. How is this related to the ongoing direction of your health services?
 - b. Are you seeking input on specific areas such as youth or Elder services?
 - c. Is there a problem or issue that requires sensitivity in how it is presented?
 3. What is your budget for the engagement process?
 - a. Have funds been allocated for engagement?
 - b. Are you able to bring stakeholders together for focus groups?
 - c. Is there travel involved? What hospitality will be required?
 - d. Are you providing an incentive to participate (e.g., mug or gift certificate)?
 4. Who are the stakeholders? Stakeholders are individuals that have a vested interest in the health integration initiative. This could be patients, health care providers, leaders, educators, Elders, youth, provincial/regional partners, etc.
 - a. How will each stakeholder contribute (e.g., will they help define the issue, contribute data, develop options, make recommendations, etc.)?
 - b. Is there a group that you are required to invite to participate (e.g., client advocacy group)?
 - c. Are there Tribal Council or Regional Health Authorities (RHA/) or provincial partners that should be included? Who and why?

- d. How is your community leadership involved?
5. How will you engage?
 - a. Will you be meeting in person with the stakeholders?
 - b. Will you be holding focus groups?
 - c. Will be you conducting interviews (e.g., in person, over the phone, online)?
 - d. Are you requesting input through feedback or input forms? Do the right people have access to the information?
 - e. Are you using technology such as a web-based survey? Do the stakeholders have access to and knowledge of the technology?
 - f. Are special requirements needed to ensure a successful engagement process (e.g., wheelchair access, helpers, babysitting, translation, etc.)?
 6. When will you engage?
 - a. Allow enough time in advance to prepare materials that clearly explain the issues upon which you are seeking feedback.
 - b. Are there times when the stakeholders are already together for other reasons? Can you 'piggy-back' onto another event?
 - c. Is this a one-time information-gathering process like a focus group, or an ongoing process (e.g., feedback or comment forms)?
 7. How will you inform stakeholders of the process?
 - a. Will you contact each stakeholder individually (e.g., email, letter, telephone call, etc.)?
 - b. Are there communication channels you can utilize such as community radio, community newspaper, bulletin board, Facebook or other social media?
 - c. Is there a single person who is a point of contact for certain stakeholder groups?
 - d. How much time will you allocate to publicizing the engagement process?
 - e. Do you have plans for second and third reminders to ensure high participation rates?
 - f. Is there an information package that explains the issue and the process?
 - g. Will you be preparing progress reports?
 8. How will you follow up after the engagement process?
 - a. Will you get back to participants to validate their feedback?
 - b. How will you thank the stakeholders for participating?
 - c. Will you collate the results and send to stakeholders?
 - d. Will you be posting the results of the process? Where will you post the results (e.g., the health centre, online, community paper, community fairs, etc.)?
 - e. How will you present your results to your staff, Health Board, Health Councillor, Chief and Council, provincial partners, funder, etc.?
 9. How will you assess if the engagement process has been effective and successful? Go back and compare to your original reasons for the community engagement process.
 - a. Did you get sufficient input or feedback to inform your process?
 - b. What approaches or channels were the most effective (e.g., email or online survey, telephone interview, focus group, mail-in questionnaire, etc.)?
 - c. Did you reach *enough* people? Did you reach the *right* people?
 - d. Were there stakeholders who should have participated but didn't? How could you reach these stakeholders more effectively in the future?
 - e. What would you do differently next time and why?

Community Communication/Engagement Spectrum

Goal	Techniques		
Inform	Provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the opportunities, challenges, alternatives and/or solutions	Keep the community informed through information dissemination. Use a one-way process that is the starting point of dialogue.	Effective information dissemination is vital. Be honest about non-negotiable areas of influence. Provide information through: • Newsletters • Websites • Fairs
Consult	Obtain community feedback on option, alternatives and/or decisions	Consultation generally requires that responses must be invited and considered before decisions are made, although there is no obligation to make changes.	It is a structured event, not a process. Consider: • Focus groups • Surveys • Community meetings
Involve	Work directly with the community to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	Joint consideration of community responses, with feedback on how the community has influenced decisions	Use a fluid, ongoing process and face-to-face dialogue: • Workshops • Focus Groups • Surveys
Collaborate	Partner with the community in all aspects of the health integration initiative including developing alternatives and identifying the preferred solution	Look to the community for help in formulating solutions, incorporating recommendations as much as possible	Use face-to-face dialogue with community representatives and those affected. Support participatory decision-making