

GATHERING FEEDBACK ON THE COMMUNITY PLAN

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Summary

This fact sheet offers suggestions for gathering feedback to check on your plan's progress, learning from the community, and adjust actions and projects as needed.

Keywords: collecting data, community engagement, Youth, Elders and knowledge keepers

Why is it important?

Gathering feedback from the community is critical for a variety of reasons:



Measure:

Once you begin putting the plan's objectives into action, it's helpful to understand the impacts of this action. Measuring impacts allows you to find out how well the plan is performing, if certain projects are having the desired results, and check in with community perception of the plan.¹



Improve:

To remain effective a plan needs to be relevant to changing situations and community needs. By hearing what is working and not working, you can revise the plan, prioritize specific objectives, and adjust projects and actions to be more effective.²



Generate Support:

Gathering feedback is an opportunity to share information about planned action with the community. By actively engaging with community members and sharing the results of the plan's efforts, you can promote or renew awareness of key issues, increase interest and excitement, and generate community support.³



Accountability:

In order for a plan to meet the needs of the community, it needs to stay accountable to the community by checking in and gathering feedback.⁴

What does gathering feedback consist of? *Best Practice*

Gathering feedback is a several step process:

1 Decide what you want to know:

The first step is to determine what kind of feedback you want to gather. Do you want to know how people feel in general, or about specific indicators, projects and objectives? Often, what you want to know stems directly from CCP projects and objectives.⁵

2 Develop indicators:

Once you decide what you want to know, it can be helpful to develop indicators. Indicators are a useful way of measuring the impact of CCP projects and objectives. They can be quantitative (how many people have used a new bench) or qualitative (how people feel about the new bench). It can be helpful to relate indicators to specific projects or objectives. Often, it's best to measure the 'success' of your CCP using a mix of indicators. Choose indicators that will be possible to collect through community feedback, and that will help answer what you want to know.⁶

3 Identify stakeholders:

Who you engage will depend on what you want to know. For example, if you want to learn about recreation activities, talk to youth.

4 Gather feedback:

Methods will depend on the specific situation. See more on page 3.

5 Analysis:

Once you have your feedback, you can measure it based on the indicators you chose. Your analysis can tell you if things are improving, staying the same, or getting worse.⁷

6 Make changes:

Once you have measured your feedback, you can consider and incorporate feedback, make changes to the CCP, and adjust projects or actions.⁸

7 Share:

Make sure the impact of feedback is known to the community. Share results in a clear, transparent, and accessible way.⁹

- **Clarity:** Be clear, transparent, and honest with the community. Be clear about what you want to know, how feedback will be used, and where the community can find out about what's happening. Make sure handouts and visuals are clear and accurate.¹⁰
- **Integrate:** Whenever appropriate, integrate local culture, language, and arts into activities and engagement.¹¹
- **Inclusive:** Ensure methods of gathering feedback are inclusive and accessible, and community events offer a supportive environment. Address barriers to engagement by providing supports such as child-care or resources such as food for groups that are harder to reach.¹²

Ensure methods of gathering feedback are inclusive and accessible

- **Empower:** Whenever possible use engagement as an opportunity to support community, provide skill-building opportunities, volunteer or employment opportunities.¹³
 - **Develop:** Some engagement methods require certain skills – if you lack experience it can be helpful to develop your communication, presentation, or facilitation skills beforehand, or talk to someone who has more experience for advice.¹⁴
 - **Plan:** Plan ahead, give yourself enough time, and stay organized when tracking feedback so your results are more accurate and you can more easily perform analysis.¹⁵
 - **Individual:** Seek to understand your audience and choose engagement methods that are appropriate to your unique community. Use language that is suited to the community.¹⁶
- ### *Choose engagement methods that are appropriate to your unique community*
- **Use resources:** When possible, work with existing organizations, networks, groups, partnerships, and resources in the community.¹⁷
 - **Celebrate:** Gathering feedback goes hand in hand with celebrating the successes of the CCP. This is an opportunity to share the results of all of the community's hard work, and can help increase awareness, motivation and confidence.¹⁸
 - **Catalog:** Whenever possible and appropriate, take pictures and video of projects and community events. This can help share the positives of CCP projects as well as apply for funding.¹⁹

Who to gather feedback from?

Anyone in the community can provide helpful feedback. Sometimes, it may be beneficial to gather feedback on specific projects – in this case, anyone who is affected by the project directly or indirectly. Different methods of gathering feedback will be better suited to different groups – for example, those living on or off reserve. Within the community, it's helpful to identify community leaders and communication networks to reach as many people as possible.²⁰

In general, it's helpful to receive feedback from:

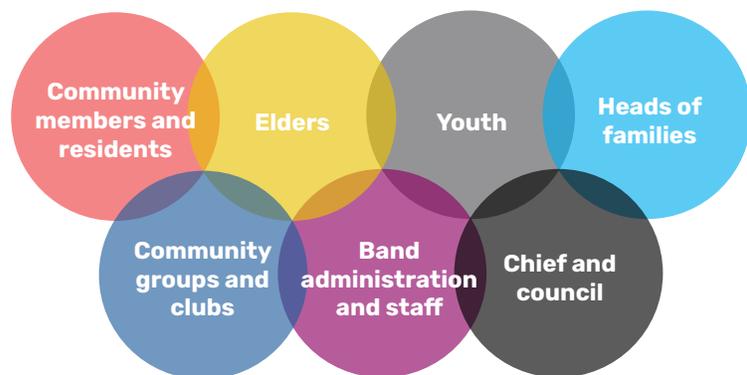


Table 1 | Groups to receive feedback from

When to gather feedback?

The process of gathering feedback in ongoing, and it's best to gather feedback as often as possible. It can be helpful to gather feedback at different stages of your CCP objectives, as well as after specific events or activities. Different stages of the project, or different times of year, will be better suited for different types of engagement and you may need to be strategic. For example, you may want to consider gathering feedback before you begin a new project or CCP objective, then gathering feedback after it's completed to get an idea of the impact. If you want to better understand people's thoughts on specific engagement activities, try gathering feedback during activities.²¹

How to Gather Feedback

There are many different methods for gathering community feedback. It's often best to use a range of methods to increase participation.²²

Conversation: Casual conversation is a great way to gather general information from the community and can be effective at open houses, events, and activities. It can be helpful to take notes in a logbook to keep track of what you hear.²³

It's often best to use a range of methods to increase participation.

Key interviews: While more time-consuming, this is an effective way of gathering in-depth feedback. This is used most often with key participants or hard to reach individuals who may not provide feedback at community events.²⁴

Survey: Surveys are useful for gathering a range of community feedback. They can be online, over the phone, on paper, and can be handed out at events. Make sure surveys are short, and questions are clear.²⁵

Radio: Radio can be an effective way to gather feedback, share project success and events, and share information with the community.²⁶

Newsletters: Feedback forms can be incorporated into online or print newsletters. This is most effective when newsletters are distributed more regularly.²⁷

Focus groups: Focus groups bring a small number of people (5-10) together, often to discuss specific issues. Focus groups can include a particular group, such as children. Focus groups can be more open and productive than community meetings, but can be challenging to facilitate effectively.²⁸

Public meetings: Public meetings can be effective at gathering feedback from a lot of people. They also provide a good opportunity to host smaller group discussions or share progress. Use maps, posters, and visuals for greatest effect.²⁹

Open house: More informal than a public meeting, open houses can be a more comfortable and less intimidating environment for people to provide feedback.³⁰

Social media: Facebook, Twitter, websites and blogs can all be used to share progress and gather feedback from the community. Whenever possible, share videos, images, and text of CCP progress and action. Update regularly to keep people engaged.³¹

Suggestion boxes: Suggestion boxes allow people to provide feedback anonymously, which may encourage greater response. Suggestion boxes work well if placed in an accessible location, or public building such as a community centre.³²

Further Reading

CCP Handbook - Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nation in British Columbia by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada in partnership with First Nation CCP champions across British Columbia

This is a useful guide and resource providing information and step by step instruction on all major stages of CCP planning.

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1377629855838/1613741744194>

Moving Toward a Stronger Future: An Aboriginal Resource Guide for Community Development by Little Black Bear & Associates

Created by a group of First Nation and Metis citizens, this guide provides resources, tools, and a framework to support community development that can be adapted for individual communities.

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mvng-twrd-strngr-ftr/index-en.aspx>

Endnotes

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