ENGAGING WITH STAFF

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Summary

Comprehensive community planning is a holistic, inclusive, and thorough planning process. It intends to identify community strengths, needs, ambitions, and challenges by actively engaging members in discussions and activities that make it comfortable and exciting to share their experiences. When we think about what groups to engage in this process, it is always a good idea to consider departments and staff members.

Keywords: community engagement, collecting data, staff, planning team

Why is it Important to Engage with Staff?

Engaging with staff from all departments is vitally important at every stage of the planning process. Departments such as Administration, Healthcare, Housing and Public Works, Economic Development, and Education, operate services and programs that are significant to the community. In some cases, departments have existing plans for housing, land-use, economic ambitions, stewardship and more, which could be incorpoated in the CCP. Concerns, experiences and opinions are valuable sources of information that contribute a great deal to the CCP's goals and objectives.[1]

Staff can also offer solutions to issues and insight into the present challenges of the community. Staff members can also be of great help to the planning process when they're properly informed and engaged. Staff who will eventually be assigned to oversee the implementation of the CCP should have a good understanding of the community's vision, goals, and objectives. Engaging staff members in the beginning, middle and final stages of development can help maintain strong communication and understanding throughout the planning process.

Figure 1 | A staff meeting

Who should be involved?

Knowing who to involve at each phase can help the Planning Team plan efficently and maintain on budget. Involvng departments at every phase of development can include the following members:

- Department Managers
- Supervisors
- Coordinators
- Administration Assistants
- Team staff
- Youth and Elder staff

Should all departments be involved?

Engaging with departments and their staff members is an important step in the CCP process. However, choosing who to engage under this seperate engagement catergory is entirely up to the planning team and project coordinators. When choosing who to engage under the staff catergory, planning leads should consider each department and their contributing team. See below for a list of departments commonly invovled in the CCP planning process:

- Health
- Education
- Lands
- Economic Development
- Finance and Payroll
- Community Development
- Administration
- Child and Family Services
- Housing
- Public Works
- Law and Justice
- Headstart and Daycare

Tips for Getting Started:

1. Identify your Nation's Departments.

2. Create a list of employees under each department.

3. Create a separate list with their title and job duties; coordinating engagement sessions and activities with the Department Manager or each department may help this process.

4. Consider departments and how they work together; it might be best to combine overlapping departments for these sessions.

5. Based on the size of departments identify activities that will work best for each group. At this point you can decide whether engagements will be led separately in each department, or bringing staff from different departments together

6. Create an engagement plan specifically for departments and send out schedule to each department for confirmation of dates and times.

7. Engagement activities should focus on the department.

10 sample questions to ask staff:

1. What's going well in your department?

2. What could use improvement, and where should efforts be focused?

3. What are challenges and opportunities for your department?

4. Does your department have existing documents and data that could help form our community's profile?

5. What are the key topics discussed in your department?

6. Explain the purpose and mission of your department

7. What are some departmental goals your department has?

8. What type of programs and services does your department offer to the community and/or administration?

9. What other departments does your department work or interact with?

10. Does your department interact with stakeholders? If so, who are they?

Staff's involvement at each phase:

1 ### Phase 1: Pre-Planning

In the pre-planning phase, community leaders and staff are usually involved with developing a planning team, creating workplans, community profiles and more. Planning teams are comprised of administrators, managers, or band office staff, board of directors, Chief and Council, and a mix of community members. Once the planning team is decided on, the people in involved will help guide the remaining phases of the CCP planning process. In some cases, the first task for the planning team is to gather and organize existing data from various departments.

> For more information, see the Establishing a Planning Team fact sheet.

2 ### Phase 2: Planning

In the planning phase, department leads, and staff are engaged with activities and a series of questions that are tailored toward their roles and responsibilities in the community. During the planning phase, department leads can work with the planning team to co-organize engagement sessions with each department and staff. Staff who work directly with Elders, youth, and families can also help the planning team organize and develop activities for these groups' engagement sessions.

3 ### Phase 3: Implementation

In the implementation phase, the planning team and major role players will sit down and create the Action Plan. The action plan outlines the activities, timelines, roles, and resources needed to achieve the goals and objectives. A large part of these action plans looks to departments for insight on finance, administration, economic and governance capacities. With the help of staff and department managers, the planning team and major role players can create an achievable action plan that is cognizant of staff and financial capacities of the community

> For more information, see the Creating Action Plans fact sheet.

4 ### Phase 4: Monitoring

In the monitoring phase, a select number of people within the community will be responsible for keeping track of progress and adjusting the action plan when necessary. Monitoring can require one or more staff members, but, in some cases, a committee will be appointed to monitor the implementation of the CCP.[2] The staff or committee will use monitoring data to identify progress points and lessons learned. The findings can eventually be made into a formal report that will be reviewed by community members and used for future CCP revisions.

Potential Challenges

- Staff may feel uncomfortable sharing their ideas and providing feedback because they fear departmental retribution.

- Keeping the conversation focused, and not on issues unrelated to the matter.

- Sessions can unintentionally lead into negative discussions about staff members.

- Departments may have differing ideas about what is a priority for the community.

- Directors (or department leads) may unintentionally lead conversations and influence responses.

- New hires or entry level workers may be less likely to share their ideas or provide feedback.

- Some departments work closely together and may produce information overlap.

Potential Solutions:

- After an initial group session, planning leads may hand out take-home documents so employees can have their final say without fear of it getting back to other staff members.

- Departments leads should be advised before the group session that an appropriate and respectful work-place etiquette should be agreed upon with all employees.

- Each department will be able to assess their open priority areas without knowledge of what other departments have listed as a priority area.

- Planners or engagement facilitators may utilize structured activities where each person in the session is asked to give their opinion or advice to limit the chance of having one person speak the most or influence responses.

- Departments that work closely together could be engaged as one large group to limit overlap.

Further Reading

Comprehensive Community Planning Toolkit: Finding Bimadizowin by Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund

This document contains practical and easy to follow information on how to communicate plans and engage with members of your community.

http://www.nadf.org/upload/documents/ccp-toolkit-2018-v2.pdf

Sharing 96 Best Practices of First Nations Comprehensive Community Planning by Jeff Cook, MAP: Beringia

This document is a rich resource of successful examples of comprehensive community planning. The chapter on engaging the community contains topics that are Indigenous-focused such as "Including Elders in the Process" and "Maximize youth involvement".

http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/comprehensive-community-planning-long-version.pdf

Endnotes

1   Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, "CCP Handbook: Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia (2nd Ed.)", *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development,* 2013, URL. www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021966/1100100021970
2   Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada, 2013

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