



Engagementworks

Community Engagement Basics

Session 1 – Video 3

Engagement Principles

Engagement Principles

Introduction



In this lesson we -

- talk about principles of engagement, particularly the 10 principles developed by the OECD, and also
- overlay these principles onto levels of engagement to give a sense of how they interrelate

Principles are important because -

... They are an essential requirement for framing an organisation's commitment to its communities and stakeholders. They are what guide how an organisation puts engagement into practice.

Organisations do engagement because there is a statutory requirement for them to do so. But they should also engage because they value the knowledge and differing perspectives that members of their community have. They should also want to rely on the involvement of community members to make things happen for them.

The OECD's principles are an important way of outlining to communities that organisations embracing these are prepared to go that extra mile.

The OECD Guiding Principles

A number of countries use the OECD guiding principles for information, consultation and active participation in policy making. This helps them to strengthen open and inclusive decision-making and embraces the idea of engaging on the problem and the solution. These 10 principles cover:

1. Commitment: Leadership and strong commitment to open and inclusive policy making is needed at all levels – politicians, senior managers and public officials.



2. Rights: Citizens' rights to information, consultation and public participation in policy making and service delivery must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens must be clearly stated. Independent oversight arrangements are essential to enforcing these rights.

3. Clarity: Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and public participation should be well defined from the outset. The roles and responsibilities of all parties must be clear. Government information should be complete, objective, reliable, relevant, and easy to find and understand.



4. Time: Public engagement should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of solutions and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective.

5. Inclusion: All citizens should have equal opportunities and multiple channels to access information, be consulted and participate. Every reasonable effort should be made to engage with as wide a variety of people as possible.



6. Resources: Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed for effective public information, consultation and participation. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports both traditional and online tools.

7. Co-ordination: Initiatives to inform consult and engage civil society should be coordinated within and across levels of government to ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of “consultation fatigue.” Co-ordination efforts should not stifle initiative and innovation but should leverage the power of knowledge networks and communities of practice within and beyond government.



8. Accountability: Governments have an obligation to inform participants how they use inputs received through public consultation and participation. Measures to ensure that the policy making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny can help increase accountability of, and trust in, government.

9. Evaluation: Governments need to evaluate their own performance. To do so effectively will require efforts to build the demand, capacity, culture and tools for evaluating public participation.



10. Active citizenship: Societies benefit from dynamic civil society, and governments can facilitate access to information, encourage participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens' civic education and skills, as well as to support capacity-building among civil society organisations. Governments need to explore new roles to effectively support autonomous problem-solving by citizens, CSOs and businesses.



The Engagement Spectrum and the OECD Principles

← Depletes Social Capital					Develops Social Capital →				
					← Increasing Level of Engagement →				
	OECD	Information				Consultation	Active Participation		
		Dictate	Market	Advise	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
1	Commitment					√	√	√	√
2	Rights					√	√	√	√
3	Clarity	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	Time						√	√	√
5	Inclusion						√	√	√
6	Resources						√	√	√
7	Co-ordination						√	√	√
8	Accountability						√	√	√
9	Evaluation						√	√	√
10	Active citizenship						√	√	√
← Non-Negotiable →					← Negotiable →				
Underlying Characteristic: Talking					Underlying Characteristic: Listening				

In the table above we have overlaid the OECD principles with their three levels of engagement and also an eight step spectrum.

This shows how the principles and levels interrelate.

The OECD engagement levels are –

- Information
- Consultation, and
- Active participation



The first four of the eight step spectrum co-relate with the information step of the OECD

And you can see here that in terms of the principles there is little co-relation.

The consultation level of the OECD spectrum co-relates with consult which is step five of the eight step spectrum.

Here we can see the principles and levels beginning to co-relate.

Active participation in the OECD spectrum aligns with the involve, collaborate and empower steps of the eight step spectrum.

And this is where we see the greatest alignment.

At this stage we have moved from a state of talking to listening, the level of engagement has increased and social capital is being developed rather than depleted as in the other levels.

It is here that trust and respect develops, quality decisions are made resulting in better outcomes.

We should qualify this diagram and acknowledge that it is subjective but is intended to give a sense of how a more engaging approach can deliver better results.

Conclusion

In this lesson we have examined the importance of having engagement principles to:

- Shape the nature of the relationship with communities
- Build trust, openness and honesty
- Empower communities to contribute
- Build social capital between an organisation and its communities and stakeholders.

We hope this lesson has helped you to understand the importance and value of engagement principles.

