

Best Practice in community engagement projects

CSE adheres to ten standards of community engagement, and encourages our project partners to commit to these standards on all our projects. The standards are adapted from those published by the Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland in a well-resourced consultation process that involved more than 500 representatives of community groups and individuals.

The **standards** describe *what should be done* to ensure best practice in community engagement, and the **indicators** describe *how that should be achieved*. Taken together, they form a comprehensive checklist for best practice in community engagement.



1. INVOLVEMENT: we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement

INDICATORS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT STANDARD

1. All groups of people whose interests are affected by the issues that the engagement will address should be represented.
2. CSE and its partners actively promote the involvement of people who experience barriers to participation.
3. CSE and its partners actively promote the involvement of people from groups that are affected but not yet organised enough to participate.
4. People who are involved, from agencies or community groups:
 - want to be involved
 - are given knowledge of the issues
 - have the authority of those they represent to take decisions and actions
 - have legitimacy in the eyes of those they represent
 - maintain a continuing dialogue with those that they represent

2. SUPPORT: we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

INDICATORS OF THE SUPPORT STANDARD

1. The participants identify what support each representative needs in order to participate.
2. There are no practical barriers to participants in community engagement. Where possible, they are provided with:
 - suitable transport
 - care of dependants
 - general assistance
 - personal assistants
 - access to premises
 - communication aids (such as loop systems, interpreting, advocacy)
 - meetings organised at appropriate times
3. There are no financial barriers to participants in community engagement including:
 - out of pocket expenses
 - loss of earnings
 - suitable transport
 - care of dependents
 - personal assistants
 - communication aids (such as loop systems, interpreting, advocates)
 - timing of meetings
4. Community and agency representatives have access to the equipment they need (for example computers, a telephone, photocopying).

3. PLANNING: we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to decide the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken

INDICATORS OF THE PLANNING STANDARD

1. Participants express views openly and honestly.
2. The purpose of the engagement is identified and stated, there is evidence that it is needed, and the purpose is agreed by all participants and communicated to the wider community and agencies that may be affected.
3. Public policies that affect the engagement are explained to the satisfaction of participants and the wider community.
4. Participants identify existing and potential resources which are available to the engagement process and which may help achieve its purpose(s) (for example, money, people, equipment).
5. Intended results, that are specific, measurable and realistic, are discussed and recorded.
6. All participants assess the constraints, challenges and opportunities that will be involved in implementing the engagement.
7. The participants agree on the timescales for the engagement.

4. METHODS: we will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose

INDICATORS FOR THE METHODS STANDARD

1. The range of methods used is:
 - acceptable to the participants
 - suitable for all their needs and their circumstances
 - appropriate for the purposes of the engagement
2. Methods used identify, involve and support excluded groups.
3. Methods are chosen to enable diverse views to be expressed, and to help resolve any conflicts of interest.
4. Methods are fully explained and applied with the understanding and agreement of all participants.
5. Methods are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback.

5. WORKING TOGETHER: We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

INDICATORS FOR THE WORKING TOGETHER STANDARD

The participants:

1. Behave openly and honestly – there are no hidden agendas, but participants also respect confidentiality.
2. Behave towards one another in a positive, respectful and non-discriminatory manner.
3. Recognise participants' time is valuable and that they may have other commitments.
4. Recognise existing agency and community obligations, including statutory requirements.
5. Encourage openness and the ability for everyone to take part by:
 - communicating with one another using plain language.
 - ensuring that all participants are given equal opportunity to engage and have their knowledge and views taken into account.
 - seeking, listening to and reflecting on the views of different individuals and organisations, taking account of minority views.
 - removing barriers to participation.
6. Take decisions on the basis of agreed procedures and shared knowledge.
7. Identify and discuss opportunities and strategies for achieving change, ensuring that:
 - key points are summarised, agreed and progressed.
 - conflicts are recognised and addressed.
8. Manage change effectively by:
 - focusing on agreed purpose.
 - clarifying roles and who is responsible for agreed actions.
 - ensuring participants are clear about the decisions that need to be made.
 - ensuring that all parties have time to consult with those they represent.
 - co-ordinating skills.
 - enhancing skills where necessary.
 - agreeing schedules and keeping all participants informed of necessary changes.
 - assessing risks.
 - monitoring and evaluating progress, to seek continuous improvement in how things are done.

6. SHARING INFORMATION: we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants

INDICATORS FOR THE SHARING INFORMATION STANDARD

1. Information relevant to the engagement is shared between all participants.
2. Information is accessible, clear, understandable and relevant, with key points summarised.
3. Information is made available in appropriate formats for participants.
4. Information is made available in time to enable people to fully take part and consult others.
5. All participants identify and explain when they are bound by confidentiality and why access to such information is restricted.
6. Within the limits of confidentiality, all participants have equal access to all information that is relevant to the engagement.

7. WORKING WITH OTHERS: we will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement

INDICATORS FOR THE WORKING WITH OTHERS STANDARD

The participants in the engagement:

1. Identify other structures, organisations and activities that are relevant to the work.
2. Establish and maintain effective links with such other structures, activities and organisations.
3. Learn about these structures, activities and organisations, to avoid duplication of their work and complement it wherever possible.
4. Learn from others and seek improvement in practice.
5. Encourage effective community engagement as normal practice.

8. IMPROVEMENT: we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants

INDICATORS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

1. All those involved in the engagement process are committed to making the most of the understanding and competence of both community and agency participants.
2. Where needs are identified, the potential of participants is developed and promoted.
3. The competence and understanding of the engagement system as a whole is regularly evaluated by the participants as it develops.
4. Resources, including independent professional support, are available to make the most of the competence and understanding of individual participants and the engagement system as a whole.
5. There is adequate time for competence and understanding to be developed.
6. Methods used to improve competence and understanding reflect diverse needs and are fit for purpose.

9. FEEDBACK: we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

INDICATORS FOR THE FEEDBACK STANDARD

1. Organisers of community engagement regularly feed back, to all those affected:
 - outcomes and impact of decisions and actions.
 - explanations about why decisions and actions have been taken.
 - details of any future activity.
2. The characteristics of the audience are identified to ensure that:
 - relevant information is provided in appropriate and accessible languages.
 - a suitable range of media and communication channels is used constructively.
3. Information includes details about opportunities for involvement in community engagement and encourages positive contributions from groups and individuals in the community.
4. Information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes.

10.MONITORING AND EVALUATION: we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards set out above

INDICATORS FOR THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION STANDARD

1. The engagement process and its effects are continually evaluated to measure progress, develop skills and refine practices.
2. Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes identified by the participants.
3. It is determined what information needs to be collected, how, when and by whom, to understand the situation both at the start of the engagement and as it progresses.
4. Appropriate participants collect and record this information.
5. The information is presented accurately and in a way that is easy to use.
6. The participants agree on the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the results and the changes that occurred.
7. The participants act on the lessons learned.
8. The results of the evaluation are fed back to the participants and the wider community.
9. Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared with other agencies and communities.
10. Achievement is celebrated!