



Whittlesea Community Engagement Audit Tool

A tool developed with the Whittlesea community to assist organisations to assess and implement the Whittlesea Community Engagement Principles

The vision for what a tool can achieve with organisations;¹

“Having flexible mechanisms to allow people to be involved”

“An openness between the agency and the community”

“Trust in the community’s expertise and skills”

“A way for organisations to include community members in the development of their processes”

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¹ As discussed at the Community Engagement Assessment Tool workshop with the Whittlesea Community Engagement Reference group, including local community members.

Whittlesea Community Engagement Framework

The Whittlesea Community Engagement Framework has been developed and defined by local Whittlesea residents and outlines key strategies to achieving full community participation and engagement. In actively participating in this project, the community of Whittlesea has demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing community involvement through service planning, delivery and evaluation. In order to achieve these outcomes, the framework provides specific guidelines for how organisations and governments can effectively engage the community of Whittlesea.

The framework has been developed by Whittlesea Community Connections, funded by the Department of Planning and Community Development. A project reference group, consisting of local community members, organisations and government representatives provided additional guidance.

A key component of the framework is a set of locally defined community engagement principles – the principles aim to shape the enhanced involvement of Whittlesea residents and communities in service planning, delivery and evaluation. The Whittlesea Community Engagement Principles are:

- Information
- Integrity
- Inclusion
- Building relationships
- Influence
- Accessibility
- Local
- Sustainability.

Why was the Audit tool developed?

The Audit Tool provides a mechanism for organisations to assess their performance against the Whittlesea Community Engagement Principles. It provides an opportunity for organisations to reflect on their current strengths and areas for improvement, recognising that Community Engagement is an ongoing process, and organisations will be starting at different points along the community engagement spectrum. It aims to assist in developing mechanisms and strategies to improve and sustain the organisations' community engagement in Whittlesea.

Every context is different and every organisation will have strengths and challenges in relation to community engagement. Acknowledging the good practice already being undertaken is the first step to implementing the framework. However while most organisations have the best intentions when it comes to engaging the community, findings from the Community Engagement consultations identified the need for improvement in performance and accountability of organisations to engage Whittlesea communities.

Using the Audit Tool

The Audit tool sets out key indicators for each community engagement principle (as defined by the community) and aims to assess organisational performance against each indicator. The Audit tool has been designed to be completed through a facilitated, reflective and participatory process. While organisations differ in terms of their structure, size and processes, it is recommended that all key stakeholders, including staff, management, volunteers and community members/clients/consumers be involved in the audit process. The following is a recommended process for conducting the audit:

1. Ensure all key stakeholders (committees, management, staff, volunteers) have an opportunity to read and understand the community engagement principles, audit purpose and process, and have time to prepare for the audit.

2. Develop a process to undertake the audit, and that is inclusive of all stakeholders. Some options for this process may include;
 - a. Involve WCC as an external facilitator to conduct a whole staff audit workshop
 - b. Allocate an existing staff, committee, volunteer and/or team meeting to undertake the audit process internally.
 - c. Gaining individual staff or team feedback, then collate information against the audit tool
 - d. Conduct an external audit whereby WCC is engaged to assess the organisation's current community engagement capacity
 - e. Establish a community reference group whereby community members/consumers/clients/volunteers oversee the audit process, under the direction of staff and/or with WCC's involvement.

3. Reflect on the values, policies and practices of your organisation, in relation to each key indicator, and determine a rating for each indicator against the scale below. Ratings should be based on objective results achieved, in discussion with others in the organisation. Overrating or underrating performance is not useful, and will not aid in improving community engagement outcomes.

Major Strength	Moderate Strength	Satisfactory	Moderate Weakness	Major Weakness	Not applicable
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4. Once a rating has been agreed, you are required to demonstrate current organisational practices with evidence and example (s) to support the chosen rating.

5. As the audit is being conducted, organisations may also identify ideas, tasks or measures addressing any areas in which performance could be improved (actions for future priority).

Next Steps

The process aims to assist in developing a reflective culture in which organisations can build and improve outcomes with the community, by supporting staff to identify ways for achieving better practice to meet community aspirations and needs.

Through the audit process, organisations will have identified areas within the organisation that need addressing in order to improve engagement with the community (actions for future priority). Alternatively, organisations may chose to facilitate a session focusing on the development of an action plan following the audit.

It is recommended an Action Plan should detail:

- What will be done (task/objective)
- Identify a measurable outcome (performance measure)
- Who is responsible for completing the task (responsibility)
- When it will be completed by (date).

Actions that require minimal resources and result in maximum community benefits are recommended to be actioned immediately. Other tasks should be prioritised according to the resources required to maximise community outcomes, according to the community engagement principles.

Sample Audit

Below are some sample items of a completed audit to assist organisations to conduct the audit.

WCEP 1: Information

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
<p>Accessible Information Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is provided in a variety of ways to meet information needs of diverse communities This includes use of interpreters/ translations, prioritising face to face contact, and provision of information at places where communities access (eg; Doctors, Schools, shopping centres, Real Estate Agents, Centrelink, Council) 	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information translated into 7 community languages Information primarily provided in written form (eg; mainstream newspapers, website, newsletters) Few examples of face to face contact with community to inform about organisation Organisation promoted at Council, libraries, internet, courthouse & schools Organisation not promoted at broad range of locations, particularly those frequented by disadvantaged communities 	<p>Moderate weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about the community engagement activities is primarily provided via email Community Engagement is discussed in staff meetings for the purposes of updating on activities as part of regular reporting No broader discussions/agenda item in staff meetings or forums on community engagement more generally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continually review and update information to be provided in relevant community languages Prioritise face-to-face contact with the community – enable time for workers to attend local community groups and networks Explore development of volunteer roles to provide information Provide organisational information at more diverse locations Liaise with services who work with disadvantaged communities Conduct a forum/workshop on CE with all staff Regular agenda item at staff meetings on CE

WCEP 5: Influence

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
<p>Meaningful involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a commitment to involve the community in meaningful ways Community involvement influences or changes the way things are done The views, aspirations and experiences of the community are reflected in organisations policies and services 	<p>Moderate Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a commitment to consult with the community as part of the organisations' service planning and delivery (consultation conducted by all teams, ongoing involvement through support of community groups, volunteer roles in all program areas enable community input in service delivery) Organisations programs & services reflect community input (transport service developed based on community input, youth submission made based on needs of young new arrivals) 	<p>Moderate Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from consultations and client work directly influences organisations' priorities (budget and resource allocation for a transport service in response to issues raised by community, community members involved in governance roles) There is scope to strengthen communication internally regarding outcomes of consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of effective evaluation mechanisms for community review of service delivery Extend ongoing ways for community involvement, such as further support for community groups Development of mechanisms for internal consultation findings to be shared (eg; Development of a consultation register, regular feedback at staff meetings)

WCEF Principle 2: Integrity

It is important that there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement, that there is a willingness to trust the community's views, experiences and aspirations.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
Decisions reflect input <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions made reflect the experiences, wishes and hopes of the community• Decisions made are supported and understood by the community• Community views, experiences and feedback are factored into decision making processes• The reasons for decisions taken are explained openly, including why certain decisions were not made•			
Real opportunities for input <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The engagement of the community has meaning and there is a genuine opportunity for people to influence decisions made• Those with responsibility for making decisions actively welcome and encourage community views			
Transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a commitment to communicate openly with stakeholders• There are no hidden reasons for engaging the community			
Views respected <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The views and opinions of the community are respected<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The views of the community are accurately reported to other agencies, government and the media			

WCEF Principle 3: Inclusion

It is important a diverse range of people in the community have a chance to be involved in the community and have their say, and that community engagement processes seek to include and support those who may otherwise not be involved.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
<i>Barriers to participation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community engagement is inclusive of people from all abilities, backgrounds and ages• Barriers to participation are addressed• Those who are disadvantaged are adequately supported & resourced to participate• Opportunities for participation are flexible to enable participation of a diverse range of people			
<i>Invitation to participate</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community engagement processes seek to include those who are already disadvantaged and marginalised• Organisations are welcoming of new people participating• Organisations invite community involvement and input•			
<i>Diversity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an awareness of the diversity in Whittlesea and of community needs and strengths• Diversity is acknowledged, encouraged and celebrated• Community participation reflects the diversity of Whittlesea• Community engagement activities actively bring diverse groups together			

WCEF Principle 4: Building relationships

It is important that people have the chance to meet other people and form relationships with others when they get involved or have a say in the community. Community engagement activities in Whittlesea will foster relationships, between organisations and communities and within communities, based on mutual understanding, trust and respect.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
Connecting the community <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community engagement processes provide opportunities for people in Whittlesea to connect and form relationshipsThere is a commitment to connecting the Whittlesea communityOpportunities for people to come together are maximised			
Prioritising processes <ul style="list-style-type: none">Decision making processes enable people to come together, hear others views and meet each otherThere is a commitment to community engagement processes as much as to the outcomes of engagement activities			

WCEF Principle 5: Influence

It is important that when people participate in the community or have a say, that it makes a difference or changes the way things are done. The policies, services or ways organisations work should reflect the input and involvement of local people.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
<i>Meaningful involvement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a commitment to involve the community in meaningful ways• Community involvement influences or changes the way things are done• The views, aspirations and experiences of the community are reflected in organisations policies and services			
<i>Scope of influence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a commitment to communicate how community involvement has influenced final decisions or outcomes• The reasons for decisions is explained openly, including why certain decisions were not made• The purpose & limitations of community engagement are clearly communicated early on• Communities are engaged early on in the decision making process•			

WCEF Principle 6: Accessibility

It is important that governments and community organisations help people who have difficulty participating to get involved and have a say.

Community engagement activities should consider and address issues such as affordability, transport, venues, language needs, childcare, literacy levels and physical accessibility.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
<i>Accessibility</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a commitment to support people who face barriers to participate to get involved• Community engagement activities should actively consider and address issues such as transport, venues, language needs, childcare, literacy levels and physical accessibility• The lack of infrastructure is considered when engaging the community or representing community engagement processes•			
<i>Flexible approach</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention is paid to the needs of groups that tend to be under represented in engagement processes• There is a commitment to use a variety of engagement processes and be flexible in approach			

WCEF Principle 7: Local

It is important that opportunities to have a say and get involved in the community are available locally (within the City of Whittlesea) and that resources available for community engagement in Whittlesea prioritise meeting the community participation needs, aspirations and interests of Whittlesea residents.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
Local opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community engagement opportunities are provided locally (within the City of Whittlesea)			
Benefiting the local community <ul style="list-style-type: none">Resources available for community engagement in Whittlesea prioritise meeting the community participation needs, aspirations and interests of Whittlesea residentsLocal community engagement opportunities should be sustainable locally and contribute to ongoing community capacity building of communities and organisations that support Whittlesea's participation needs.			

WCEF Principle 8: Sustainability

It is important that opportunities to get involved or have say have lasting community benefits, and that activities that meet current needs will have positive influence on communities ability to meet future needs.

Key indicator	Achievement against principle (community)	Achievement against principle (internally)	Actions for future priority
<i>Future needs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community engagement activities that meet current needs have a positive influence on the community's ability to meet future needs• The community has the capacity to meet its own needs, as a result of engagement activities			
<i>Ongoing engagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a commitment to ongoing community engagement processes and activities• Community engagement is not a once off activity• Resources and support are available for continuing community participation activities			