



Measuring Community Engagement

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Description

Community engagement is essential to the success of most natural resource management (NRM) activities. Specifically, it is a key step in enabling the practice change required to achieve biophysical outcomes. This tool assists the measurement of:

- a) community engagement by regional NRM bodies; and
- b) participation of stakeholders in the engagement process

for the purpose of collecting the information required to determine the effectiveness of community engagement for practice change.

Benefits

Measuring community engagement allows an assessment of the performance of community engagement in relation to the planning and delivery of NRM programs. The information provided through the assessment also allows the identification of opportunities through which community engagement maybe enhanced and improved.

Limitations

While the tool describes the broad logic of community engagement and relevant measures, the intention and suitable measures of community engagement for fostering/influencing practice change are highly influenced by local issues, projects and history. The measures therefore need to be specifically tailored for each situation.

Planning and Review Tool

When to use

When preparing a monitoring and evaluation framework or plan for NRM investment (strategy, program or project level)

Companion Tools

Community engagement in NRM

NRM Practice Change Planning Process

NRM Program Logic

What is required?

- ✓✓ Skills Understanding of community engagement; an ability to determine performance measures/indicators
- ✓ Resources Staff time
- ✓✓ Information Community engagement strategy/plan, community/ social knowledge/understanding.

✓ = LOW LEVEL

✓✓ = MEDIUM LEVEL

✓✓✓ = HIGH LEVEL



A broad logic of community engagement is provided in the figure below. It shows a generic logic of moving from the activity of developing a community engagement strategy or identifying the need for community engagement to the desired (generic) longer-term outcomes of community engagement for practice change, i.e. that the community supports and is effectively and actively engaged in NRM. Of course, community engagement is not an end in itself but an enabler of NRM practice change, among other things.

The link between community engagement and longer-term desired NRM outcomes depends on the specific purpose of community engagement in each instance. Thus, the generic logic provided below would serve as a sub-set of a broader NRM program logic, with the specific link between community engagement and desired longer-term NRM outcomes articulated according to the purpose of community engagement in each instance.



The following table provides example measures that could be used to assess the performance of community engagement for practice change broadly, as described by the logic above. As for the logic, measuring community engagement as specifically articulated in the community engagement objectives and outcomes of an organisation or its programs or projects would require the measures to be tailored to the specific purpose of engagement. The broad measures provided, however, are a good starting point for developing tailored measures.

Outcomes level	Example measures
<p>Longer term</p> <p>Community supports and is effectively and actively engaged in NRM</p>	<p>Extent to which (the organisation, program, project) has contributed to increased community engagement and participation in managing natural resources.</p> <p>Community perceptions and attitude towards regional body.</p>
<p>Intermediate</p> <p>NRM planning and investment decisions informed by different community sectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inclusiveness of NRM decision-making: ■ Extent to which important NRM planning and investment decisions are adequately informed by different sectors, stakeholders and interest groups ■ Decision making process.
<p>Community engaged in NRM decision-making and delivery</p>	<p>Quality of process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Level of trust between the regional body and stakeholder groups in the engagement process ■ Level of transparency in the engagement and decision making processes between stakeholder groups and the regional body ■ Willingness of the regional body to be inclusive in the engagement process ■ Level of cooperation amongst stakeholders, landholders and community in the engagement process ■ Level of ongoing commitment by the regional body to maintaining relationships with stakeholders, landholders and the community
	<p>Scale and effectiveness of engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Level of participation by stakeholders, landholders and the community in community engagement activities ■ Appropriateness of diversity of stakeholder groups involved in regional body activities ■ Effectiveness of the regional body in actively engaging important regional stakeholders who have had limited, if any, previous involvement with the regional body ■ Effectiveness of the engagement process in contributing to regional decision making.
	<p>Community knowledge of the regional NRM processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Level of stakeholder knowledge and understanding of regional NRM processes and programs, including plan development, investment strategies, implementation and on-ground activities.

Outcomes level	Example measures
Immediate Engagement strategy implemented	Engagement approach or strategy is used to guide decision making and day-to-day activities
Engagement opportunities provided	Extent to which the regional body has initiated or supported sufficient activities for community engagement.
Foundational Community engagement strategy developed	Engagement approach or strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ is integrated with the activities of other NRM stakeholder groups in the region ■ provides a description of the principles of community engagement ■ has a description or profile of stakeholders, community and community groups ■ provides a description of community engagement activities ■ outlines learning and development activities to be undertaken by the regional body to support community engagement.

There are many methods for collecting information on community engagement and participation, and again, the choice of methods for use will be context-specific. In choosing methods, consider the purpose of collection (i.e. which should be aligned with the purpose of the review), resourcing implications (time, cost, staff availability) and the skills required. A multi-method approach helps address the limitations of individual methods. An organisation may wish to collect the information themselves or outsource this activity.

Some example methods include:

- Desktop reviews - of any documentation which provides evidence of the outcomes as described by the example measures.
- Interviews and/or focus groups - with regional body staff and/or regional community stakeholders. A whole range of interview techniques could be used. If quantifying information, Fenton 2008 suggests a Likert scale measuring strength of respondent agreement.

For further information

This fact sheet is one of a series prepared for the Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change project.

For further fact sheets and information visit the NRM Practice Change website:

References and links

Fenton M (2008) Socio-economic indicator protocols - Capacity of regional organisations and social and institutional foundations of natural resource management. National Land and Water Resources Audit. <http://nlwra.gov.au/files/products/national-land-and-water-resources-audit/pn21236/pn21236.pdf>

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