

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDE 2007



Assembly of Co-Chairs of the  
Child and Family Services Authorities

Alberta Children's Services

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Community Engagement as a Priority.....	1
Community Capacity .....	1
Community Capacity Development Framework.....	1
The Revised Community Engagement Guide .....	1
<b>What is Community Engagement?</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Levels of Participation.....	3
Activities to Develop Community Capacity.....	4
<b>Benefits</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>The Community Engagement Template</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Application of the Community Engagement Template .....	9
<b>Defining Success</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Resources</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix A: Community Engagement Initiative Samples</b> .....	<b>12</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### Community Engagement as a Priority

In 2003 the Minister of Alberta Children's Services (the Ministry) identified community engagement as a key priority for the Ministry. The Assembly of Co-Chairs of the Child and Family Services Authorities (the Assembly) took the lead role on community engagement for Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs), recognizing that while community capacity was the ultimate goal, community engagement was a key step in achieving community capacity. An Assembly committee was struck and was comprised of representatives from the department and from CFSA governance and operations. Over the course of two years the committee developed the document entitled, "Community Engagement: A Strategic Framework and Guide" (Community Engagement Guide). This guide was accepted by the Assembly in 2005, and the committee was then tasked with overseeing its implementation. The work of that committee was completed in 2007.

### Community Capacity

While work continued on the implementation of the Community Engagement Guide, the need to develop a definition for community capacity within the parameters of Children's Services and the work of the CFSAs was recognized. This task was challenging, in that a short definition could not describe community capacity in a meaningful way for those implementing it. Thus, it was determined that it would be more useful to develop a document that describes the components of community capacity development and sets the parameters to effectively operationalize sustainable community capacity development in a consistent manner.

### Community Capacity Development Framework

In 2007 the "Community Capacity Development Framework for Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs)" (the Community Capacity Development Framework) was approved by the Assembly and the Senior Management Team. The document provides a common understanding of sustainable community capacity development and the identification of the ways to achieve it. Its purpose is to assist CFSAs in carrying out their community capacity development responsibility and determining related community engagement strategies.

### The Revised Community Engagement Guide

With the Community Capacity Development Framework in place and with the recognition that community engagement is a means to achieving community capacity, the Community Engagement Guide has been revised to align with the framework document. Please refer to the Community Capacity Development Framework document for an explanation of the following concepts:

- community;
- capacity;
- sustainable capacity development; and
- Ministry community capacity development goal (what it means for CFSAs).

An electronic version of the framework document is available on the Ministry website at [www.child.gov.ab.ca/boards](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/boards).

This Community Engagement Guide describes community engagement within the Ministry context and provides a common template to effectively plan, deliver and track progress of community engagement initiatives designed to increase community capacity.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement embraces a whole spectrum of initiatives that support a two-way communication process and relationship development. In one aspect, the Ministry embodies community engagement through the organizational structure of board-governed CFSA's and through the Ministry's relationships with Delegated First Nations Agencies and Family and Community Support Services across the province. In another aspect, Ministry employees and CFSA's engage their communities as a means to enhancing community capacity for shared planning and delivery of Ministry services.

The objectives of community engagement initiatives within the Ministry are as follows:

- Using community engagement as a means to enhancing community capacity for shared planning and delivery of services that promote the well-being of children, youth and families;
- Developing community engagement initiatives that ensure a more comprehensive approach to responding to the needs of children, youth and families; and
- Being able to share information on community engagement initiative successes and leading practices so that the initiatives can build upon one another to foster learning and change.

Before embarking on a community engagement initiative, it is important to determine the purpose of the initiative. The International Institute for Sustainable Development has identified the principles for a successful community engagement strategy as follows.

“A successful strategy:

- has a clear focus and goals;
- acknowledges that people are the most important resource for sustainable development;
- uses tangible projects as a way of focusing conversations and attracting interesting people to learn from each other;
- bases participation on the individual's/organization's ability to fulfill specific roles in transforming innovation into general practice; and
- provides graduated steps for participation of stakeholders.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iisd.org/networks/coms/engagement.asp>


It is also helpful to think of community engagement as a continuum of ongoing initiatives seeking different levels of active participation from the community in a variety of ways. Some initiatives will be information dissemination or sharing; while other initiatives will encourage more active participation and require a deeper commitment of time and resources by all parties involved. Over time, community engagement shifts from being predominantly Ministry driven to a stronger emphasis on it being community driven and a shared responsibility with the Ministry for providing services to children and families.

## Levels of Participation

The four levels of participation in community engagement initiatives can be described as follows:

- information sharing;
- consultation;
- shared planning; and
- shared decision making.

Each level focuses on a different aspect of involvement and empowers the community in a different manner when applied to a specific community engagement initiative. The table below describes the four levels of participation in community engagement initiatives and what happens at each level.

	LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION	WHAT HAPPENS AT THIS LEVEL
<p>LEAST EMPOWERING</p>  <p>MOST EMPOWERING</p>	<b>Information Sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community parties are advised before a decision is implemented.</li> <li>▪ The formal exchange of topic relevant information amongst the community parties attending the session.</li> </ul>
	<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The formal exchange of relevant information, opinions, input, advice and feedback from the community members attending the session (often collected for consideration before a decision is made).</li> </ul>
	<b>Shared Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A joint activity in which two or more parties develop their ideas and find common ground on issues and challenges, short or long term desired futures and potential goals and strategies to meet those goals.</li> <li>▪ Community-focused shared planning is composed of key elements of thoughts and communication designed to give meaning by focusing on the impact of change in the use of all involved community resources.</li> </ul>
	<b>Shared Decision Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decision is completed via a community of defined participants involved before, during and after this action,</li> <li>▪ Decision making approach (e.g. Autocratic, Democratic, Consensus, Unanimous) is formally established and used to make the decisions.</li> <li>▪ Communication of decision(s) to identified stakeholders (interested parties) is completed shortly after the decision is made.</li> </ul>

It should be noted that information sharing and consultation form the basis for relationship development that over time may lead to shared planning and shared decision making initiatives.

## Activities to Develop Community Capacity

Under the Community Capacity Development Framework, the Ministry participates in developing community capacity in three ways:

- through the direct delivery of services;
- as partners; and
- as supporters.

Community engagement initiatives are feasible within each of these categories, at different levels of participation. The following table illustrates the most common levels of community engagement participation within each category.

<b>Levels of Community Engagement</b>	<b>Categories</b>		
	<i>Direct Delivery</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Supporter</i>
Information Sharing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Shared Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Shared Decision Making		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

It should also be noted that community engagement initiatives that start under one of the three categories may change in nature over time and can migrate into another. For example, information sharing or consultation in relation to direct delivery of Ministry services may result over time in a relationship with another community organization where the parties explore and agree upon partnering in the planning or delivery of community identified programs and services that promote the well-being of children, youth and families.

## BENEFITS

People who have used the Community Engagement Guide have identified a number of benefits from its use:

- Provides a common approach to the community engagement process enables those involved to be better able plan, develop, implement, assess and report on each community engagement initiative for which resources are being used.
- Creates an increased focus around the whole area of community engagement, including the dialogues with board, staff, and potential partners.
- Raises the level of discussion and review around the community engagement initiatives that are either starting, are underway or are completing.
- Assists in work with Aboriginal communities both identifying goals and tracking outcomes.

- Provides a tracking mechanism, as the community engagement template serves as a method to identify and capture key information about our community engagement initiatives, which can then be shared and reviewed over time for greater insight and understanding.
- Allows for clear and concise communications, including the answering of community engagement initiatives questions from interested parties.

## THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEMPLATE

The Community Engagement Template provides basic parameters that create a common lens through which community engagement initiatives can be viewed, understood and reported. To this end, the Community Engagement Template aids in the successful planning and achievement of increased community capacity.

The Community Engagement Template is based on the following assumptions.

- The nature of community engagement is evolutionary.
- Community engagement is a means to achieving desired community capacity outcomes.
- Community engagement involves a number of different stakeholder groups that share an interest in the desired initiative outcomes, but who also may have different concerns and priorities.
- There are various (four) levels of involvement possible for a community engagement initiative.
- Participants in a specific community initiative may be at varying levels of community-focused development.

The Community Engagement Template is comprised of the following components.

- **Elements** – The supporting business elements being addressed by the specific community engagement initiative (Identity, Outcomes, Strategy, Responsibilities, Implications, Resources, Time lines and Assessment).
- **Defined Information** – The key questions to be answered for each of the elements (e.g., What is to be achieved? Why are you doing a specific community engagement? How is it to be achieved?).
- **Particulars** – The details of the specific community engagement initiative, which are to be completed by the user when planning and/or reporting on the initiative.

The Community Engagement Template is provided on page 7 for your use in planning and reporting on specific community engagement initiatives. An electronic version of the template is available on the Ministry website at [www.child.gov.ab.ca/boards](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/boards).

On pages 8 to 10 you will also find the Community Engagement Template with supporting information, which is intended to assist the user in filling out the Particulars column of the template in a consistent manner.

### The Community Engagement Template

ELEMENT	DEFINED INFORMATION	PARTICULARS
<b>Use</b>	<i>Planning or reporting on an initiative</i>	
<b>Identity</b>	<i>Initiative name and key contact</i>	
<b>Outcome(s)</b>	<i>What is to be achieved?</i>	
	<i>Why are you doing a specific community engagement?</i>	
<b>Strategy</b>	<i>Community capacity category</i>	
	<i>What will the level of the engagement be?</i>	
	<i>How is it to be achieved?</i>	
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<i>Who is responsible?</i>	
	<i>With which community are you engaging?</i>	
<b>Implications</b>	<i>What is the assessment of the risk/opportunity?</i>	
	<i>What is the strategy to reduce identified risks or realize opportunities?</i>	
<b>Resources</b>	<i>What resources are required to complete the initiative?</i>	
<b>Time Line</b>	<i>Have you identified checkpoint and completion dates?</i>	
<b>Assessment</b>	<i>What was achieved?</i>	
	<i>How was success measured?</i>	

## The Community Engagement Template with Supporting Information

ELEMENT	DEFINED INFORMATION	PARTICULARS (WITH SUPPORTING INFORMATION)
Use	Planning and/or reporting on an initiative	<b>Indicate if the CET is being used for planning an initiative or for reporting on an initiative that has been completed.</b>
Identity	Initiative name and key contact	<b>What is the formal name of the community engagement initiative (activity or project)?</b> <b>Who is your community engagement initiative key contact?</b> Include name, title, e-mail address and phone number
Outcome(s)	What is to be achieved?	<b>Why are you doing this community engagement initiative (i.e., goals/desired outcomes)?</b>  When answering this question, keep in mind the board's relationship with the community under the Core Governance Policies, the goals under the Ministry Business Plan, the Four Pillars under the redesign of the Ministry (community-based services, early intervention services, improved services for Aboriginal children and families, integrated services), and the responsibilities/accountabilities set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.
	Why are you doing a specific community engagement?	<b>How does this community engagement initiative link to your strategic direction and business plan goals?</b>  Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ So communities are better able to respond to the needs, values and cultures of children and their families;</li> <li>▪ So children, youth and families participate in decisions that affect them;</li> <li>▪ So Albertans are involved in addressing issues faced by children, youth and families.</li> </ul> <b>Note:</b> Determination of the <i>nature</i> of engagement will lead to identification of initial and longer-term outcomes and measures.
Strategy	Community capacity category	<b>Under which community capacity category does this initiative belong?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direct Service Delivery</li> <li>▪ Partner</li> <li>▪ Supporter</li> </ul>
	What will the level of the engagement be?	<b>What is the level of engagement for your community engagement initiative?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information Sharing</li> <li>▪ Consultation</li> <li>▪ Shared Planning</li> <li>▪ Shared Decision Making</li> </ul>
	How is it to be achieved?	<b>How will we approach community engagement (i.e., strategies)?</b> Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate opportunities for citizens to participate in a public forum</li> </ul> <b>Has a supporting communications strategy and plan been developed?</b>  There will be a requirement to successfully address the informational needs of all identified stakeholders associated with this community initiative.

ELEMENT	DEFINED INFORMATION	PARTICULARS (WITH SUPPORTING INFORMATION)
Responsibilities	<i>Who is responsible?</i>	<p><b>Who is carrying out the initiative?</b></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Governance (CFSA Board)</li> <li>▪ CEO/Management Team</li> <li>▪ CFSA Staff</li> <li>▪ Department Staff/Other (Identify)</li> </ul>
	<i>With which community are you engaging?</i>	<p><b>Who are you involving in this specific community engagement initiative?</b></p> <p>Identify the particular groups/organizations and which type of community they reflect (i.e., community of place and/or community of interest)</p>
Implications	<i>What is the assessment of the risk/opportunity?</i>	<p><b>Have you identified and assessed the risk/opportunity areas?</b></p> <p>Use the Ministry's risk management documents<sup>2</sup> that outline how to integrate risk/opportunity management into business practices.</p>
	<i>What is the strategy to reduce identified risks or realize opportunities?</i>	<p><b>What specific risk reduction strategy(ies) have you defined to address each identified risk?</b></p> <p>At a minimum, risks identified as Critical or High should have documented risk management strategies to manage the identified risks.</p> <p><b>What specific opportunity realization strategy(ies) have you defined to address each identified opportunity?</b></p> <p>At a minimum, key opportunities identified should have documented management strategies to ensure their realization.</p>
Resources	<i>What resources are required to complete the initiative?</i>	<p><b>Have you identified all the necessary resources to achieve the desired outcomes?</b></p> <p>In reviewing the community engagement initiative goals/outcomes, identify all the specific resources required to ensure success. (e.g., people's time, dollars, physical space, physical assets)</p>
Time Line	<i>Have you identified checkpoints and completion dates?</i>	<p><b>What checkpoints will you use to measure progress of this community initiative?</b></p> <p>Identify checkpoints (by action, date, and person) to ensure progress of community initiative.</p>

<sup>2</sup> These documents are the *Risk Management Framework and Strategy for Children's Services*, April 2002; and the *Risk Management Framework Guide*, March 2003. These can be obtained through Board Resources and Development.

ELEMENT	DEFINED INFORMATION	PARTICULARS (WITH SUPPORTING INFORMATION)
Assessment	<i>What was achieved?</i>	<p><b>What has the community engagement initiative been able to achieve over the specified time period?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How has community been involved?</li> <li>▪ What has been done with community input?</li> <li>▪ To what extent have community priorities been reflected?</li> </ul>
	<i>How was success measured?</i>	<p><b>What methods did you use to determine that the outcome(s) were achieved?</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Survey participants against objectives of initiative and role they were asked to play</li> <li>▪ Assess whether the relationship with the targeted community has changed, and how</li> </ul> <p><b>As a result of your community engagement initiative, how has community capacity been enhanced?</b></p> <p><i>Consider the following indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ skills, knowledge, authority and/or means;</li> <li>▪ motivation and willingness;</li> <li>▪ ability to identify opportunities and related initiatives;</li> <li>▪ resources to carry out the initiatives (human, financial, and infrastructure);</li> <li>▪ commitment to plan and carry out the initiatives, including policies and allocation of resources which make this possible; and</li> <li>▪ commitment to ongoing assessment of the initiatives (planning, implementation and results), and a culture of adaptation to changing circumstances.</li> </ul> <p><i>See also the Defining Success section of this Guide.</i></p>

### Application of the Community Engagement Template

While the Community Engagement Template could be used for any initiative where resources are being applied, it is recommended for use with those community initiatives that are:

- designed specifically to enhance community capacity; and
- where the intent is to leverage the talents, resources and skills of people in the community in order to increase the collective focus and work for social change directly focused on children, youth and families.

The Community Engagement Template provides the ability to ensure that community engagement initiatives across the province are addressing the same key elements in a commonly-understood and shareable manner. To this end, information related to community engagement can be used to report on, in a consistent manner, outcomes related to increased community capacity.

Other organizations or groups may adapt the Community Engagement Template as a tool for planning community engagement initiatives or reporting on them in a common and consistent fashion. Positive feedback has been provided to indicate that the Community Engagement

Template can and has been used successfully for the design, development and implementation as well as the evaluation of specific community engagement initiative(s).

A sample of a community engagement initiative with key data presented in the Community Engagement Template format is included in Appendix A. This sample is shared with the reader to enhance the understanding and use of this guide and the template. Additional samples may be added from time to time.

Additional samples submitted by the CFSA's in the past have been compiled for reference. They can be accessed at [www.child.gov.ab.ca/boards](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/boards) under the heading entitled *Community Engagement*. Please note that a number of samples are based on earlier versions of the Community Engagement Template. Although more detail is now required, the earlier samples do provide information on community engagement initiatives that might serve as a starting point when you are planning your community engagement initiative.

## DEFINING SUCCESS

Community engagement initiative and community capacity development success can be defined from many perspectives. The following questions serve as a guide to reflect upon when reporting success.

- What are the core relationships between the initiating organization (e.g., CFSA's at Board, CEO and staff levels, and the involved community)?
- How is community consulted on strategic and business plans (e.g., by the CFSA)?
- How do strategic and business plans (i.e., CFSA, reflect community priorities through strategies and allocation of resources)?
- To what extent does this community engagement initiative work to address the gap between community needs and services delivered?
- How have working partnerships with Aboriginal communities (both on and off reserve) been developed?
- How have regional partnerships been forged with key players (e.g., DFNA, MNA, FCSS, RHA, School Boards)?
- How have service providers in the region been engaged in the development of common regional outcomes and community response(s)?
- How has community been involved in developing and defining community capacity initiatives?
- What has been done with community input?
- To what extent have community priorities been reflected?

## RESOURCES

Depending on the nature of your community engagement initiative, there may be a requirement to use other community focused tools/resources that have been developed or are used elsewhere within the Ministry. Some of these resources follow.

- Ministry Community Capacity Development Framework
- FCSS Logic Model
- Provincial Aboriginal Advisory Committee Foundation for Action Framework
- Performance Measurement (Performance Management Toolkit)
- W.K. Kellogg Logic Model Development Guide
- CPEF – Southwest Community Mapping Study
- International Institute for Sustainable Development at [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org)
- Canadian Sustainability Indicators Network at [www.csin-rcid.ca](http://www.csin-rcid.ca)

These and other useful community focused resources can be seen to complement the Community Engagement Guide and associated template. We leave it to the individual reader to decide what additional tools/resources will aid them best in their work on community engagement initiatives.

## APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE SAMPLE

ELEMENT	DEFINED INFORMATION	PARTICULARS
Use	<i>Planning and/or reporting on an initiative</i>	Reporting
Identity	<i>Initiative name and key contact?</i>	Speakers Series: New Directions in Children's Services
Outcome(s)	<i>What is to be achieved?</i>	First Speaker (two sessions): Dr. Martin Brokenleg on Reclaiming our Children and Youth; January 24, 2007
	<i>Why are you doing a specific community engagement?</i>	This Speakers Series, in addition to other community engagement activities, is intended to help build stronger, more effective, relationships with all the board's communities and partners and to help develop leadership capacity that achieves the board's vision and mission.
Strategy	<i>Community capacity category</i>	Partner
	<i>What will the level of the engagement be?</i>	Information sharing
	<i>How is it to be achieved?</i>	First Speaker: lecture-style presentation
Responsibilities	<i>Who is responsible?</i>	The board
	<i>With which community are you engaging?</i>	Afternoon Session: service delivery level (CFSA Staff and Agency Staff) and the staff of other child service organizations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal  Evening Session: governance and management of the service delivery level and in other child service sectors for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, representatives from the municipal, provincial and federal government and Aboriginal Band and Council levels, and students of social work and education
Implications	<i>What is the assessment of the risk/opportunity?</i>	Risk: value for dollar may be considered too costly, criticism that topic is not at a governance level.  Opportunity: feedback and board reassessment/evaluation will provide new ideas for an improved speaker series.
	<i>What is the strategy do reduce identified risks or realize opportunities?</i>	Employment of the Community Engagement Framework in the planning stages for the selection of the next speaker in the series.
Resources	<i>What resources are required to complete the initiative?</i>	Board and staff time in planning, marketing and issuing invitations.  Cost of mailing of invitations, speaker, venue and beverages, and Board, CEO and Guest Speaker's dinner.
Time Line	<i>Have you identified checkpoint and completion dates?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity date: January 24, 2007</li> <li>Evaluation of event: Communication Committee and Board meetings in February 2007</li> </ul>

ELEMENT	DEFINED INFORMATION	PARTICULARS
Assessment	<i>What was achieved?</i>	Assessment is currently in progress and appears positive for increased community awareness and promotion of the CFSA.
	<i>How was success measured?</i>	Initial assessment only was determined through informal feedback and attendance levels.