

Appendix 16 – Guidelines for Developing a Community Council Work Plan

The Council work plan can cover one to three years, depending on the issues, projects and goals identified. If a goal will be achieved over a few years, it is important to identify the focus of each year and where you can, draft the strategies and / or activities that might be used to achieve that year's goals. Some goals or projects may be accomplished in one year and set aside. Others will only be achieved after a number of individual and interlocking efforts and activities are coordinated over a few years. In a multi-year plan, strategies and activities may change as a result of the previous year's accomplishments or challenges.

Community Council planning can result in stand-alone, one-time, or repeated activities such as:

- Forums or community meetings
- Opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and families to meet one another, and with others from outside community living, to talk about their needs and goals related to living full lives in welcoming communities
- Joining in ongoing community initiatives and events such as fairs, festivals, luncheons, awards ceremonies and so on, as members of planning committees, as volunteers, special guests, or general participants
- Doing a five-minute presentation at City Council meetings to highlight Council's role and to invite others to learn about (and perhaps join) the Council
- Doing a five-minute presentation during October community living month at a local Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement Association luncheon or meeting
- Partnering with other community groups who are pursuing a goal that is related to what you want to achieve

The Integrated Services Manager can provide a map that highlights the area covered by the Council. This may help to:

- Stay focused on the richness, along with the challenges and opportunities, that exist in the area the Council represents
- Think about how to learn more about or create a presence in one new community each year, even if the effort is limited

Getting ready

What topic or issue (s) does Council want to address and what do the members hope to achieve (the goal)? Activities that can help Council decide on a focus can include:

- Talking with the Integrated Services Manager about current local CLBC efforts or plans related to strengthening community inclusion
 - ◆ how might the Council support these efforts?
 - ◆ does the Council want to include these as part of the work plan?
- Talking with Council members and others with a developmental disability about their experience of feeling welcomed and a part of their community

- ◆ what has contributed to feeling welcomed and included?
- ◆ what is good about life in our communities? How do these good things work for everyone in the community, including people with developmental disabilities or older adults, and so on?
- ◆ what has contributed to feeling separate, invisible, unwelcome and what might have made a difference?
- Talking with family members about
 - ◆ the barriers to inclusion they have experienced and what would have made a difference
 - ◆ what they are lacking or seeking about information, resources, problem solving strategies, services and networks
- Identifying topics to work on from these stories and choosing areas in which the Council can have an impact
 - ◆ were there themes that arose as Council members listened to the stories?
 - ◆ are there trends Council wants to address or turn around?
 - ◆ what can Council do to address gaps and concerns and celebrate and strengthen the good things?
 - ◆ for example
 - ✓ *You hear stories about the disheartening experience of hearing or reading media that speak about people “suffering with a disability” or other negative language. Perhaps the media show a lack of information and understanding about disability and assume people are less capable of contributing to the community than you know to be true.*

Setting Goals

What does Council want to change, strengthen, encourage, and how will Council know it has been effective?

- Once Council has decided on a topic or issue, set realistic goals on what members want to accomplish
 - ◆ for example, following the story above
 - ✓ Perhaps the goal will be to educate and influence local media about their use of language when referring to people with a developmental disability
 - ✓ Members may see this as a long-term goal that will take a few years to achieve. They may identify the first year’s goal as getting connected to people in the local media (determine who can introduce you) and letting them know the concerns
 - ✓ It may take the second year to sit down together to talk about the experience, to invite the media to talk with some people with a developmental disability so that they can educate the media, share their experiences of language that limits or offends or is inaccurate and feeds myths

- ✓ It may take a third year to move the relationship to a place where Council can write a piece or record a message for the media about the impact of language and some examples of respectful language
- Identify how Council will know it has had an impact (what evidence of a change will Council want to see?)
 - ◆ for example, following the story above
 - ✓ In year one Council may feel it accomplished the goal if there has been a first meeting with a media personality or person in charge (evidence that someone who could connect Council has been identified and has introduced members)
 - ✓ In year two Council might say it has reached the goal when members have had meaningful conversation about their experience and concerns
 - ✓ In year three Council might have success when there is evidence of media stories using respectful language and / or carrying a message about using respectful language (e.g. a news story or article a member has written, an interview with Council members and / or a radio or TV news story)

In deciding how big or small an initiative to focus on, consider

- How many members and possible Committee members will be available to work on it
- Council's previous experience in similar activities and events
- The likelihood of having a positive experience (it is good for a Council to have a positive experience of working together before focusing on goals and activities that are more complex or larger in scope; Remember, a big vision begins with small steps!)

Developing strategies

How will Council tackle this goal?

- A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal; it is different from a tactic or action members will pursue with the resources available. When developing strategies it can be helpful to answer some questions related to the goal(s). For example
- What has stopped this goal from being achieved so far?
 - ◆ is there a lack of
 - ✓ community awareness?
 - ✓ knowledge?
 - ✓ opportunity?
 - ◆ is there a lack of celebration or acknowledgement of positive experiences of inclusion?
- Who else in the community might be concerned about or interested in this goal?
 - ◆ where to find friends, allies, partners for the work?
- With all of this in mind, have a group discussion about possible strategies to address the goal(s). Encourage creative brainstorming on what strategies might be helpful in achieving the

desired outcomes. Once a list of possibilities is identified, review each idea with a critical eye, considering

- ◆ the resources each might require (people, time, skill, knowledge, money)
 - ◆ the presence or absence of opportunity (or what actions might be required to create the opportunity)
 - ◆ the possibility of finding allies in the community to join Council's effort
 - ◆ Council confidence in how effective the strategy will be in achieving or moving the goal forward
 - ◆ the opportunity the strategy presents for members to become actively involved, to learn new skills, or gain self confidence
- There are many factors to consider and the challenge to the Council is after due consideration, to balance the pros and cons and choose the strategies that will fit the goal of the Council
 - For example, following the story above, strategies may include
 - ◆ developing relationships with media leaders (editors, reporters, announcers, personalities, producers)
 - ◆ hosting community discussions on the impact of how language is used in the media
 - ◆ developing written material to submit for publication
 - ◆ celebrating and publicly honouring examples of respectful use of language

Planning and assigning actions that implement the strategies

Identify the activities or actions and Council members (or others) who are expected to do them.

In action planning it is often helpful to discuss and decide on the timelines which the Council expects each action or activity to be completed.

- For example, following the story above, the actions for each of the strategies may include
 - ◆ **Strategy:** Identify current practices regarding how and when media refers to children and / or adults with developmental disabilities
 - ✓ Actions: A Committee of volunteers will
 - Listen to broadcast media and document references and context
 - Scan local printed media and document references and context
 - Summarize and present to the Council
 - ◆ **Strategy:** Develop relationships with media leaders
 - ✓ Actions: Strike a Committee to work together to
 - Develop a list of all the media in each of the communities and make a short list of who Council members want to meet and talk with
 - Identify who in the community has relationships with these individuals and arrange introductions. This can include Council members, friends of Council members and other community organizations that are friendly to Council and / or its goal

- Review information from a community discussion (in one or more communities) on how media uses language to refer to people with developmental disabilities and develop a short list of examples Council wants to address
- Identify who will represent the Council to set up and attend the first meeting
- ◆ **Strategy:** Developing written material to submit for publication
 - ✓ Actions:
 - Identify who on Council will lead this activity. Is there a community resource that can assist and would be willing to join this activity (e.g. someone from a local college, a community member who joined one of the community discussions Council hosted)?
 - Consider inviting help and support from any of the provincial resource staff such as the Community Relations Specialists or the Family Partnership, Aboriginal or Self-Advocate Advisors

When activities have been completed, actions taken, strategies acted on, remember to stop and

- Celebrate the achievement
- Congratulate and appreciate one another for the effort and the outcome
- Review and evaluate how it all went
 - ◆ Discuss whether the actions were successful in achieving the goal
 - ✓ if successful in achieving the goal
 - What worked well?
 - What would you do differently next time?
 - What did you learn from this experience?
 - Did you gain any new contacts or friends of Council during this process and how will you follow up with them?
 - ✓ if not successful in achieving the goal
 - What worked well?
 - What would you do differently?
 - What did you learn that will help you when you plan your next strategy?
 - Do you want to refocus your efforts on this same goal?
 - Have you learned something that helps you decide to rethink your goal?
 - **Remember to appreciate the experience and the learning!**
 - Record what was accomplished and learned; it will be part of the Council's Annual Report

Some things to consider when preparing to plan

