

A framework for measuring the progression of developing local communities

Guidelines

Produced for
Objective 1
Priority 4 Driver Partnership

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Guidelines to using the framework

The framework enables communities to plan a strategy and assess progression from one stage to the next. Whilst development does not always

follow such a linear pattern the concept of 'developing communities' is a significant one - both for communities themselves and their partners in community economic development.

Communities are diverse and comprise a wide range of differing needs, interests and perspectives. For the purpose of this framework, 'the community' is defined as any meaningful community (within the geographically targeted areas). It may therefore relate to

- ♣ a geographical neighbourhood represented by an umbrella body such as a community forum
- ♣ the members/beneficiaries of a partnership involved in community economic development
- ♣ specific communities within an identified geographical area such as a development agency for the Asian community or an umbrella group for carers

The key is that there is a 'common bond' between the individuals who collectively make up an identifiable community.

Introduction to the framework

Five overall stages are identified to describe the route that development takes as communities progress from a low level of activity and development to high involvement and ownership of community led regeneration. At each broad stage the point at which communities will move on to the next stage of development is identified by the achievement of outcomes – illustrated as building blocks. The stages of development are shown up the left hand side of the framework.

The framework provides seven sets of building blocks :

- Building Social Inclusion**
- Building Skills**
- Building Organisation**
- Building Information and Communication**
- Building Resources**
- Building Strategy**

The framework allows for the fact that different communities are at different stages of development – a community may be at stage 2 in terms of building skills for example, and at stage 4 in terms of building organisation. The process of building development is a cumulative one, it is not about moving up a stage and leaving the others behind.

Communities should identify which of the five stages broadly describes their present situation. Priorities for future development can then be identified from the relevant sets of building blocks. The starting point for many communities will be to achieve the first step on the ladder, for others it will be to identify which stages they have already achieved and to aim for the next one.

Building Blocks to Community Economic Development

Building Social Inclusion needs to be seen as framing all development. Communities are diverse and an understanding of the dynamics of involvement should be developed and reflected in activities. Social inclusion is about valuing this diversity and addressing inequality with the aim of ensuring inclusive and equal access to participation and the benefits of economic development.

Development needs to be inclusive if it is to be sustainable in the longer term. The social inclusion achievements should therefore always be considered alongside the achievements identified for all other sets of building blocks.

Considerations

- ◆ Do you have an informed picture of the different experiences and perspectives present within the community?
- ◆ Are you aware of the barriers to people's full and real participation in the developing community?
- ◆ What steps are you taking to ensure that as wide a range of people as possible within the community can be involved with and influence community economic development activities and strategy?

Building Skills is about community members developing the skills and experience acquired through community group development in order that they may contribute to regeneration and economic development. This involves a very wide range of transferable skills from organising and running meetings to managing large regeneration projects. It is important to recognise that skills are developed in a variety of ways including through training courses, workshops, networking, mentoring schemes and practical experience. New opportunities for personal development can be provided by linking these development activities into pathways to further training and employment.

Considerations

- ◆ In what ways are you helping those who are least confident to both recognise the skills they have and to develop new skills?
- ◆ How are you building the skills and support that are required by people within the community to effectively represent it and participate in partnership working?
- ◆ How are you addressing the fact that 'people learn in different ways'?

Building Organisation is concerned with growth structures and organisations through which the community can collectively participate in, influence and lead community economic development. It is about progressing from a community with a low level of activity and morale to one in which the community is confidently developing a range of co-ordinated activities and services to meet local need. By this point the community will participate in,

and have initiated networks, infrastructures and partnerships with other stakeholders through which all sections of the community can have a strong collective voice.

Considerations

- ◆ How can you best support the autonomous development of community activities and groups?
- ◆ In what ways are you ensuring that the diverse range of community interests have equal involvement in the development of networks and formal community based infrastructures?
- ◆ What are the expectations and what is the impact of collaborative working on those participating and community economic development?

Building Information and Communication is critical to community economic development - 'information is power'. This involves the provision of both clear and accessible information and effective communication systems. Information can be conveyed in many forms and accessed in different ways. The central role of computer based information systems needs to be harnessed by communities and this theme is therefore about developing ICT skills and using computer technology (e.g. web based information) for community members' benefit.

Considerations

- ◆ How do you know what information the community needs?
- ◆ How do you ensure that information is clear and accessible and reaches people in time for it to be acted upon?
- ◆ How can the community best maximise the potential of ICT to support CED?

Building Resources is a cornerstone of sustaining the development of a community. The management and/or ownership of community based assets gives a sound base on which to further develop. Resources can include buildings to meet in and hold events, practical 'tools' such as computers, telephone access and printing facilities as well as the security provided by 'hard cash' coming into a community. They all enable participation and give a foundation for continuing development.

Considerations

- ◆ What resources are provided for community groups and networks?
- ◆ How much can the community potentially 'earn' itself through income generating services?
- ◆ What do we understand by, and what are we aiming for, in terms of financial sustainability?

Building Strategy within communities involves progressing from a situation of often spontaneous, fragmented and reactive activity to one in which long term aims related to identified community needs are agreed. Short, medium and long term objectives can then be established and action plans developed towards achieving the aims. Building strategies also involves consideration of

how communities wish to involve other bodies in order to achieve desired aims. In this framework such a strategy will help to develop a co-ordinated approach to the issues tackled in the other sets of building blocks.

Considerations

- ♦ What do you understand by a CED strategy?
- ♦ Who are the key stakeholders and when and how are you planning to involve them in strategic development?
- ♦ What are you aiming to achieve in the long, medium and short term?

Using the framework

The framework is designed to help communities to broadly assess their stage of development and to identify the steps to reach the next stage. It combines stages of development and development themes related to Priority 4 (the sets of building blocks).

You can locate the stage of your community's development in relation to each individual set of building blocks as you will not necessarily be at the same stage of development for all themes.

E.g. your assessment may be that your community has achieved:

'some opportunities for sharing and developing skills' (Building Skills), and 'developing networks between groups' (Building Organisation).

This would identify you as a Stage 3 community where you are next aiming to achieve:

'personal development and community activity are enhanced through skills development and support', and 'a formal structure/infraststructure accountable to your community'

For each set of building blocks you should be aiming to build/have in place the corresponding building blocks for social inclusion and strategy.

There are support materials to help guide you through the stages of development. These include a description of likely starting points and some suggestions of possible activity to progress from one stage to the next.