Engaging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

A guide for the Western Australian Public Sector

Community engagement is a process of involving citizens in government decision-making processes, policies and programs.

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Community engagement

Cultural diversity is one of the State's greatest assets. People from more than 200 different countries live, work and study in Western Australia, speak as many as 270 languages and identify with more than 100 religious faiths. Our cultural diversity and expanding population brings many economic, social and cultural benefits, and creates opportunities and challenges for the public sector in providing policies, programs and services that successfully meet the needs of all Western Australians.

Today, community engagement is a fundamental and powerful tool for government agencies. Some of the benefits for culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, the public sector and Western Australia include:

CaLD Communities

Participation in social, economic and cultural life

Contribution to public policy

Community capacity building

Successful settlement outcomes

Western Australia

An active citizenship and civil society

Increased social capital

Support for State development

Expanded global networks

Public sector

Improved public policies, programs and services

Direct community feedback

Best practice standards

Strengthened corporate values

Community engagement

Community engagement is a process of involving citizens in government decision-making processes, policies and programs. It is a way of understanding and addressing community needs through listening, building relationships and collaboration. This guide identifies key issues to consider for successful engagement with CaLD communities.

Successful CaLD community engagement means the public sector agency:

- allocates resources and develops systems and skills to engage with communities
- develops partnerships with communities
- gains community input into the development, implementation and review of policies, programs and services
- provides information and support in ways that are culturally appropriate
- evaluates its outcomes and provides feedback to communities.

Incorporating multicultural profiles into organisational processes and workplace culture promotes the public sector values of excellence, professionalism, innovation and respect.

Four elements contribute to building capacity and positioning the public sector to meet the needs of CaLD communities in WA.

Cultural competency

Good practice
Provide cultural competency training and recruit staff to reflect the diversity of your clients.

Better results
Improved service delivery, productivity, staff and client satisfaction.

Link
Diverse WA cultural competency training package
Culture and religion information sheets

Language services

Good practice
Implement the *WA Language Services Policy 2014* according to your organisational needs.

Better results
Government services are more accessible to people who are unable to communicate in written or spoken English.

Link
WA Language Services Policy 2014
A guide for government agencies

Data collection

Good practice
Collect and maintain CaLD client data that record key statistics and profiles to reflect current and future demographics.

Better results
Effective service provision, reduced duplication and identification of gaps.

Link
Cultural diversity in Western Australia
Guide to cultural and linguistic data collection for the public sector

Promotion

Good practice
Promote your agency to CaLD communities through multilingual, culturally inclusive branding and images. Utilise ethnic print, radio, television and online media.

Better results
Effective, positive communications of your services as inclusive, culturally aware and for all Western Australians.

Links
Directory of services and contacts in Western Australia
Ethnic media
Community groups

Increasing community engagement

Community engagement includes interactions ranging from information sharing to capacity building. There is not a prescriptive model for community engagement. The most appropriate methods are determined by the issues, objectives, stakeholders and resources of a particular situation. It is important to develop a strategy that is appropriate to the issue and considerate of the communities involved. You can choose from the following methods for the results you wish to achieve.

Inform

Provide information about public policies, programs and services in formats that are easily accessible and culturally appropriate.

Outcome: Increased understanding of key issues, services and the options available.

Considerations:

- Is your printed material (including your website) in plain English and translated into different languages?

- Does your database/mail-out include ethnic organisations, CaLD community groups and community leaders?

- Do you meet face-to-face, produce audiovisual or pictorial communication (e.g. DVDs) to share information?

- Do you utilise ethnic media to communicate and market your services to CaLD communities?

- Does your agency use translating and interpreting services, if required by clients?

Translating and interpreting

Consult

Seek the views of CaLD communities and provide feedback on the outcomes of any consultations.

Outcome: Identification of community needs and feedback on policy, programs and services.

Considerations:

- What are the objectives and the intended outcomes of the engagement?

- Who are the key community organisations, groups, leaders, elders and individuals that need to be involved?

- What dates, times and venues suit the needs of the community and will maximise attendance?

- Are interpreters, childcare and transport required and budgeted for?

How will you keep stakeholders informed and involved after the consultation?

Community consultations

Increasing community engagement

Involve

Involve CaLD community members in the development, implementation and review of policies, programs and services.

Outcomes: Policies, programs and services are relevant and respond to the needs of CaLD communities.

Considerations:

- ▣ Which multicultural agencies may be strategic partners for advice and planning?

- ▣ Have partnerships with relevant community groups, ethnic organisations and leaders been established?

- ▣ Have key representatives been sourced from community groups?

- ▣ How will involvement of CaLD communities be maintained?

Directory of services and contacts in Western Australia

Community groups

Implementing the principles of multiculturalism locally

Empower

Actively invest in capacity building to develop stronger communities, and empower individuals and groups to acquire the skills to participate effectively in the processes of decision making, feedback and evaluation.

Outcomes: Increased capacity of CaLD communities to engage with the public sector and advocate on community issues.

Considerations:

- ▣ Which CaLD communities are most in need of capacity building?

- ▣ Can CaLD communities easily gain access to your programs, services and staff?

- ▣ What forms of capacity building can your agency provide that will benefit CaLD communities?

- ▣ Can your agency provide opportunities for leadership training, mentoring, work experience and community education?

Implementing the principles of multiculturalism locally

The Western Australian Multicultural Community Service Awards

Harmony Champion's program

Creating partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to building capacity and positioning the public sector to meet the needs of CaLD communities in Western Australia.

In 2011, the State Government released the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy which places a greater emphasis on the future role of State Government as the facilitator of services, and non-government organisations (NGOs) as providers. In future, the public sector will have greater integration and deeper collaboration with NGOs to meet community needs.

Successful partnerships can:

- develop and articulate a common understanding of issues, needs and solutions

- leverage financial, technical and human resources and expertise

- generate innovation and improvements in service provision

- streamline referral processes, and reduce gaps and duplication in programs and services.

Public sector agencies are most likely to develop partnerships with NGOs working exclusively with or providing services to CaLD communities. Agencies may also work in collaboration with CaLD community groups to facilitate engagement in government decision-making processes, policies and programs.

Partnerships with non-government organisations

Many NGOs provide programs and services that are designed to meet specific needs of CaLD communities. These organisations provide a range of services from general information, referral services, social support and capacity building programs to structured health, accommodation, employment, education and training, family and settlement services. These organisations usually employ culturally diverse and multilingual staff with strong grassroots connections to communities and are often at the coalface of issues affecting CaLD communities.

Working with NGOs

- Be clear about what it is you require and ensure that expectations and roles are clearly explained.

- Identify what your agency can offer to strengthen the partnerships and build grassroots engagement into your work practices, including staffing and financial resources.

- Research the organisation you wish to contact, its history, current programs and services, client base, and existing government partners.

- Meet with their clients in order to understand their needs and the impact of the organisation's programs and services on their communities.

- Build trust by being open about other organisations you are working with or plan to meet.

- Provide feedback on the outcomes of engagement. Share reports or meeting notes and, in the long term, inform the organisation of the agency's response or actions undertaken in light of the engagement. Invite the organisation to also provide information on the outcomes it has achieved.

Creating partnerships

Partnerships with CaLD community groups

CaLD community members establish incorporated entities to support their communities in a number of ways. Their constitution will identify membership criteria and, generally, membership of community groups is open to any member of the public with an interest in the group's mission. Depending on the migration period, CaLD groups may have hundreds (emerging communities) or thousands of members (established communities), who generally work as volunteers to manage programs such as social services, language schools, support for the ageing and cultural celebrations. CaLD community groups may have access to grants from various government agencies to support their programs.

Working with CaLD communities

- Recognise that ethnic and religious differences exist within the same country of origin and may result in the formation of numerous different groups.

- Research the community group and familiarise yourself with its political history, cultural and religious practices, especially those surrounding gender and sensitive topics of discussion.

- Community leaders change, therefore identify the current community leaders prior to your meeting, as well as all community members who are likely to attend.

- Respect community protocols, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

- Address language issues by arranging for interpreters or bi-cultural workers to assist if required.

- Consider the need for interpreters, transport, childcare and catering.

- Be honest and clear about what you are asking so that community leaders are able to advise you on the relevance, appropriateness or value of the information you require or wish to share with their communities. Seek their advice on the appropriate engagement strategy.

- Support and build the capacity of community leaders by involving them in meetings and reference groups.

- Respond in a timely manner to engagement initiated by community leaders.

- Invite the leaders to provide information face-to-face on the outcomes they have achieved. This is the preferred form of communication to build trust and long-term relationships.

- Provide ongoing feedback on outcomes and inform the group of the agency's response or actions as a result of the engagement.

- Allow time for leaders to increase the participation of community members, for trusting relationships to grow and for information to circulate. Be patient and work towards mutually beneficial long-term relationships.

Useful links

Ethnic organisations in Western Australia

Directory of services and contacts in Western Australia

Settlement services and Immigration

Implementing the principles of multiculturalism locally

How we can help

The purpose of the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) is to lead Western Australia in achieving the full potential of multiculturalism. OMI supports the public sector by providing:

- policy advice
- information on how to improve programs and service delivery to CaLD communities
- partnerships with CaLD community groups, ethnic organisations and stakeholders
- statistics and other information on cultural diversity and multiculturalism
- presentations on Western Australia's cultural diversity
- partnership opportunities.

OMI RESOURCES

The resources listed below are available on the Office of Multicultural Interests website www.omi.wa.gov.au

OMI Strategic Plan 2014–18
Read our vision, purpose and objectives to achieve the full potential of multiculturalism.

Directory of Services for New Arrivals in WA
Contact details and services provided by government and non-government agencies that assist people who have recently migrated to Western Australia.

Cultural Diversity in Western Australia—A Demographic Profile
The 2011 Australian Census confirmed that WA is one of the most diverse and the fastest growing of all Australian States and Territories. This demographic profile includes information about countries of birth, ancestries, languages spoken at home, proficiency in spoken English and religious affiliations of Western Australians.

Culture and religion information
Guidelines for service providers.

Teacher's resource kit—A World of Difference
A resource to assist teachers to provide learning and teaching opportunities on the appreciation of cultural diversity and the development of the WA Charter of Multiculturalism.

Community profiles
Comparing data from the 2011, 2006 and 2001 Censuses, these profiles provide data and trend analysis for key socioeconomic and demographic characteristics for 30 culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism Locally
A planning guide for Western Australian local governments.

Catalogue of Settlement Services and Programs for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants in Western Australia
A database of WA settlement services and programs for people from CaLD backgrounds.

Other resources

Australian Bureau of Statistics
www.abs.gov.au
Australia's official statistical website that provides statistical data including population by State and Territory.

Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
www.hreoc.gov.au
Contains up-to-date information about current human rights issues.

Australian Multicultural Foundation
http://amf.net.au
Committed to Australia as one people drawn from many cultures.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
www.dfat.gov.au
The department supports Australia's security, prosperity, Australian travellers and Australians overseas.

Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIPB)
www.immi.gov.au
Manages Australia's migration, humanitarian and citizenship policy and programs.

Department of Social Services (DSS)
www.dss.gov.au
The department works to improve the lifetime wellbeing of migrants and refugees settling in Australia by responding to their specific needs, encouraging their independence and participation in the Australian community.

DIAC community information summaries
http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries
Describes the communities in Australia by country of birth, and their descendants who are living in Australia.

Face the Facts 2008
www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/face_facts/index.html
Factual information about immigrants, refugees and Indigenous peoples.

Making Multicultural Australia
www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au
One of Australia's leading sources of quality educational resources on multiculturalism.

Racism No Way
www.racismnoway.com.au
A project aimed at assisting school communities and education systems to recognise and address racism.

Reporting diversity
www.reportingdiversity.org.au
A project aimed at raising awareness in reporting of issues concerning community diversity.

The People of Australia
www.immi.gov.au
The Australian Government's multicultural policy.

Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission
www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au
Contains a range of free information published by the Commission to raise awareness and understanding of equal opportunity.

More information

For more information and assistance, please contact:

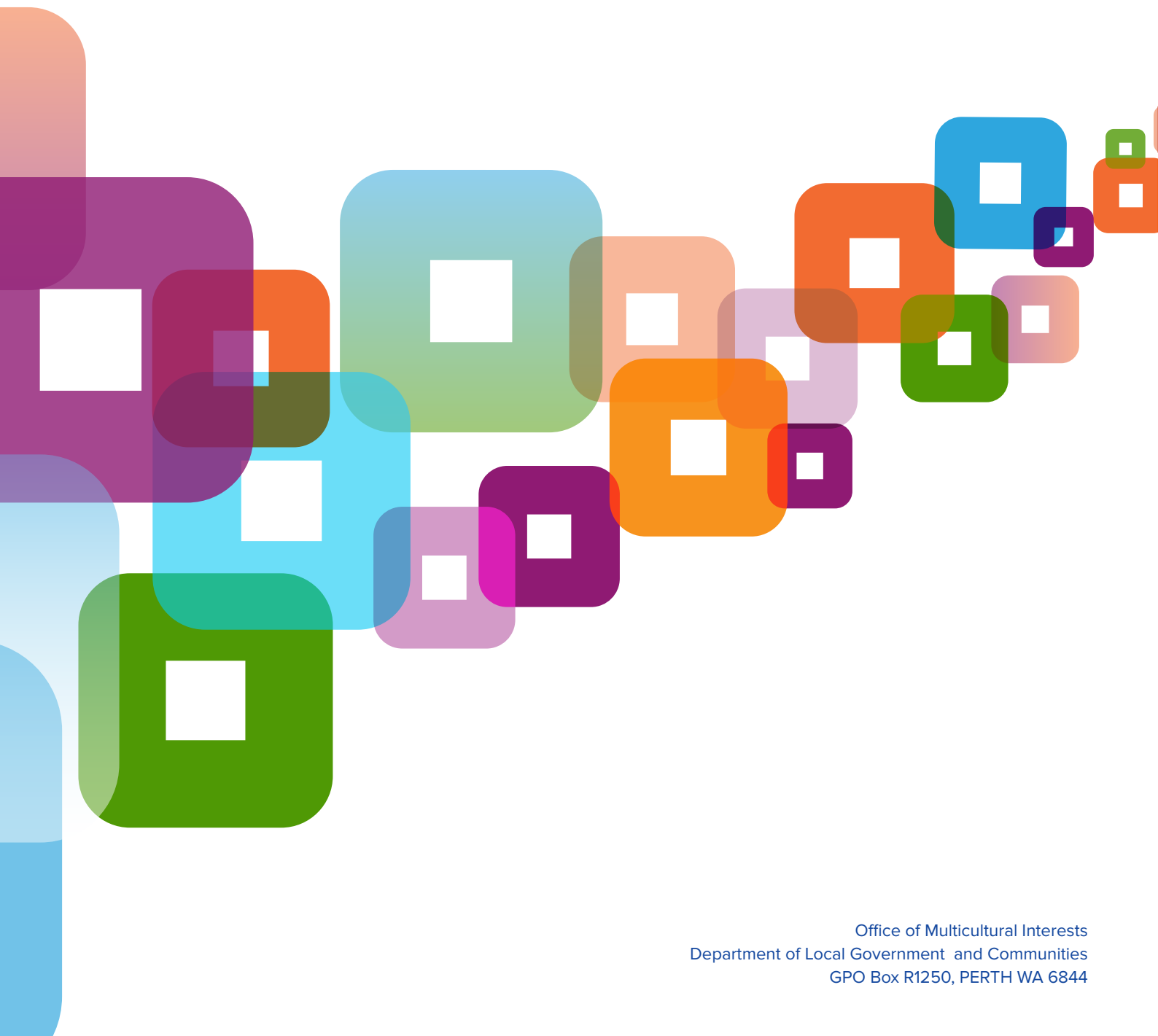**OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS**
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