

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: CHECKLIST FOR FAMILY BUSINESSES

This checklist is designed for use as a referencing tool to assist with the planning of community engagement activities for family business board members, family members, managers, and community-based organisations interested in enhancing the firm's community impact. The guidance here applies to family businesses of all sizes.

Planning your community engagement activities

Important questions to consider at an early stage when planning your community engagement activities. For example,

- Will these activities be taken at the individual or corporate level, at the level of the business as a whole?
- Will the engagement activities be kept separate from the business activities or delivered as part of the business' main operations?
- What resources will be needed to deliver these activities, in the business and/or family?
- Is your business already engaged in any community engagement activities? If yes, then where can extra value be added?

Step 1: Defining the purpose and scope of your community engagement activities

1.1 Identify the community or communities you want to engage with

The community or communities you engage with might be defined by geography, shared interests/practices or it might be an advocacy group, other businesses, or a community linked with your employees.

1.2 Clarify your motivation for wanting to engage with this particular community

This could be for business reasons, compliance with governance and CSR strategies, business reputation/brand management, or to attract new talent. Or it could be for family reasons, such as to create a legacy and to ensure future generations continue the heritage of community engagement, or to build a reputation for the family name.

1.3 Identify the outcomes and benefits of your engagement

Identify the outcomes or benefits for both the business and the family; this may include the following:

- Business benefits could include: increased profits as a result of increased sales because more people want to work with businesses which can demonstrate good corporate citizenship; create a unique selling point for attracting talented new recruits; build a reputation in the local community through giving something back; employees' personal and professional development, increased job satisfaction, and team-building; and taxation incentives.
- Family benefits could include: building a reputation as a key component of your community; and as a family that gives back to society; providing a way to engage family members with the business and transmit the family's values to the next generation.

Step 2: Planning your Community Engagement Activities

You might start small and then build momentum before expanding the reach of your community engagement activities. Factors to keep in mind might be:

- Identify the community's needs and what the family business can do to meet them.

- Align community needs and family business values and goals to build a strategy and build in what is already happening through the work of those already in the family business.
- Start working with the community and organisations identified as ones that could be helped.

Step 3: Delivering your Community Engagement Activities

Choose an individual to be the leader to oversee the engagement activities and to be the main contact point for community organisations. It is important to decide what the limits are in terms of available resources.

Step 4: Monitor and evaluate your impact

This involves creating standards to measure the impact of your engagement activities. Evidence on impact can inform decisions about how to best use resources and communicate your achievements. For example, identifying the resources used, measuring the impact, identifying the benefits achieved for the community and for the business.

Step 5: Document and report the impacts of engagement activities

Activities can be reported through a Corporate Social Responsibility report, a separate community engagement report, or communicated through press releases, social media and website news pages. Consider reporting on the firm's community engagement activities internally within the organisation, as well as to wider society, and it can be reported through e-newsletter or social media.

Step 6: Learn from and improving your engagement activities

It is important to review the activities undertaken and their outcomes, reflecting on how the business has engaged with communities and how impact is measured and reported. Use this learning to develop your community engagement activities going forward, in a cycle of learning and improvement. Finally, consider how to reward and recognise those involved in the business's community engagement activities to increase future uptake.

This checklist is based on findings from new research on the social and community impact of family firms in the UK, together with practice guidance for family businesses on how to engage and form partnerships with local communities and community-based organisations. The full report by researchers from the Universities of York and Birmingham, *Family Business and Community Engagement*, is available to download here:

ifb.org.uk/ifb-research-foundation/news/new-report-sheds-light-on-the-community-impact-of-family-businesses/

As an accompaniment to this guidance, the IFB Research Foundation has produced new case studies illustrating the principles set out above and providing practical examples of the different ways that family firms engage with their communities. The case studies are available to download here:

ifb.org.uk/ifb-research-foundation/family-businesses-and-community-engagement/