

Brisbane Declaration

We, representatives of countries and communities, including Indigenous peoples, international institutions, national, state and local governments, academic institutions, and business and civil society organizations from across the world, participating in the International Conference on Engaging Communities, held at Brisbane, Australia, from 15 to 17 August 2005,

1. *Acknowledge* the universal interest and importance of community engagement, founded in the inherent dignity of people and the values, rights and responsibilities of all people expressed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
2. *Welcome* the Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance¹ in its call for all actors² in societies to work together to expand and promote participatory, transparent governance for the benefit of their people.
3. *Underscore* that community engagement is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Declaration including the Millennium Goals for Development.
4. *Express appreciation* for the efforts of the United Nations and its specialised agencies in helping to advance the practice of community engagement and support of greater participatory and transparent governance.
5. *Express appreciation* to the Government of the State of Queensland, to the Indigenous peoples for their welcome to country, and to all the people of Queensland, Australia for hosting the inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.
6. *Express appreciation* to the other Australian governments, tertiary institutions and organisations that have sponsored and partnered in the organisation of this gathering, to the staff and volunteers, and to all those who have through participation shared their expertise and experience to build greater understanding, capability and commitment to the practice of community engagement.

Community Engagement

7. *Affirm* that community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors.
8. *Recognise* that community engagement is a two way process:
 - by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment; and
 - by which governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes.
9. *Affirm* that effective engagement generates better decisions, delivering sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.
10. *Also recognise* that effective community engagement enables the free and full development of human potential, fosters relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, facilitates the sharing of responsibilities, and creates more inclusive and sustainable communities.

¹ The Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance made at the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government at Seoul, Republic of Korea, 24-27 May 2005.

² The 'community' or all 'actors in society' are all those who are potentially affected by or have an interest in an issue, decision, service delivery or evaluation, and include government, businesses, trade unions, civil society organisations, non-Government organisations and individual citizens.

11. *Further recognise* that meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in, and negotiate and partner with, institutions that affect their lives, in particular those previously excluded or disenfranchised.
12. *Further recognise* that inclusive engagement requires that the poor and marginalized, and Indigenous peoples, are adequately resourced and mainstreamed to participate meaningfully and that they have a stake in the outcome and benefit equitably as a result of being involved.
13. *Endorse* the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence in community engagement:
 - Integrity – when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement;
 - Inclusion - when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard;
 - Deliberation – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities;
 - Influence – when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.
14. *Recognise* the availability of a wide range of methods and technologies, including new and emerging tools associated with the internet, to facilitate appropriate and effective community engagement.
15. *Affirm* the value of education, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing about active citizenship and community engagement processes and outcomes.
16. *Draw attention* to the materials and recommendations of the specialized panels and workshops which supplement this Declaration

Next steps

The participants from all over the world at this conference:

17. *Request* the Host Country to bring to the attention of the General Assembly of the United Nations the Declaration of this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities so that it may provide leadership globally for its promotion and implementation.
18. *Further call on* international institutions as well as national, provincial and local governments to give effect to the values and principles of this Declaration.
19. *Express* support for more dialogue between international institutions and others with the people of the world about issues of global interest, and the availability of digital and other means to support such interaction.
20. *Encourage* the tertiary sector and other public and professional organisations to facilitate research and teaching, policy and practice development, organizational development, evaluation and networking to sustain the learnings and connections created at this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.
21. *Further encourage* the private sector and civil society organisations to implement practical and meaningful ways to be responsive to, representative of, and enabling of the participation of citizens, clients, communities.
22. *Note* with appreciation the willingness of the Queensland Government to support knowledge-sharing and capacity-building for community engagement and to be involved in the follow-up to this Conference.
23. *Request* the United Nations, building on the success and legacies of this Conference, to assist countries and communities to foster effective community engagement practices by supporting research and training, and documenting successful outcomes and disseminating these widely.