

Overview

Environment Bay of Plenty believes that a collaborative community approach is essential to achieving its goal of sustainable development of the region. The mission statement, *working with our communities for a better environment*, is not just words. It is a promise to the Bay of Plenty community and a directive by councillors to staff. It underpins our work and how we should go about doing it.

It is also a huge challenge.

- It requires a knowledgeable community that is inspired to be involved and take action.
- It requires an organisation that knows and respects its community and is willing to listen to it and be changed by it.

Strong relationships are built on mutual respect and trust. They require meaningful, honest two-way communication, supported by appropriate action. A single wrong action can shatter trust, so Environment Bay of Plenty's commitment to working collaboratively is not made lightly. Environment Bay of Plenty staff are expected to make that same commitment.

A collaborative approach puts the emphasis on community relationships as never before. *Working with Communities*, Environment Bay of Plenty's Community Relations Strategy 2010, lays down some foundation principles and guidelines for developing our relationship with the community. It aligns with, and supports, the Regional Community Outcomes and Environment Bay of Plenty's Ten Year Plan.

Three Community Relations Plans pick up and expand on different aspects of *Working with Communities*. They have been developed in consultation with councillors, staff and community members. The Plans take the goals from the strategy and show how Environment Bay of Plenty will put them into practice over the next five years.

The Plans are:

Let's Talk: Communicating with Communities	Environment Bay of Plenty's Communications and Marketing Plan 2010
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Get Active	Environment Bay of Plenty's Community Engagement Plan 2010
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Learning with Communities	Environment Bay of Plenty's Education for Sustainability Plan 2010
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The Plans are integrated into a toolkit format for use by councillors and staff. The toolkit also contains guidelines, tips and other useful information. We hope it will be an easy reference guide for councillors and staff members, especially those who work closely with the community. It is a work in progress so will be added to over time.

1.1 **Community Relations toolkit**

The Community Relations toolkit is an all-in-one reference guide for community relations at Environment Bay of Plenty. It is for use by councillors and staff. The full toolkit contains the three Plans plus a range of other information, as detailed below. However, you can pick and choose from the information to create your own personal kit. You can do this by printing individual documents off SAM or by photocopying from the folder held by the Community Relations Group Manager's personal assistant. All documents referred to in the toolbox, such as market research reports, will be filed on the same shelf for easy access.

The Toolkit contains:

- The three Plans
- Building community relations: What we do at Environment Bay of Plenty
- An annual calendar
- Toolkit:
 - Working with people
 - Community relations tools
 - How to guides

Contact the Community Relations Group Manager's personal assistant for a copy of the toolkit

2 **Introduction**

2.1 **What are community relations?**

What are community relations?

A definition: The planned, active, and continuous participation by an organisation with and within a community, usually to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the organisation and the community.

Environment Bay of Plenty is committed to developing strong mutually-beneficial relationships with the regional community. We know that the organisation will not achieve its goals – which are also the community's goals - without involving the community in them. In this context, the community means the people who live in the Bay of Plenty plus the organisations and groups that we have relationships with, such as other councils, central Government and community groups.

2.1.1 *Community Relations Tools*

Community relations at Environment Bay of Plenty can be broken down into building blocks. These are the disciplines of communications, marketing, community engagement and education for sustainability.

2.1.2 *Definitions*

Communications

Good communications involves the mutual exchange of information. The quality of communication – including how well we listen - is vitally important. Tools include emails, phone calls, newsletters, and awards.

Marketing

Marketing assumes that people will not work with us if they do not know who we are or what we do. It involves the building of our “brand” or image. Tools include marketing campaigns.

Engagement

Community engagement is about the way councillors and staff liaise and engage with various communities. Examples are Care Groups, the Environmental Enhancement Fund, community events and consultation.

Education

Education for Sustainability involves sharing knowledge. It focuses on sustaining and improving the environment and about living sustainably. It promotes long-term changes in behaviour. We provide and support programmes in schools, businesses and the community.

2.2 **Why we do community relations**

Environment Bay of Plenty recognises that strong community relationships help us achieve our goals, which are also the community’s goals. The community’s goals are expressed in the Regional Community Outcomes, and are refined further by market research.

Community relationships also help us meet the requirements of legislation. This includes the Local Government Act 2002, the Resource Management Act 1991, and legislation such as the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1941. Environment Bay of Plenty’s own plans and strategies also drive community relations work, including the Regional Policy Statement.

Enviroschools programmes. However, others are also involved in more formal communications, marketing, engagement, and education.

For example:

- Councillors chair meetings and give media interviews
- Rivers and drainage staff write newsletters
- Transport staff organise major road safety campaigns
- Land management staff provide ongoing support for community environmental groups
- Consents staff run training education seminars for earthworks contractors
- Human resources staff market job opportunities
- Navigation and safety staff run water safety promotions

2.5 **How we work**

2.5.1 *Values*

At Environment Bay of Plenty, we value:

- Openness, honesty and integrity
- Efficiency, effectiveness and excellence
- Working with communities to achieve positive outcomes
- The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- Organisational teamwork

We believe that our main role is as facilitators; it is one of empowerment. We realise we cannot achieve our goals on our own. To succeed, we must work in partnership with other organisations and the community. We recognise and respect the vital roles others have to play within the Bay of Plenty. Staff in different sections and councillors must also work together as a team.

We all need to understand what each other is doing and planning, work together where possible, and take the time to share ideas and experiences.

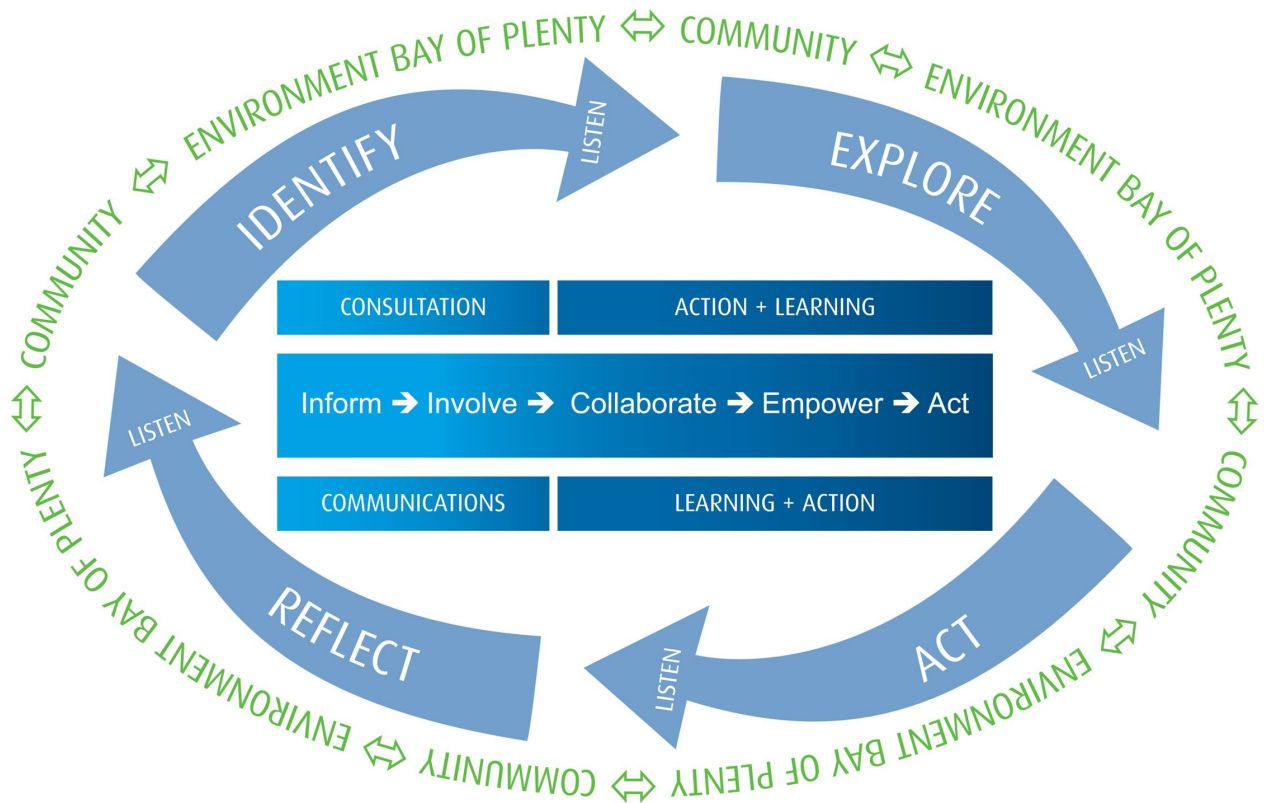
Some guiding principles for Environment Bay of Plenty are:

- We consider the environment in its totality - natural and built, technological and social (economic, political, cultural-historical, moral, aesthetic)
- We recognise that sustaining and improving the environment as a lifelong process

This [Working with Communities continuum](#) explores the interrelationships between communicating, engaging and [learning](#). It shows how people move from knowing to taking action about a topic or issue. It also shows how the community relations work we

do encourages and supports people through the process. Best practice requires us to work with the community to identify, explore, act and reflect at each stage.

Working with communities



2.6 Who we work with

Environment Bay of Plenty works in a region with a population of about 250,000, a quarter of whom identified as Maori in the last Census. We work with a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations. Some are partners or stakeholders who we must work closely with to achieve our mutual goals. They include agencies like territorial authorities, the Sustainable Business Network, NIWA and the Land Transport New Zealand. We also have an ongoing relationship with rural landowners, businesses, community groups, the media, and hapu and iwi. Central government is important because of the influence it has on our activities.

Some audiences:

River scheme ratepayers	Consent holders	Students and teachers
Care group members	Rotorua lake users	Bus travellers
Beach goers	Boaties	Residents

See *Working with People* for information about key audiences, what they think, and how best to work with them.

2.7 Where we are now

Environment Bay of Plenty possibly works more closely with its communities than many regional councils do. It engages with 76 care groups all over the region. Nearly a quarter of the region's schools are involved in the extremely successful EnviroSchools programme. Staff have offered individual support to more than 400 Environmental Enhancement Fund projects over the past six years. We sponsor a number of very

successful award programmes. We produce quality publications. We consult extensively with many different audiences. We have developed strong working partnerships with government and local government agencies and other organisations. Our councillors and staff are genuinely good ambassadors.

However, we are challenged by negative community perceptions and a lack of knowledge or confusion about the organisation and what it does. Most of the time, we are doing a fantastic job – but people don't always know it. This is a strong barrier to achieving our community relations goals. Another barrier is simply the size of the task and the resources (including time) available for it – there will never really be enough.

2.8 **Where do we want to be?**

Goal: To work with our communities for a better environment.

Targets:

- More people know who we are and what we are doing
- More people engage with us and have input into our decision-making
- More people know about the environment and sustainable practice, and take action to look after the environment better

2.9 **How we are going to get there**

The three Plans pick up on the above targets, expand on them, and show how they will be achieved over the next five years.

2.10 **How we will know when we get there**

Working with Communities, Environment Bay of Plenty's Community Relations Strategy, sets the following targets, to be achieved by 2010. Some will be measured through a regional survey and others by evaluating work programmes.

- 90% of people know about Environment Bay of Plenty
- 75% understand Environment Bay of Plenty's role well
- 60% recognise that Environment Bay of Plenty is a leading agency in protecting and enhancing the environment
- 35% have dealt directly with the organisation
- 20% will be involved in some environmental action
- The numbers of people engaged positively with Environment Bay of Plenty will increase each year
- The number of businesses, schools and organisations involved in sustainable practices will increase each year
- People's understanding of and support for sustainable development will continue to increase