



First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.)

– Coordinator's Guide –

The First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) has been developed as a community and economic development tool by the Municipal Association of Victoria. It has been adopted from similar tools in Canada (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs), USA (University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Centre for Community Economic Development and the University of Illinois Extension) and Western Australia (Bank of I.D.E.A.S.). Special thanks to Clare Wasteneys from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for her time and generosity in sharing their experiences and

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'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.'

(Marcel Proust)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Description

Communities and their residents often have difficulty in developing an objective assessment of their strengths, limitations and opportunities, due to over familiarisation, fear of offending someone and the diversity of local perspectives and interests.

The First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) is a fun, simple and inexpensive structural exercise which reveals the first impressions that a community conveys to outsiders, including tourists and potential investors, business operators, residents and retirees. F.I.C.E. involves two communities agreeing to exchange 'Visiting Volunteer Teams' who undertake unannounced, incognito one day visits to the other community. These teams record and photograph their observations and provide constructive feedback to their exchange community.

Each Visiting Team is composed of 4 – 5 community residents who reflect a mix of backgrounds, ages and occupations. The Team travels together to the exchange community where they spend time utilising a survey questionnaire booklet to gather information. Upon returning to their community, the Visiting Team prepares a report and presents this to the community. The exchange community reciprocates with a similar visit and participates in a Feedback Report Meeting.

F.I.C.E. is simply a community development extension of the well used 'mystery visitor' program that retail businesses employ to receive objective feedback on their business performance and customer first impressions.

1.2 Purpose

The simple purpose of the F.I.C.E is to facilitate a low cost assessment exercise by first time visitors, thus enabling valuable and objective information about local appearances, infrastructure, services, facilities and attitudes.

1.3 Community Benefits

F.I.C.E. is beneficial to communities that want to develop a community vision and future development action plan. It simply offers an outsider perspective about their community – an assessment of the community's strengths, weaknesses and potential opportunities through a fresh set of eyes, from a first-time visitor.

F.I.C.E. is based on the assumption that outsiders without vested interests are able to be more objective than local residents, who are often too familiar with their own community. Outsiders are also more likely to be able to provide constructive advice which is often more acceptable to local residents than if given by someone from within the community.

F.I.C.E. can provide useful feedback and information to assist such community and economic development activities such as –

- *Community Strategic Planning* – identifying community strengths, assets, weaknesses and critical issues.

- *Community Economic Analysis* – enabling confirmation about what the community has learnt from statistical analysis.
- *Mainstreet Program* – prioritising critical issues for main street / central business district revitalisation.
- *Tourism Planning* – evaluating local tourism strengths, challenges and opportunities.
- *Community Service Assessment* – assessing the quality and range of services and areas for improvement.
- *Business Expansion and Retention Program* – providing additional information about services and infrastructure relevant to business development.
- *Customer Service* – evaluating the level of customer service within local business.
- *Investment Attraction* – analysing the scene of how potential investors may view the community.

1.4 Matching Communities

A key factor in determining the success of the exercise is to ensure the appropriate matching of communities. Matched communities need to –

- share a set of similar characteristics e.g. population, demographics, economic activities, location etc
- be at least 200kms apart to avoid familiarity.

Interstate exchanges have some real and desired advantages.

2. Program Stages

F.I.C.E. has three key stages – Planning and Preparation, Exchange Community Visits and Post Visit Activities.

2.1 Planning and Preparation

In terms of planning and preparation, there are four key activities which require attention and action, namely –

2.1.1 Assessment of Community Readiness

Before deciding to implement F.I.C.E., it is important that a community examine its readiness for such an exercise. The following critical considerations require reflection –

- Right Timing?
 - Is the timing right for an exercise that is designed to provide an assessment of the community's strengths and weaknesses from a fresh, outsider perspective?
 - Is it the right community and economic development tool to use at this time?
 - For what purposes will the information be used?
 - What are the current community and economic development issues and priorities of the community?
 - Is there a broader strategic community and economic development process being undertaken where F.I.C.E. information will be useful?
- Acceptance of Constructive Criticism?
 - Does the community have an open mindset to receive constructive criticism (along with praise) given that F.I.C.E. results in an honest appraisal of the community through the eyes of a visitor?
 - Will local people be willing to listen to constructive feedback?
- Community Commitment?
 - Is there a community organisation willing to commit to plan and implement F.I.C.E., and take a lead in making things happen with the feedback information that will emerge?
 - Is there a community member willing to fulfil the Coordinator role?
 - Is there a diverse range of individuals who would be prepared to be part of the Visiting Volunteer Team?

Discussion around the above questions is the first step in the process of F.I.C.E..

2.1.2 Linking with an Exchange Community

Locating and signing a Memorandum of Agreement with another community to undertake F.I.C.E. is step two in the process. In identifying the exchange community, similarities in terms of the following profiles are important -

- Population size and demographics
- Proximity e.g. distance to regional centre, coastal, remoteness etc.
- Economy – major industry sectors or employers.
- Common community and economic issues and priorities – e.g. rural decline, growing tourism sector, dependence on a single industry, main street revitalisation, council amalgamation etc.
- Unique physical features e.g. location on a major river etc.

The issue of proximity to the exchange community needs to be considered. Ideally, it should be within reasonable driving time (2 – 3 hours), but far enough away so visiting

team members are not familiar with the community. Interstate exchanges have some merit.

There are regional development organisations e.g. Area Consultative Committees, Economic Development Officer networks etc that could assist in locating possible exchange communities. Upon identifying possible exchange community, contact needs to be made through the local Council and / or local development organisation to ascertain their interest and capacity to implement the recommendation of the F.I.C.E. Project within the same time frame.

Once agreement has been reached with the matched community, it is suggested that a simple Memorandum of Agreement be signed between the communities that includes –

- expectations;
- timing framework for completion of community visits and reporting back activities;
- boundaries of geographic area to be visited; and
- format for the visits – one full day or afternoon – evening – morning, weekend or weekday etc.

A '*Sample Memorandum of Agreement*' is provided as Appendix 4.1 of this Guide.

2.1.3 Organisation and Key Players

Implementing F.I.C.E. requires identification of several key players, namely –

- *Sponsoring Organisation* – a community organisation (e.g. council, local development body, service club etc) needs to take overall responsibility for the exercise and undertake the following organisational tasks –
 - assessment of community readiness to participate;
 - partnering arrangement with an exchange community including signing of MOU;
 - identification of budget to cover program costs; and
 - appointment of a Coordinator (see below).
- *Coordinator* – That is you! Working with the sponsoring organisation, you will be responsible for –
 - planning the visit e.g. timeframe, format etc;
 - securing broader community support for the exercise;
 - organising the practicalities of the trip to the exchange community including identification of vehicle and necessary equipment;
 - recruiting and briefing Volunteer Visiting Team Members (see below) on visit details, role and use of Survey Questionnaire;
 - facilitating the preparation of a written report and PowerPoint slide show summarising key observations from the visit, for the exchange community;
 - presenting the report and PowerPoint slide show during a public meeting in the partner community;
 - organising a report back meeting to hear the exchange community's report and see their PowerPoint presentation;
 - coordinating media;
 - organising an Action Plan Meeting; and
 - instigating appreciation and celebration actions.
- *Volunteer Visiting Team* – As mentioned, each community needs to recruit a team of 4 – 5 members (including yourself as Coordinator). Diversity of age,

gender, occupation and backgrounds are important characteristics in selection. It is also important that Team Members are not too familiar with the exchange community to ensure a true 'first impression'.

Visiting Team Members commit to participation in –

- a briefing session on the exercise and their specific responsibilities;
- a one day visit to the exchange community where they complete a Survey Questionnaire and play out a designated role (e.g. tourist, retiree, potential business operator etc); and
- attend a debrief session following the visit and assist with preparation of report for exchange community.

One team member should assess the exchange community's website prior to the visit, and at least one team member should accompany yourself as Coordinator to the exchange community to present their report and slide presentation.

When recruiting Volunteer Visiting Team Members, it is vital that you as Coordinator clearly communicate –

- time;
- member expectations;
- the potential learning opportunities; and
- any costs they may incur.

As part of the recruitment of Volunteer Visiting Team Members, the Coordinator should provide members with the *Volunteer Visiting Team Member Information Sheet* (see Appendix 4.2). As part of the briefing of Team Members, a separate *Volunteer Visiting Team Members Resource Kit* is provided.

- *Time and Format* – Exchange communities need to agree on the best time period for visits. Exchange communities also need to decide whether they prefer weekday or weekend visits. Ideally, visits should occur within a month of each other, feedback reports prepared within a month of the visit and report back meetings should take place within the three to six week period following the visit. It is critical to ensure information is fresh in everyone's mind.

Finally, the format of visits needs determining. There are two options, both with advantages and disadvantages –

- One day approach – this occurs within a one day period allowing visiting teams to return home on the same day. It saves on accommodation costs, but does not allow for assessment of night life activities.
- Two half days and evening – this requires greater volunteer commitment and cost, but does provide an opportunity to access the exchange community's night life, dining and accommodation options. It also allows more time for the Team Members to collectively and individually review their observations.

- *Equipment Requirements* – as Coordinator you will need to locate –
 - vehicle (ideal if Team can travel together in one vehicle to maximise discussion);
 - digital camera's for any Team Member who does not have one; and
 - clipboards for use for writing in the car.

2.2 Exchange Community Visits

Participating communities need to agree on the format / agenda for the exchange visits. Below are sample illustrations of two format options.

2.2.1 Agenda for Visits

Sample Agenda One: Format for One Day

Time:	Activities:
7.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depart from home community • Review Survey Questionnaire • Complete Section(a) 'Impressions Prior to your Visit' of Survey Questionnaire
10.45am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at exchange community • Complete Section(b) '<i>The First Five Minutes – Initial Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire • Complete Section(c) '<i>Drive About Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire
11.45am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spilt up individually to undertake Section(d) '<i>A Walking Tour' of CBD / Main Street Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire • Engage in role plays and complete Section(e) '<i>Impressions through Role-Playing Exercise</i>' of Survey Questionnaire
12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy lunch in a variety of local food outlets
1.15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue role play exercise and complete Sections (d) and (e) of Survey Questionnaire
2.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy a coffee in a local café or relax in a park • Complete Section(f) '<i>Sensory Impressions</i>', Section(g) '<i>Information Source Impressions</i>' and Section(h) '<i>Overall Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire
4.00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour community for final photographs
4.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel home • Review Survey Questionnaire • Team Review
7.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive home

Sample Agenda Two: Format for Two Half Days and an Evening

Time:	Activities:
12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depart from home community • Review Survey Questionnaire • Complete Section(a) 'Impressions Prior to your Visit' of Survey Questionnaire

3.15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at exchange community • Complete Section(b) '<i>The First Five Minutes – Initial Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire • Complete Section(c) '<i>Drive About Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire
4.15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spilt up individually to begin Section(d) '<i>A Walking Tour of CBD / Main Street Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire • Enjoy a coffee at a local cafe • Engage in role plays and begin Section(e) '<i>Impressions through Role-Playing Exercise</i>' of Survey Questionnaire
6.00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book into local accommodation • Review questionnaire
7.00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy dinner at local food outlet • Undertake group review
8.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy refreshments in different locations • Explore night time activities • Interact with locals
Overnight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience local accommodation – spread team through a variety of options
8.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast in local food outlet
9.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Section(f) '<i>Sensory Impressions</i>', Section(g) '<i>Information Source Impressions</i>' and Section(h) '<i>Overall Impressions</i>' of Survey Questionnaire
11.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour community for final photographs
11.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel home • Review Survey Questionnaire • Team Review
2.15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive home

2.2.2 Travel to Exchange Community

Travelling in one vehicle enables shared time to be used to –

- Review the Survey Questionnaire individually and as a team (Coordinator should provide each Team Member with a clipboard to use).
- Discuss the strategy for collecting information for the Survey Questionnaire.
- Discuss individual roles that each Team Member will play out.
- Reinforce the importance of –
 - being discrete in behaviour and questions;
 - identifying both positive and negative features of the community; and
 - not being limited by the Survey Questionnaire.

2.2.3 Visit Activities

The above section *2.2.1 Agenda for Visits* summarises the typical format for visit days.

The prime role of the Volunteer Visiting Team Member is to complete the Survey Questionnaire (see Appendix 4.3) which has eight sections –

- a) Impressions Prior to your Visit
- b) The First Five Minutes – Initial Impressions
- c) 'Drive About' Impressions
- d) 'A Walking Tour' of CBD / Main Street Impressions
- e) Impressions through Role-Playing
- f) Sensory Impressions
- g) Information Source Impressions
- h) Overall Impressions.

Initially, the Team Members will complete the first three sections of the Survey Questionnaire whilst within the Team vehicle, but Sections (d) to (h) need to be completed individually whilst playing out the roles, wandering around the community.

Each Team Member is equipped with *Volunteer Visiting Team Member Resource Kit* which contains hints for effective observation, a copy of the Survey Questionnaire, blank note space and a Photo Log Form.

Each Team Member also adopts a role during the visit. The Survey Questionnaire provides five roles with appropriate issues to rate and comment on, namely –

- tourist / visitor;
- retiree contemplating retirement in the community;
- potential business operator;
- potential resident with a young family contemplating settling in the community; and
- single young adult exploring employment in the community.

As Coordinator you, in addition to completing all the tasks of a Visiting Team Member, are also responsible for coordinating key events in the visit program including providing location and timing for whenever the Team needs to reassemble.

For liaison purposes, it is ideal if all Team Members carry a mobile phone.

2.2.4 Travel to Home

This travel time provides an opportunity for –

- Visiting Team Members to expand on their comments in the Survey Questionnaire;
- Visiting Team Members to evaluate the day's visit and identify key findings;
- Visiting Team Members to discuss plans for preparing and presenting the Feedback Report to the exchange community; and
- the collection of the written Survey Questionnaires. It is important they are completed within the day when first impressions and recollections are most accurate.

2.3 Post Visit Activities

There are five key activities that need to be undertaken following the visit to an exchange community, namely –

- preparation of Feedback Report for the exchange community;
- preparation of a PowerPoint presentation for exchange community;
- hosting of a Community Feedback Meeting where the exchange community's Volunteer Visiting Team share their presentation;
- convening of an Action Planning Meeting and development of plans and recommendations; and
- communicating and sharing results.

2.3.1 Preparation of Feedback Report for the Exchange Community

Within a week of returning from the visit to the exchange community, Visiting Team Members need to gather and provide input to the Coordinator in terms of the content of the Feedback Report. In preparation for this meeting, it is important that you as Coordinator have summarised major themes from each individual Team Members completed Survey Questionnaire. Following this Team feedback session, you need to prepare a Report document which is then circulated to Visiting Team Members for review, prior to it being sent to the Coordinator of the exchange community.

The Feedback Report needs to include –

- a preamble that provides a profile of Visiting Team's roles / perspectives, date of visit and amount of time spent in town;
- summary of visit observations (with photographs) highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and specific recommendations; and
- contact details.

A report utilising bold headings with bullet points is very acceptable, as long as the key report messages are clear.

2.3.2 Preparation and Delivery of a PowerPoint Presentation for the Exchange Community

A commitment by both communities to F.I.C.E. participation is the willingness to return to the exchange community and present the Visiting Team's opinions and ideas at a community event. The preparation and delivery of this presentation needs to be undertaken by yourself as Coordinator and one or two other Team Members. Use Team Members who are comfortable at addressing meetings and are able to provide constructive feedback.

The presentation needs to be a visual summary of the Report incorporating key opinions and suggestions. It is important that it includes positive images / comments that will encourage the exchange community to celebrate and enhance their assets and achievements, as well as areas and issues of concern that need to be addressed.

A copy of the presentation should be presented on disk for the exchange community so they can utilise photos as part of their Final Community Report relating to future local action initiatives.

2.3.3 Hosting of a Community Feedback Report Meeting where the Visiting Team Share their Presentation with the Exchange Community

This Feedback Report Meeting is an opportunity for your community to hear from the Visiting Team. This meeting needs to be held within three to six weeks of their visit to your community.

This meeting is an extremely important part of F.I.C.E., and requires careful and considered planning. A decision needs to be made whether to target just key community and economic development leaders or create an open community meeting.

It is an opportunity to both celebrate the community's assets and achievements and to identify areas and issues requiring attention. Above all, it provides an opportunity to identify practical future actions whilst seeking to inspire community members to become involved.

Possible Agenda:

1. Welcome and introduction to F.I.C.E.
2. Introduction of sponsor organisation(s), Coordinator and Visiting Team Members
3. Introduction of, and presentation by visiting community Team Members
4. Question / discussion time
5. Identification and prioritisation of possible follow up actions
6. Supper and networking.

2.3.4 Convening of an Action Planning Meeting and Development of Plans and Recommendations

This should be held within one to two weeks of the Community Feedback Report Meeting. It is important that the sponsoring organisation convene a meeting of key community stakeholders to discuss the key issues that have emerged and identify what actions need to be taken and by whom.

Stakeholder participation should include representations of the sponsoring organisation, council, business associations, community development associations, service clubs and F.I.C.E. Visiting Team Members.

During this Action Planning Meeting, the following types of questions need to be considered as a means of developing priorities for an action plan –

- What are the critical issues / areas that need attention?
- What actions could be realistically carried out in the short term (within 12 months) with available resources?
- What actions require proactive planning to implement in the medium to long term (one to three years)?
- What actions would give the biggest '*bang for the buck*'?
- What actions would complement or value add to existing community projects?
- What actions could be delegated to other community groups?
- What actions build on the strengths and resources we currently have?

Appendix 4.4 is a useful set of action planning resources provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in Canada. These tools are useful in helping establish priorities and develop action plans and recommendations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a small group needs to take responsibility for compiling a simple action plan that can be circulated for final feedback, and then distributed to the broader community.

2.3.5 Communicating and Sharing Results

It is of strategic important to share the results of F.I.C.E. with your community. Increasing public awareness of the exercise together with the plans and recommendations ensures both the likelihood of greater community volunteer support and more focussed action implementation.

You will need to be creative in finding ways to share the results with the broader community as not everyone –

- reads the local newspapers;
- has access to the internet;
- listens to the community radio station; and / or
- watches the regional news television channel.

A combination of all these approaches needs to be utilised. In addition to working with the media, consider using community group newsletters, community notice boards, websites, flyers and posters. Approach local organisations regarding a presentation – chamber, service clubs, council, churches etc . . . your message needs to reach people where they gather.

Appropriate utilisation of the media is critically important. Appendix 4.5 provides a useful handout – *Working with the Media* and Appendix 4.6 provides a sample media release to promote the community Feedback Report Meeting.

It is vital before any media releases are given out with reference to the exchange community; that a copy is sent to their Coordinator for prior approval.

3. Program Dynamics

3.1 Community Commitment

F.I.C.E. is not for every community. Prior to partnering with an exchange community, it is vital that your community –

- assesses its suitability through discussion of the questions posed above in the planning and preparation stage (Section 2.1.1);
- confirms its usefulness in terms of current community and economic development planning processes;
- identifies the availability of necessary resources including a Coordinator, Volunteer Visiting Team Members and costs associated with travel and conveying of meetings;
- accepts all terms of the Memorandum of Agreement with the exchange community; and
- commits to all aspects of the F.I.C.E. exercise, including action planning and implementation following visitation.

3.2 Constructive Feedback

Providing constructive feedback is vital to the success of F.I.C.E.. Constructive feedback is not the same as advice. It is descriptive rather than evaluative. The challenge is to provide information that will help the exchange community improve, while minimising critical comments that elicit a defensive response. At the same time, most communities will appreciate frank, honest comments rather than 'feel good' observations.

Feedback needs to be specific rather than general, with a focus on issues and actions that are both practical and purposeful. A synergistic balance is valuable and could be a powerful catalyst for positive change.

Always provide positive feedback first, before highlighting areas that need attention. Always use terms like *'from our perspective, we observed that...'* as opposed to *'you don't have, you should have...'*

Receiving constructive feedback is a vital part of F.I.C.E.. It is important that participating communities are open to feedback, and avoid trying to defend or deny. No community can grow unless it is open, to *'How can we do things better?'*

3.3 Linking Information to Action

F.I.C.E. is an exercise that seeks to make things happen. Information is important, action is infinitely more important. No community should undertake F.I.C.E. unless committed to following through with planning and action. What happens from the Feedback Report Meeting is the most important element of F.I.C.E..

3.4 Appreciation and Celebration

One of your important roles as Coordinator is to find opportunities to publicly thank all who have contributed to enabling F.I.C.E. to happen, in particular the Volunteer Visiting Team Members. In addition, remembering to send thankyou notes to this Team and the Visiting Team of the exchange community is important.

4. Appendices

Appendix 4.1

Sample of a Memorandum of Agreement Document

First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) *Memorandum of Agreement*

_____ and _____ have partnered to conduct a First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.).

Purpose

The purpose of the First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) is to help _____ and _____ learn about their strengths and shortcomings through the eyes of first-time visitors. F.I.C.E. is a structured community assessment that enables communities to learn about the first impression they convey to outsiders. It offers a fresh perspective on the appearance, services, infrastructure of each community. Volunteer teams from _____ and _____ will undertake unannounced one-day visits, record their observations, and give constructive feedback to the exchange community. The knowledge gained through the F.I.C.E. is intended to serve as a basis for community and economic development action.

Expectations

_____ and _____ will each:

- identify a Coordinator to plan and implement F.I.C.E.;
- recruit volunteers for the Visiting Team from their community, and make arrangements for the Team to travel to visit and complete an assessment of the exchange community within the agreed upon timeframe;
- prepare a written Feedback Report and PowerPoint slide presentation on the Visiting Team's observations during the visit;
- present the Feedback Report and PowerPoint slide presentation at a public meeting in the exchange community within an agreed upon timeframe; and
- host a public meeting within an agreed upon timeframe, when the exchange community will present their report.

Roles and Responsibilities

_____ and _____ will each identify a Coordinator for their respective community.

The Coordinator, working with the team members of the sponsoring organisation will:

- coordinate the visit to the exchange community (timeframe, budget, etc);
- recruit volunteers for the visiting team, ensuring an appropriate mix of team members in terms of skills, profession, age , gender etc;
- organise the trip to the exchange community;
- collect completed team member questionnaires;
- facilitate the preparation of a written report for the exchange community;
- prepare a PowerPoint slide presentation featuring the highlights of the report and present Feedback Report and PowerPoint slide presentation at a public meeting in the exchange community; and
- host a report-back meeting to hear the exchange community's report.

Visiting Team Members will:

- attend training / orientation meeting(s) in preparation for the visit;
- review the Survey Questionnaire prior to the visit;
- complete a Survey Questionnaire during the visit;
- participate in the preparation of a written report for the exchange community; and
- if selected, present the team's findings to the exchange community at an agreed upon time.

Timing and Format

The exchange visits will occur within the month of _____ 20__.

Report back meetings will take place within the month of _____ 20__.

Exchange visits will follow a one-day format and be conducted during a weekday / weekend.

Program Costs

Any costs incurred in F.I.C.E. (travel, meals, report preparation, meetings) will be covered by each community.

Final Reporting

Once the exchange visits have been completed, the Visiting Team will prepare a written report for the community they visited.

The written report will be completed within four weeks of completion of the community visits.

Presentation

The _____ and _____ F.I.C.E. Coordinators and/or their designates will prepare and make a slide presentation covering the highlights of the F.I.C.E. assessment. This presentation will take place in a public forum in the exchange community. Each F.I.C.E. Coordinator will be responsible for planning and hosting the presentation by the exchange community representatives. Every effort will be made to ensure that the presentation is well-attended, including participation by key community leaders if possible.

Media

_____ and _____ will jointly develop press release(s) for the project. A copy of the written report will be provided to the exchange community Coordinator prior to any communication about the report contents within the media.

Agreed to this _____ day of _____ 20__.

FOR (name of community or organisation) _____

(name)
(position, organisation)

FOR (name of community or organisation) _____

(name)
(position, organisation)

Appendix 4.2

Sample Volunteer Visiting Team Member Information Sheet

Greetings.

You have volunteered to be a member of our community's Visiting Team in a First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) Exercise. Thankyou for your commitment to our community. Along with other Visiting Team Members, you will make a short incognito visit to our exchange community _____ and record your first impressions. You are not expected to offer expert advice – you are simply expected to give an outsider's honest viewpoint on various aspects of the exchange community.

Activities During the Visit

Visiting Team Members will travel together to the exchange community on _____. We will be leaving at _____, and expect to return by _____. While in _____ we will tour the community, observe, take photo's, interact with people and businesses and complete a Survey Questionnaire.

A group "windshield survey" will begin the tour. Then, we will take an in depth look at the CBD / main street area. Following this, each member of the team will undertake a role-play during the visit. You will be asked to play one of the following roles - someone who is a new resident, retiree, a person considering moving to the area with a young family, young single adult or a person looking to open a business. The role you have will determine some of the places you visit and questions you ask. Finally, there will be time to make some overall, wrap up comments.

You will need to be **discreet** as you record observations, seek out information about the community you visit and take photographs. The best results are obtained when local residents do not realise they are being assessed.

By the time you return to our community you should have filled in all sections of the Survey questions for the areas you addressed during the assessment. As Coordinator will facilitate a team discussion to enable members to share their observations and come to an agreement on the key messages to be included in the written report and slide presentation. You may be asked to attend the presentation of your team's report to the exchange community. This will involve travelling back to the community a few weeks after our visit and assisting us to present our team's observations at a public gathering.

Time Commitment

There is some preparation prior to the visit as well as follow up reporting tasks. Prior to the visit it is important that you familiarise yourself with the kit and

survey questions and the information provided on the exchange community given to you by myself.

The visit will involve a full day. Following our visit we plan to meet on _____ from _____ to _____ to compile our Team Report.

In addition, as mentioned, one or two members of the Team with skills and experience in making presentations will be needed to help present the results of the team's work to the exchange community within 3-6 weeks of the visit. Providing constructive criticism and praise always requires some thoughtful diplomacy. It is a fine balancing act! Careful attention to the words and phrases contained in the report is necessary. Preparing for this presentation and returning to the exchange community to present findings, could add another ½ day to the time commitment framework.

Depending on your roles in the team your commitment as a volunteer will total from one to two days.

A Learning Opportunity

The selected Team has a challenging task at hand. Here are a few tips from Volunteer Visiting Team Members from other communities who have undertaken the F.I.C.E. Exercise –

- *You will get the best information if residents do not know you are there to assess the community – be as incognito as possible.*
- *Focus on the positive as well as the negative – everyone likes to hear when they are doing something right!*
- *Do not feel limited by the Survey Questionnaire – record any additional information about community strengths and weaknesses.*
- *Strike up as many conversations with local residents as possible.*
- *F.I.C.E. is all about initial impressions – it is not about right and wrong. Naturally, impressions may vary among Team Member's and that is fine.*
- *Have fun and enjoy the day!*

Most importantly, the exchange element of the First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) is based on the notion that all communities can learn from their peers. The F.I.C.E. visit will definitely give you insights and development ideas about our community.

Thanks again for your commitment to our community.

Yours sincerely,

(Coordinator)

Appendix 4.3

First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.) Survey Questionnaire

The Survey Questionnaire involves the completion of eight sections, namely –

- a) Impressions Prior to your Visit
- b) The First Five Minutes Initial Impressions
- c) 'Drive About' Impressions
- d) 'A Walking Tour' of CBD / Main Street Impressions
- e) Impressions through Role-Playing
- f) Sensory Impressions
- g) Information Source Impressions
- h) Overall Impressions

Remember to use this Survey Questionnaire document as a guide.

Feel free to add comments and to modify questions so as to better suit the community you are visiting.

Where you are asked to rate something, use the following as a guide:

- 1:** Needs urgent attention / action
- 2 – 4:** Needs improvement
- 5:** Satisfactory
- 6 – 9:** Good / Very good
- 10:** Excellent! You should be telling others about this

In the spaces provided, give specific (rather than general) comments on both the positive aspects of the community, and areas where you feel changes / improvements could be made.

a). IMPRESSIONS PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT

What is your impression of the community before your upcoming visit? What are you expecting to see? Please comment on what you know about this community.

For Visiting Team Coordinator:

How easy was it to get information by mail and telephone about the community you are visiting? Are you satisfied with the quality of information received? Did the information arrive in a timely manner?

Rate and comment on the community's online materials and information (only answer if you were assigned the task of reviewing the community's website).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

b). THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES - INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Upon arrival at the exchange community, drive through the community for five minutes without speaking to other team members. Park the vehicle and then record your first impressions of the community:

c). 'DRIVE ABOUT' IMPRESSIONS

As a group, spend up to one hour driving around the community and record impressions.

i). Community Entrances – Road / Highway

Approach the community from the major entrances. Rate and comment on each entrance in terms of signage, quality and quantity of community advertising, billboards, community statements, logos, beautification efforts and other pointers that you think might indicate exceptional community pride and involvement.

Entrance #1: _____
(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		

Comment:

Entrance #2: _____
(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		

Comment:

Entrance #3: _____
(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		

Comment:

Entrance #4: _____
(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

ii). Community Entrances – Air Terminal, Railway Station and Bus Terminal (where applicable)

Air Terminal:

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Railway Station:

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Bus Station / Bus arrival point:

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

iii). Housing and Residential Areas

Drive through as many suburbs as possible.

How would you rate the overall quality of housing in the community?

Types of housing -

Existing / older Homes:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Poor Satisfactory Excellent

Senior Citizen Housing:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Poor Satisfactory Excellent

New Construction:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Poor Satisfactory Excellent

Apartments / Rental Housing:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Poor Satisfactory Excellent

Comment:

Is there an adequate mix of housing to suit a variety of income levels?

Are there adequate housing rental options available in the community?

What are the most appealing features of the housing in this community? Why?

What are the least appealing features of housing in this community? Why?

Comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure (e.g. roads, sidewalks etc).

Comment on residential gardens, landscaping and sense of pride.

iv). Recreational Facilities

Comment on the community's range and condition of its parks, gardens, public spaces and playgrounds.

Did any recreational facility (private or public) in this community surprise you?

What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be lacking?

Rate the **overall suitability** of the recreational facilities for each of the following groups –

Senior Citizens:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor				Satisfactory					Excellent
Suitability				Suitability					Suitability

Families:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor				Satisfactory					Excellent
Suitability				Suitability					Suitability

Singles, young adults:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor				Satisfactory					Excellent
Suitability				Suitability					Suitability

Teenagers:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor				Satisfactory					Excellent
Suitability				Suitability					Suitability

Children (13 and under):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor				Satisfactory					Excellent
Suitability				Suitability					Suitability

Comment:

Rate and comment on the appearance and state of –
Swimming Pool:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs				Satisfactory					Excellent
Urgent									
Attention									

Comment:

Golf Course:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Community Sports Complex:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Youth / Community Centre(s):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

v). Education Services

Rate and comment on the appearance of schools.

Pre-School / Daycare:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Primary:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Secondary:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Post Secondary Educational Services:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Question to ask later –

What do residents (young and old) think about the quality, reputation and accessibility of their local schools?

Overall, how would you rate the quality and availability of education facilities for a community of this size?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

vi). Health Care Services

Rate and comment on the availability / accessibility and apparent quality of healthcare facilities and services.

Hospitals:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs										
Urgent					Satisfactory					
Attention										Excellent

Comment:

Doctors and Dentist of offices and clinics:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs										
Urgent					Satisfactory					
Attention										Excellent

Comment:

Nursing home facilities:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs										
Urgent					Satisfactory					
Attention										Excellent

Comment:

Other complementary/integrative health services (e.g. chiropractor, physiotherapist, naturopath, masseur):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs										
Urgent					Satisfactory					
Attention										Excellent

Comment:

Across the spectrum, how would you rate the adequacy of health care services / facilities for a community of this size?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

vii). Social Services

What social services (e.g. senior's centre, counselling etc) are available /accessible in the community?

What are the types of not-for-profit organisations and clubs that operate within the community?

Are there any obvious social services lacking in the community?

viii). Emergency Services

Question to ask later –

Do residents feel fire, ambulance and policing services are adequate?

ix). Public Toilets

Comment on the appeal of public toilet facilities in terms of quality, availability and accessibility.

x). Industrial Area(s) Appearance

Comment on the following aspects.

Location, accessibility and layout:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent									
	Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Signage and directions:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent									
	Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Beautification:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent									
	Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Degree of activity, diversity of businesses:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent									
	Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Did any businesses surprise you?

Would this community be an attractive location for business / industry relocation? Do they provide attractive incentives? Why or why not?

xi). Planning

Do you see any conflicting land uses in the community (e.g. a residential subdivision next to a pulp mill)?

Is all land usage appropriate (commercial, residential, green space etc)? Specify where you feel land usage is not appropriate.

xii). Tourism

List in order of priority the five most appealing tourist attractions of the community.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Rate and comment on the visitor / tourist appeal of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

d). 'A WALKING TOUR' – IMPRESSIONS OF CBD / MAIN STREET

The CBD / main street of any community is often an indicator of pride and confidence of a community. This part of the Survey Questionnaire focuses on this vital part of the community. Wander individually around the CBD / main street area, visiting as many businesses as possible.

What is your overall aesthetic / functional impression of the CBD / main street part of the community?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

What is your impression of the overall economic health of the local community?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping options in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the customer service you received in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the window displays and merchandising in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the people factor of the community e.g. friendliness, helpfulness, knowledge of local facilities, services and other businesses, smiles, welcoming, customer service etc:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Comment on the availability of facilities like:

1. ATM's –

2. Post boxes –

3. Water fountains –

4. Benches / seating –

5. Garbage bins –

6. Bus Shelters

Rate and comment on the number, maintenance and appearance of any historic buildings and features in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Comment on the use of public art in the CBD / main street part of the community:

Comment on accessibility of facilities and services for people with disabilities in the CBD / main street part of the community:

Did you experience any traffic or pedestrian congestion anywhere? If yes, please specify location.

Rate and comment on the signage in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the quality and availability of parking in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Comment on the mix of facilities and services in the CBD / main street part of the community (housing, professional services, retail, recreational, accommodation & food, industry, parks etc):

What shops or services were missing that you expected to find?

What retail shops or services did you find that were unusual or unexpected for a town of this size?

What shop(s) / service(s) in this community would you travel a distance of more than 40 kilometres to patronise?

Rate and comment on the quality of food outlets in the CBD / main street part of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Are there any obvious pressures on the CBD / main street? (e.g. development of big box retail developments in other parts of the community, lack of retail space, number of empty shops etc)

e). **IMPRESSIONS THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING EXERCISE**

*This section involves each Visiting Team Member assuming **one** of the following roles and recording impressions while 'in character'.*

i). Tourist Role

Pretending to be a tourist, interact with locals and tourist operators in the search for an understanding of local attitudes towards tourism and the community's appeal as a tourist / visitor destination.

Rate and comment on the community's appeal as a tourist / visitor destination in terms of the following –

Knowledge and attitude of locals towards tourism:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Diversity/uniqueness of tourist attractions:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Availability and quality of tourist information:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Range of festivals and special events:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent					Satisfactory				Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Availability and selection of accommodation:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent					Satisfactory				Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Availability and selection of eating venues:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent					Satisfactory				Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

After hours / evening visitor appeal of the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent					Satisfactory				Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Does the community have a strong tourism sector?

Did you see any opportunities for new tourism product development?

Do you consider any existing assets / facilities / attractions to be underdeveloped in terms of tourism?

Would you recommend the community as a tourist destination? Why or why not?

ii). Potential Resident Role

Assuming the role of a potential resident with a young family, seek an understanding about the appeal of the community as a new family location.

Rate and comment on how the following issues would influence your decision to relocate –

Housing availability / affordability (including rentals):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Recreational opportunities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Schooling:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Community services:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Health facilities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Community attitudes, engagement and welcome:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

Would you recommend the community as a place that has appeal for a young family? Why or why not?

iii). Retiree Role

Assuming the role of a retiree, seek an understanding of the suitability of the community as a retirement destination.

Rate and comment on issues that would influence your decision to retire in the community –

Appropriate aged care housing:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Health services:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Community recreation facilities and services for the aged:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Community welcome, engagement and attitudes:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
Attention									

Comment:

Disability facilities, accessibility and mobility:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					
Attention									Excellent

Comment:

Would you recommend the community as a retirement destination? Why or why not?

iv). Potential Business Operator Role

Assuming the role of a person seeking to establish a new business in town, seek an understanding of issues related to new business establishment through discussion with other operators, customers and municipal staff.

Rate and comment on how the following issues would influence your decision to establish a new business in the community –

Size of local market and degree of local customer loyalty:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					
Attention									Excellent

Comment:

Practical support from local Council:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent				Satisfactory					
Attention									Excellent

Comment:

Business networking and vitality of local Chamber:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

Business support services:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

Availability of staff:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

Accessibility / availability of alternative markets outside the community:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

Are there any specific business establishment issues that need highlighting?

Would you consider locating your business here? Why or why not?

v). Young Single Adult Role

Pretend to be a young single adult (25 – 35 age group) who is contemplating relocation in terms of employment options to the community.

Rate and comment on issues related to the appeal of the community for this age demographic –

Appropriate / affordable housing:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Young adult night life:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Recreational and social facilities and activities:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs									
	Urgent				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Attention									

Comment:

Presence of other young adults:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory					Excellent

Comment:

What was the general perceived attitude of this age group (25 – 35 years) towards their community?

Would you consider this community as a suitable location for a young single adult? Why or why not?

f). SENSORY IMPRESSIONS

Describe the community using your senses.

i). Taste

Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant or business that you will remember?

ii). Smell

Is there a scent that characterises the community?

iii). Sight

Was there any colourful or striking feature in the community that made an impression on you?

iv). Sound

What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community.

g). INFORMATION SOURCE IMPRESSIONS

Were residents knowledgeable about their community? Explain your answer.

Was information on the community easily accessible?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Urgent									
	Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the community's Tourist Information Centre / services:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Urgent									
	Attention									

Comment:

Rate and comment on the availability and quality of the following information:
Community brochure / guides / maps:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Needs				Satisfactory					Excellent
	Urgent									
	Attention									

Comment:

Business Directory:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

Rate and comment on the appeal and usefulness of community information boards:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs									
Urgent									
Attention					Satisfactory				Excellent

Comment:

h). OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Towards the end of the visit, take time in a coffee shop or on a park bench to reflect on the day and record your overall impressions.

Describe your overall 'gut feeling' about the community.

Was your perception of the community prior to the visit accurate? In what ways did the community surprise you?

Did the information you read on the community prior to the visit accurately reflect what you observed / experienced today? Why or why not?

What do you consider the most outstanding feature of this community? (i.e. a feature/service that makes it distinctive)

What do consider the key area that the community needs to give attention to?

List five positive things you learnt about this community:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What are three potential opportunities available to this community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the five biggest challenges facing this community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Did residents identify any particular issues to be of major concern?

What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)? What aspect had the greatest impact on you?

Did you sense strong community pride amongst residents? Explain your answer.

What have you learned today that has changed your impression of your **own community**?

Has today given you fresh ideas about what could happen **in your community**?
If yes, what?

Describe one or two ideas that you feel could be borrowed from this community for use in **your community**:

Are there any final comments you would like to record?

End of Survey
Many, many thanks for your efforts.

Appendix 4.4

Action Planning Resources

The following tools can be used to assist with the establishment of priorities and the development of action plans.

A: Nominal Group Technique for Establishing Priorities

What is it?

- a rank ordering of ideas/actions;
- a statistically derived decision based upon individual ratings.

The technique is accomplished by using:

- a numerical rating system, e.g., assigning items a priority where the most important item receives a value of 5 (if there are five items) and the least important receives a value of 1; or
- a visual rating system, e.g., assigning items a priority through the use of sticky dots e.g., participants are provided with a specified number of dots and are asked to place them on the items that are of the greatest priority; one or more dots can be assigned to an individual item.

When do you use it?

- when there are many options to choose from;
- when the group wants to determine the importance of all items; and
- to help large groups make a decision.

How do you use it?

- list all the items on a flipchart;
- participants individually assign a priority ranking to the identified items;
- the individual rankings are recorded on the flipchart;
- the rankings are totaled for each of the items/actions;
- the item that receives the greatest number of "votes" is the top priority; the item that receives
- the least number of votes is the lowest priority;
- action items are re-ordered according to the priority level that it received.

B: “Must Do, Should Do, Could Do” Priority Setting Worksheet

A METHOD FOR SETTING PRIORITIES

(A) “MUST DO”	(B) “SHOULD DO”	(C) “COULD DO”
Record action items that the working group feels must be implemented.	Record action items that the working group feels should be implemented.	Record action items that the working group feels could be implemented.

C: Pair Share for Establishing Priorities

What is it?

- a technique that allows individuals to think about their own ideas/opinions before sharing them with the larger working group;
- a technique that helps individuals to focus and express their concerns;
- allows for more in-depth discussions than would happen in a large group.

How do you use it?

- write the question on the flipchart;
- provide participants with time to formulate their ideas/response;
- have participants divide into partners and share their responses;
- the partners may use their individual responses to create a new one;
- each pairing shares their report with the larger group;
- a discussion follows to reach consensus on actions and the priority assignment.

D. Consensus

What is it?

- a method for making decisions that all group members can live with and support;
- it is usually more successful in a small group (8 or less);

- a decision-making technique that allows for persuasion rather than coercion.

How do you use it?

- state the reason/focus for the discussion, e.g., how would you rank these five items in terms of priority?
- ask for a recommendation and the associated rationale, i.e., have someone provide a priority ranking for the actions and explain why they have ranked the items in that order;
- have the group discuss the recommendation; everyone's opinion, knowledge and skills should be heard;
- ask for consensus, e.g., should we accept this recommendation?
- if everyone is not convinced, then ask for another recommendation and repeat the process until a decision is reached.

Action Planning Worksheet

An Action Planning Worksheet needs to be completed for each Priority Action that is identified.

Identification of the individual steps that are required to complete the priority action can be identified through a brainstorming exercise.

Brainstorming

What is it?

- a method of quickly generating a lot of ideas, free of criticism and judgment.

How do you use it?

- record the question on a flipchart; ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of what is being asked;
- challenge participants to be creative and think in new ways while breaking away from "what we've always done";
- use your imagination and build on ideas provided by others;
- allow a few minutes of "thinking" time;
- record ideas as given on a flipchart so that they can be easily seen by all; there are no bad ideas;
- discussion and evaluation does not occur during the initial brainstorming exercise;
- provide clarification of idea as required;
- when ideas have stopped, provide some additional thinking time; the brainstorming exercise will take between 5 to 20 minutes depending on the complexity of the topic;
- discuss, provide clarification and build on each idea following the second brainstorm;

- combine ideas that are similar; and
- finally, evaluate the ideas and reach agreement on the best ideas/actions.

Action	By Whom	Deadline	Resources & Support		Potential Barrier(s)	Communications Plan	Evaluation
What needs to be done?	Who will take the lead?	By what date will the action be done?	Available	Needed	What individuals or organizations might resist? How?	What individuals and organizations should be informed re: this action?	What will successful implementation look like?

****This Resource Sheet was compiled by the Rural Development Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs***

Appendix 4.5

Working with the Media

The media (newspapers, TV, radio) is a very important means of informing the community about F.I.C.E. and its outcomes. Media coverage is a vital information, marketing and promotional opportunity which no community can afford to ignore. However, effective use of the media is a skill which needs to be developed.

General Principles

- Decide within the sponsor organisation who will deal with the media. Whether you use one person eg, Project Coordinator) or a group to deal with publicity, it is essential that reporters know who to contact for a clear, mandated comment or statement. Channel all communications with the media through one spokesperson and ensure all your members know who this is.
- Be careful not to raise local expectations beyond what you can deliver. This will quickly lose your credibility with the community and it will take a long time to get it back.
- Be proactive - seek the media out. Do not wait for the media to chase you. Make a list of local newspapers, radio and TV contacts, including local newsletters.
- Establish relationships. Get to know local reporters, correspondents and editors. Find out about their deadlines and the issues they are interested in. Be mindful of constraints on their time.
- Playing favourites with the local media is not smart practice. Alternate the times you give out stories and press releases so you do not favour one paper or radio station.
- Be open and reliable - give accurate information. Stick to the facts. If you are giving an opinion make sure you state it is your opinion. Provide honest answers to questions and do not be afraid to say that you do not know something. If you are phoned by a reporter to comment on something, feel free to ask for 10 minutes to collect your thoughts, but make sure you phone back.

- Invite media representatives to your meetings. Send them minutes (always with a prepared media statement summarising the key points you wish to convey), give them early notice of important events. Always provide an after hours phone number at the end of any press statement or after an interview and return calls promptly. Go out of your way to report progress.
- Be helpful - most media organisations are short of time and resources. Put particular effort into writing media press releases (see below). Journalists are usually too busy to spend a lot of time rewriting press statements. Attach photos.

Make sure it's news

The media look for news that is new, unusual and which in their opinion will interest their readers, listeners or viewers. Do not bombard them with endless press releases, you will soon develop a bad reputation.

As a general rule, the more local the media outlet (local newspapers, community radio) the greater their feeling of obligation and willingness to report events and issues of interest or benefit to the local community.

Make sure your news is fresh and allow time for reporters to meet their deadlines.

Arrange photographic or video opportunities or provide good quality photographs (most media prefer to take their own).

Ways of conveying news to the media

- Media press releases
- Phone calls/alerts
- Invitations
- Media conferences
- Radio phone-in shows
- Circulation of documents
- Letters to the Editor

Press Releases

A press release (media release or press statement) is one of the most efficient ways of informing the media or making an announcement. It saves your group and media outlets time, helps get the facts correct and enables your group to inform a range of media outlets at the same time. It is simply a statement that tells "the WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW, and WHY" concisely.

A press release must create a positive image in the critical eyes of the media. Poorly drafted press releases usually end up in the rubbish bin and reduce the credibility of your group.

To enhance the effectiveness of your press releases, note the following:

- Use a media release letterhead which reflects your sponsor's identity - keep the design uncluttered and avoid using small typeface.
- Make sure you grab the reader's attention in the headline and the first sentence.
- Place the most important facts at the top and then arrange your material in descending order of importance. Do not attempt to get everything into the first (lead) paragraph, which should consist of no more than 30 words.
- Ensure material is accurate. Check all facts especially spelling of people's names and titles.
- Keep it short, preferably a single page, two pages at the most. (Keep to 400 words or fewer).
- Ensure it is dated and contains a contact name and phone/fax numbers. Make sure the contact person and telephone number are obtainable when journalists are likely to call, many journalists work at night or early in the morning.
- Know the copy deadlines of your target media outlets.
- Make sure you issue your release on the best day for maximum coverage. Generally a release issued on a Monday or Tuesday will get better coverage than one released on a Friday.
- State the timing for release if not for immediate use, i.e., embargoed until date and/or time.
- Attach any visual material, photographs, logos, maps, diagrams

In terms of media release writing style, note the following:

- Use simple language and sentence construction. Avoid the use of jargon and clichés.
- Use positive words and phrases.
- Use short paragraphs - often one sentence is enough. Limit sentences to 25-30 words.

- Write names of people and organisations in full the first time they appear in the text. Add abbreviations in brackets afterwards [eg, First Impressions Community Exchange (F.I.C.E.)].
- Use quotes to make it more interesting.
- Write in the third person, eg, 'he said' or 'she said', not 'I said' or 'I was'.
- Do not use underlining - underlining is an editor's instruction to print those words in italics.
- Spell out numbers from one to nine, except for dates, times, prices, weights and measures, then use figures until they become unwieldy thousands of millions.
- Do not use the % sign, spell out "per cent" as two words.

Appendix 4.6

Sample Media Release for Community Feedback Report Meeting

(Name of community) Participates in "First Impressions Community Exchange"

Residents of (Name of community) will have a chance to see our community through the eyes of first-time visitors as part of the State Program sponsored by the Municipal Association of Victoria entitled "First Impressions Community Exchange" (F.I.C.E.) On (date), a group of community representatives from (name of exchange community) paid an unannounced, incognito visit to (name of community) to offer an outsider's perspective on our community. We reciprocated by sending a similar delegation to (name of exchange community) on (date).

The exchange visit helps communities to see themselves the way tourists, prospective businesses, relocating families, and non-local shoppers might see them. Their first impressions of a community have a strong influence on their decisions to relocate to or shop in the community. F.I.C.E. was a simple and inexpensive way to receive feedback to our community from a 'first time visitor'.

"After you've lived in one place for awhile, you sometimes take for granted the things that attract people to your community," says (Coordinator's name), of (organization). "Or you may be unaware of aspects of your community that may be unappealing in the eyes of outsiders. The exchange gives a community an objective assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and gives participants a chance to gather ideas from other communities dealing with similar development issues."

Results of the First Impressions Community Exchange will be presented at a public meeting scheduled for (date, time, location). All members of the community are invited.

If you have any questions about the exchange, contact (Coordinator) at (phone number).

END