



Greater Arnprior Senior's Council
Yearly Self-Evaluation and Progress Report
2016-2017
Survey Summary

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Executive Summary

This report highlights four overarching themes drawn from survey responses, both as checkbox answers and written comments. The four themes may be summarized as follows:

- **Membership** questions from the survey found that the GASC has a diversity of members that bring unique skills to the Council. There is an expressed interest in recruiting more senior members, and the possibility of implementing an attendance policy.
- Members find that **Meetings** are well-run and use the allotted time effectively. The frequency and location of meetings is considered to be appropriate and conducive to productive meetings. The in-depth discussion or examination of topics at meetings might be considered based on survey responses indicating the desire to more fully explore individual topics.
- There are many **Strengths and Wins** that were identified through checkbox responses and in written comments. These are important elements of a self-evaluation both to acknowledge the council strengths and work in a way that plays up these strengths in the future. The GASC boasts a diverse range of projects that offer members a variety of learning opportunities. Members are engaged, respectful of peers, and have a strong confidence in the Chair's ability to lead.
- Now that work has been completed on current **Goals**, there is a desire to review these goals to determine exactly what has been accomplished and what direction the GASC will take in this coming year. The most significant barrier to goal accomplishment is considered to be a lack of resources – particularly financial resources. Overall, there is a desire to continue work on the current goals as they are still viewed as appropriate. New strategies or wording may be added to the Workplan to reflect work that has been done, the next steps that can be taken, or the movement of a goal to a maintenance phase.

These four themes are meant to provide “jumping-off” points for discussion and consideration when producing a final self-evaluation document.

Survey Summary

Background

The Greater Arnprior Senior's Council (GASC) formed in June 2016 and has recently completed its first year of operation. As part of the self-evaluation and progress report referred to in under the "Reporting" section of the GASC Terms and Reference (2017), a survey was distributed to members in attendance at the June 26, 2017 regular GASC meeting. The survey consisted of a number of statements that members were asked to rate from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Statements ranged from topics related to the functional aspects of the GASC to practical topics about funding and goals. A comments section was also provided and well-used by members looking to provide additional feedback and ideas.

The survey was completed by 12 members of the GASC (being 3 citizen members, 4 town members, 4 health-care members, and one unmarked survey). The purpose of this identification was to determine if any general trends or issues were unique to certain groups or if concerns were generally consistent across all groups. Based on comparison of answers between the groups, it is evident that concerns, goals, and priorities are very similar among all member backgrounds.

A service-provider (any non-citizen member) specific section was also included in the survey to determine if stakeholders and service providers saw participation as mutually beneficial of value to their respective organization. It appears based on answers to this section that service-provider members feel that participation on the council is of value to their organization. This analysis is the only place where groups are considered separately. Because answers are generally consistent between groups, further analysis and the drawing of themes was completed by considering the entire GASC as a whole.

Purpose

Reflection and adaption are an important part of any working strategy. During the creation of the Terms and Reference document, the GASC included the desire to conduct a yearly self-evaluation and progress report that is to be shared with stakeholders and the community. Neither this document nor this survey are to be considered this final evaluation or report. The purpose of this survey is to collect general information about the functioning of the GASC to be presented back to the Council for discussion and consideration as part of an overall review. This survey is offered as administrative support from the Town of Arnprior and the information contained within it is to be used by the GASC as it sees fit.

Process

The Terms and Reference does not identify how the evaluation of activities should be conducted. A survey provides a quick insight into trends but may not always ask the right questions. The results of a survey alone may be insufficient to create a report that encompasses and expresses all the achievements of the GASC over the past year. As part of the GASC evaluation, the Council may consider if a survey is an appropriate method of information collection, if changes need to be made to the survey, or if a different method altogether should be considered for future evaluation.

Survey Summary:

Overall, members agreed on topics presented in the survey. Agreement was shown through consistent responses to the same statements (for example, all or almost all members responded “strongly agree” to a particular statement). Agreeance, such as “strongly agree”, does not necessarily reflect a “good” or “bad” trend on its own – simply that most members strongly agree to that statement. While in many cases the response “strongly agree” to a statement might reflect an aspect in which the Council excels this format does not apply to all statements. For example, the statement “attendance at our meetings should be evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee” yielded a relatively wide variety of responses from 2 to 5. In this statement there is no evident “good” or “bad” answer. Responses reflect level of agreement on a potential future course of action, rather than past events.

Rather than attempting to categorize answers into strengths and weaknesses – “good” and “bad” – the responses from this survey were used to create four themes. These themes are meant to provide topics of discussion based on discrepancies and areas of strong response from the surveys.

Themes

The four themes established from survey responses are **Membership, Meetings, Strengths & Wins, and Goals.**

Theme 1: Membership

Quotes:

“We need to get more seniors on the GASC”

“We need ‘manpower’ to operationalize the AFC Plan”

Membership

The GASC membership boasts a wide variety of individuals with diverse skills and backgrounds. This was acknowledged by members in this survey and identified as a strength of the council. With this in mind, the need for more senior citizen members is also acknowledged across all members backgrounds. Currently, Town and Service Provider membership appear “heavy” and there is a desire to see more senior citizens on the council. More senior members could add to the current diversity that exists within the council membership.

Attendance

Currently, there is no explicit attendance policy outlined in the Terms and Reference. The survey statement “attendance at our meetings should be evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee” yielded a variety of responses. While the half of the answers fell between 4 and 5 (agree and strongly agree), there are two notes to be considered about this statement. Firstly, the survey structure may have influenced this answer. For many statements in this survey the “5” response may be considered to be a “good score”, indicating that the area of interest is going well. In this survey, most statements were answered with a “agree” (4) or “strongly agree” (5) statement. The change in statement intent may have resulted some confusion about what the statement was asking the member to consider. This statement is attempting to determine if members feel an attendance policy should be implemented possibly through an updated Terms and Reference or through other means. By responding with a low score, the member feels that such a system should not be implemented. Consequently, a high score would indicate that the member feels an attendance policy should be put into place.

For consideration, the responses to this statement were as follows:

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly Agree
Attendance at our meetings should be evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee.	0	3	3	5	1

The second consideration to this statement's results is that the previous statement "attendance at our meetings is consistent and members arrive on time" received only agreement responses. All respondents provided a score of 4 or 5 (agree or strongly agree) to this statement. It would therefore appear that the current attendance of council members is not an issue.

Additionally, it may be considered that members identified the time commitment being made by other members to attend the council and identified this commitment as a strength. Therefore, does this issue require further investigation? Does attendance require the implementation of an explicit policy?

Theme 2: Meetings

Quotes:

"People are engaged and everyone's time and schedules are respected"

"Minutes from the previous meeting[s] are excellent"

Overall, members felt that meetings were organized, and well conducted – keeping to topic and on schedule. Updates are given on projects and topics where follow-ups are required.

While updates are well-received, they may only cover the surface of the topic presented. There is expressed desire to "deep-dive" into specific topics during meeting discussion. In-depth discussion on specific topics in addition to general updates would play on the good collaboration and idea sharing that was identified as strength by members in the survey.

While in-depth discussion and brainstorming about specific topics could yield successful action plans, to do so would also require estimating discussion time for the agenda and keeping to the allotted time.

Theme 3: Strengths & Wins

Quotes:

"Great ideas are developing through the collaborating efforts of everyone sitting at the table"

"Excellent cross-section of community involvement"

"Committee weakness is that Darrell is an excellent chair and there I not a replacement in the wings"

One aspect of the survey that stands out is the focus on the positives of the GASC. Both checkbox answers and comments reflect positivity and conviction about Council activities.

There is a good diversity in projects and topics, as well as learning opportunities for members. The range of backgrounds allows knowledge to be shared across different fields. Members feel valued, heard, and respected in meetings of Council. Additionally, there is very strong, positive support for the current chair.

Theme 4: Goals

Quotes:

“Operation of [the] committee should be evaluated in terms of its purpose and goals”

“I think what we are doing is great and we are headed in a great direction”

“There is a lack of funding which is slowing down progress and implementation”

Goals

Goals can be seen as both a reflective theme and a planning theme. Before the next steps are taken there is a desire to review the current Workplan. This review can include listing what has been accomplished, discussing which directions should be taken, and what factors are influencing the success of each project.

Some barriers to the success of goal areas have been identified in this survey. The main barrier appears to be lack of resources, particularly lack of financial resources. Lack of “man power” however has also been identified as potentially slowing progress as well.

Included in Appendix B is a Workplan Worksheet that briefly summarizes GASC activities in the last year by goal area. While most agreed that the current goals were appropriate, prioritization of goals may also be considered. Prioritizing goals could help with resource allocation in future projects.

Review

Certain goals stood out among survey answers. The desire to focus on transportation, accessibility, the rural village concept, and active seniors were highlighted as important aspects deserving of future focus of the GASC. Part of a goals review could include an element of prioritization. Additionally, the GASC may consider including a review structure in the Terms and Reference. The GASC may consider the following questions for discussion:

- Should goals be updated and changed annually or only reviewed to mark progress?
- Should goals be updated every three years to match appointment terms?
- Are there any recommendations or changes that should be made to the Age-Friendly Community Plan at this time?

The Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Plan establishes the goals that the GASC uses as a basis for its own goals. The AFC Plan however is considered to be a “living” changeable document. Should the GASC find that certain issues are not being addressed through the current AFC Plan, they make recommendation to make alterations or additional goals.

Topics of Discussion

Based on the four themes drawn from survey answers a number of discussion points may be considered. Additionally, meeting minutes from each meeting in the past year have been reviewed to determine if there is any business that may require a follow-up in the next year.

Member recruitment:

- Would the GASC benefit from the recruitment of more senior members? Are there any unexplored avenues to attract the talent needed to accomplish goals?
- In addition to senior citizen members, members with business connections may be of benefit to the Council. What type of advantages would a business connection member provide? Do these advantages align with the current goals? And is recruitment of this member worthwhile considering the effort it may take?

Partnerships:

- How can current partnerships be strengthened? Where can new partner and stakeholders be found? Does being better established after a year of operation allow the council to approach stakeholders that may not have expressed interest previously?
- Can the website be used to promote partnerships? Can we reach out to current partners, such as the OACA, to ask to be linked from their websites?
- The World Health Organization has a series of webpages dedicated to age-friendly initiatives happening around the world. In addition to providing inspiration for projects locally, this resource may also provide connections to other Age-Friendly Community projects happening in Canada. The search parameters includes Country and community size options. Additionally, any organization may submit their own projects and initiatives for submission on the WHO website.

- The webpage can be access at:
https://extranet.who.int/datacol/custom_view_report.asp?survey_id=3536&view_id=6301&display_filter=1

Resources and Funding:

- In addition to increased membership, can time resources be better distributed with “in-depth” topic sub-committees? Are current work strategy effective to achieve results?
- Now that the GASC is a year old, are there any grants that can be applied for that were previously unavailable? Would the GASC benefit from a grant and funding sub-committee?

Compendium of Services:

- Has the website achieved this goal to the desired extent? Can a better format or listing be created or obtained and included somewhere on the website? If goal is met – can this goal be reworded in the Terms and Reference to indicate a maintenance phase, or can it be replaced by another goal? Or allowed to stay as it and focus simply be placed on other goal areas?

Communication:

- Communication refers to both internal and external communications. Externally, communication strategies are governed by the communication plan. Internally, is there a framework or procedure that can help to relay information to group members and the public both at the time and into the future? Meeting minutes accurately keep record of discussion, however they often refer to emails and documents that are not included as an appendix to the record. Is there a place where links and email can be shared for future members to access?

Workplan Update:

- What method of updating goals should be undertaken? Can certain goals take priority of human and financial resources? Should a deliverables section be added to the Workplan?
- Should an annual Workplan update occur before each summer break? Or after summer break to allow time for ideas to cultivate/settle?

Based on discussion, the Workplan Worksheet (Appendix B) is intended to help relate discussion around these themes to specific goals in the current Workplan and to offer a method of updating the plan.