SHEIKH SAUD BIN SAQR AL QASIMI
FOUNDATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES 2013-2018

"SUPPORTING RESEARCH, DEVELOPING MINDS"

Introduction

Supporting people, nurturing collaboration, and advancing a spirit of community are at the heart of the Al Qasimi Foundation's mission and values. The Foundation is not an entity unto itself. Only through conversation and partnership can we ask the right questions and address complex challenges to strengthen Ras Al Khaimah and support its vision for the future. Accordingly, community engagement plays a central role in the Al Qasimi Foundation's work and is embedded across its research, capacity development, and outreach missions.

At the Al Qasimi Foundation, engagement represents a purposeful exchange and leveraging of knowledge, resources, and partnerships to the mutual benefit of those involved and the local public sector. The Foundation's engagement efforts revolve around various communities: researchers, policy makers, civil servants, education professionals, students, and residents who call Ras Al Khaimah home. The Al Qasimi Foundation not only views engagement as a social responsibility, but also as a tool for improving the value, relevance, and effectiveness of its own work.

This Community Engagement Strategies and Priorities document (Engagement Plan) articulates the core values and framework that underpin the Al Qasimi Foundation's communication, outreach, and broader engagement efforts. It also provides an overview of the Foundation's short-term engagement goals and strategies over the next five years (2013-2018). As the Al Qasimi Foundation builds and expands its engagement program, inclusiveness and mutual respect will serve as guiding principles.

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Al Qasimi Foundation's Vision & Mission

Vision

Our vision is the sustained social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates and the enhanced capacity, satisfaction, and quality of life for all members of its community, attained through effective public policy research and strategic service delivery.

Mission

Our mission is to make significant contributions to the social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates by:

- Generating and supporting innovative, high-quality research focused on education and related policy areas in order to inform decisions and support the creation of relevant, effective public policies.
- Developing and providing strategic services and support to build individual and local capacity in education and the public sector.
- Building a spirit of community, collaboration, and shared vision through purposeful engagement that fosters meaningful relationships among individuals and organizations.

The Engagement Plan builds on the existing Vision and Mission statements in order to create a framework and goals for the Al Qasimi Foundation's outreach and engagement activities over the next five years.

Purpose of the Plan

The Engagement Plan aims to build community, share information, and cultivate collaboration and partnerships to the benefit of Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) and the broader United Arab Emirates (UAE). Specifically, the purposes of the Engagement Plan are to:

- Foster and strengthen relationships with diverse individuals and organizations – both with the Foundation and among members of the RAK, UAE, and international research communities.
- Focus and improve the quality of the Al Qasimi Foundation's communication and outreach activities locally and internationally, including their value to create public dialogue.
- Ground the Al Qasimi Foundation in the local community and ensure its responsiveness to the needs of RAK and the emirate's future vision.

Goals of the Plan

Accordingly, the Engagement Plan identifies five primary goals for the Al Qasimi Foundation's outreach and engagement efforts over the next five years:

1. Develop communication channels with partners to share news and information on the Al Qasimi Foundation's activities in both Arabic and English.

2. Host in-person and online forums that create opportunities to form relationships, exchange ideas, and discuss public policy issues.

3. Identify and promote opportunities for residents of RAK and the broader UAE to participate in realizing the mission and vision of the Al Qasimi Foundation and contribute to building a vibrant emirate.

4. Administer strategic grant programs that bring together researchers, policy makers, and organizations from RAK, the UAE, and international community to focus on research and capacity development initiatives relevant to RAK and the UAE.

5. Promote capacity development opportunities for education professionals and secondary school students, including the ability to provide feedback and voice additional needs.

Target Audiences

The Al Qasimi Foundation approaches its work collaboratively, and aims to establish relationships with talented scholars and world-class universities, innovative public policy research centers, established government institutions, and strategic partners in the private and non-governmental sectors. Specific audiences and communities that the Al Qasimi Foundation seeks to engage to varying degrees include:

Individuals

- Teachers and administrators in RAK government schools
- Emirati students in RAK secondary schools
- RAK civil servants
- UAE, regional, and international researchers and international researchers (including established and emerging scholars)
- RAK, UAE, and regional policy makers
- Residents of RAK

Organizations

- RAK and UAE government schools
- RAK and UAE government departments
- National, regional, and international foundations and non-profit organizations
- Universities and research institutions
- Embassies
- National, regional, and international funding entities
- Local and regional media

Engagement Framework

The Al Qasimi Foundation Engagement Plan is situated within a broader framework that emphasizes the following:

People and community as partners and resources

Those who live, work, or have a personal interest in RAK and the broader UAE are the most important resources available in realizing the Al Qasimi Foundation's mission to strengthen the RAK community. Their rich local knowledge, on-the-ground experiences, and personal/organizational networks bring new ideas, deeper understandings, and additional expertise to the activities that the Al Qasimi Foundation undertakes. In addition, it is only through cultivating a spirit of community and shared purpose that long-term goals will be achieved and ultimately sustained. Therefore, working in partnership with local institutions, reducing inter-organizational barriers, and fostering local ownership are critical components of the Foundation's engagement efforts.

Open source information and transparent communication

The Al Qasimi Foundation seeks to encourage a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration. It believes transparency is necessary for establishing relationships and building trust among partners. All research conducted and workshop materials developed are made publically available through the Al Qasimi Foundation website or those of its affiliates (e.g. RAK Teachers' Network). The Al Qasimi Foundation also plays an active role in gaining access to various datasets for researchers, and considers the data it gathers to be a public resource.

Inclusiveness

The Al Qasimi Foundation will only realize its full potential through an inclusive approach to its research, capacity development, and engagement activities. To this end, the Foundation is committed to reaching out and engaging diverse individuals and organizations at the local, national, regional, and international levels. All publications, events, and professional development workshops are offered in both Arabic and English. Inclusiveness also means creatively using both in-person and online platforms to overcome geographical boundaries in order to create dialogues and opportunities for collaboration. In addition, the Al Qasimi Foundation seeks to connect its partners to one another, as a web of relationships is stronger, more dynamic, and ultimately more effective.

Strategies for Engagement

To date, much of the Al Qasimi Foundation's engagement approach has focused on the *Inform* end of the public participation spectrum articulated by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) outlined below. As the Foundation streamlines and expands its engagement program, it seeks to shift the emphasis from informing/consulting toward involving/collaborating when setting its engagement goals and strategies.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	■ Fact sheets ■ Web sites ■ Open houses	■ Public comment ■ Focus groups ■ Surveys ■ Public meetings	■ Workshops ■ Deliberative polling	■ Citizen advisory Committees ■ Consensus-building ■ Participatory decision-making	■ Citizen juries ■ Ballots ■ Delegated decision

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Short-Term Engagement Goals

Communications

- Create and maintain a communications resource library (e.g. images, news coverage, videos, profiles) to facilitate sharing the Al Qasimi Foundation's mission and impact.
- Establish a web-based quarterly newsletter tailored to different audiences and partners.
- Develop a family of public relations materials (print and multimedia) with flexibility to include audience-specific content highlighting the research, capacity development, and engagement initiatives of the Foundation.
- Set target numbers and deadlines for in-house publications (e.g. research working papers, policy briefs) based on the work of visiting scholars and on-going studies of the Foundation.
- Build visibility of the Al Qasimi Foundation as a thought leader (and funding organization) through proactive communication in public arenas and academic circles, both nationally and abroad.

Partnerships

- Implement a contact management system (including office protocol for effective use) to better track existing relationships and partnership opportunities with individuals and organizations.
- Conduct a needs assessment to review existing individual and organizational partnerships to identify areas where new relationships should be fostered (including universities and professional organizations that would value the Foundation's grant opportunities).
- Establish new programmatic grants: one to seed new initiatives that align with the Foundation's work and a second to support the improvement of student-centered learning environments in local government schools.
- Create an Advisory Board to help guide the Al Qasimi Foundation's research, capacity development, and outreach activities – including the review of grant applications.
- Build relationships with media to share research findings, publicize events, and pitch story ideas relevant to the Al Qasimi Foundation's mission.
- Cultivate relationships with leaders and staff of similar organizations (e.g. foundations, research entities) nationally and internationally and identify potential opportunities for shared projects.

Accountability

- Develop an annual report to document the Foundation's activities and impact each year.
- Create executive summaries to document the outcomes and impacts of individual research, capacity development, and engagement activities based on the Foundation's on-going work.

Long-Term Engagement Goals

Benchmarks and evaluation

- Identify key outcomes and metrics for grant, partnership, communication, outreach, and other engagement efforts to gauge effectiveness and overall success.

- Implement an evaluation plan to regularly inform decision-making and ensure continuous improvement of the Al Qasimi Foundation's grant, partnership, communication, outreach, and other engagement efforts.

Funding

- Identify and pursue relevant grant opportunities to leverage in support of the Foundation's research, capacity development, and engagement missions.

- Seek matching or additional funding from private organizations whose interests align with the Foundation's mission and goals.

Community engagement

- Identify 1-2 signature annual events open to the general public that provide opportunities to personalize the Al Qasimi Foundation's mission and foster dialogue in the RAK community.

- Develop a strategy for engaging the Al Qasimi Foundation's alumni (e.g. grant recipients, course participants, interns, visiting scholars) to support active peer networks, sustained interest in the Foundation's efforts, and desire to remain connected.

- Develop a plan to ensure Al Qasimi Foundation staff participate regularly in national and international forums to share lessons and findings from Foundation-sponsored research, capacity development, and engagement initiatives.

- Identify and formalize additional opportunities for broader engagement with the Al Qasimi Foundation's research efforts to grow locally-based talent, interest in, and capacity for conducting applied research.