Community Relations Training Course for Corporate Affairs: Mapping, Partnerships and Concerns

8 – 12 February 2027
Amsterdam

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Programme Summary

Community relations is the subject of this one-week training course for corporate affairs, external relations and community engagement leaders, ending in a community relations plan for one local setting. Organisations depend on the goodwill of the neighbourhoods, workers and local institutions around them, yet contact is often reactive and shared across several teams. The programme works from stakeholder mapping through engagement strategy, partnerships and investment to concerns handling and measurement, applied to cases from several sectors. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on community relations to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Communities notice how an organisation behaves long before a formal complaint or a news story appears. Leaders who know who is affected, what each group expects and how concerns reach the organisation can act while problems are small. Where engagement is left to individual managers, promises overlap, local partners receive mixed messages and the same grievance returns in different forms.

- Local Goodwill: Strengthens as engagement follows a plan with named owners and consistent messages.
- Dispute and Delay Exposure: Falls as concerns are logged, answered and escalated through a clear route.
- Investment Effectiveness: Improves as community spending is tied to stated local priorities and reviewed.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Stakeholder Mapping: Identifying who is affected and who has influence structures the community analysis in Session 1.
- Corporate Community Involvement: Academic work on the strategic direction of corporate community involvement frames the choices on partnerships and investment in Session 3.
- Sustainable Community Relationships: Provider and practitioner material treats trust as built over time, which shapes the engagement strategy in Session 2.
- Grievance Handling Principles: Practitioner guidance on receiving, answering and learning from concerns underpins Session 4.

Intended Participants

- Corporate affairs leaders who set how the organisation relates to local communities.
- External relations directors who manage government, civic and community contacts.
- Community engagement managers who run partnerships and local programmes.
- Heads of sites or regions who carry day-to-day contact with neighbours and workers.
- Sustainability and investment leads who decide where community funding goes.

Typical sectors include energy, mining, infrastructure, banking and healthcare.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct a community stakeholder map showing interests, influence and impact.
2. Participants will be able to design a community engagement strategy with objectives, channels and owners.
3. Participants will be able to evaluate local partnership and investment options against community priorities.
4. Participants will be able to diagnose recurring concerns and design a grievance route that resolves them.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise engagement effort across communities with different needs and risks.
6. Participants will be able to justify relationship health measures and reports to senior leadership.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Community Relations Foundations

Who is affected by the organisation, and what does each community expect?

- Community Context Profile
- Stakeholder Influence and Impact Map
- Expectations and Concerns Register
- Relationship History Review
- Community Priority Ranking

Day 2: Engagement Strategy

How does the organisation plan contact that builds trust rather than reacts to events?

- Engagement Objectives Statement
- Channel and Forum Selection
- Message and Commitment Framework
- Engagement Calendar
- Team Roles and Handover Chart

Day 3: Partnerships and Community Investment

Where can local partners and funding add value that communities recognise?

- Partner Assessment Grid
- Community Investment Options Matrix
- Local Content and Employment Link
- Partnership Agreement Outline
- Investment Review Criteria

Day 4: Concerns, Grievances and Reputation

How are concerns received, answered and turned into improvement?

- Concern Intake Log
- Grievance Route Design
- Response Time Standards
- Escalation and Mediation Steps
- Lessons Learned Review

Day 5: Applying the Tools to One Local Setting

Do the mapping, strategy, partnership and concerns tools form one workable plan?

- Applying the Day 1 Stakeholder Influence and Impact Map
- Using the Day 2 Engagement Calendar
- Testing the Day 3 Partner Assessment Grid
- Checking the Day 4 Grievance Route Design
- Completing the Community Relations Plan

Methodology

The programme uses case analysis on anonymised community profiles, engagement records, partnership proposals and concern logs from energy, infrastructure and banking settings. Participants work in corporate affairs teams on a shared case, test each other's maps and plans and present choices to a panel acting as a site leadership team. Facilitators give written feedback on each exercise set so that planning and judgement improve across the five sessions.

- Suggested activity: Mapping the stakeholders around a planned facility expansion.
- Suggested activity: Redesigning a complaint route that currently ends in repeat contacts.
- Suggested activity: Ranking six funding requests against stated community priorities.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a community relations plan for one local setting. It holds a stakeholder map, an engagement strategy and calendar, a partnership and investment shortlist, a concerns route and a set of relationship health measures. The plan is used at work to brief site and corporate leadership, assign owners and open the first round of community contact.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is community relations training suitable for leaders new to external relations?

Yes. Community relations training assumes organisational experience but not prior external relations work, and it builds mapping, planning and measurement skills step by step from case material.

Which models does community relations rest on?

Community relations rests on stakeholder mapping, corporate community involvement thinking, practices for building sustainable relationships and grievance handling principles, each applied in a dedicated session.

How is the plan from community relations used at work?

You use the community relations plan to brief leadership, assign owners to communities and partners and run the first round of engagement.

How does community relations differ from corporate social responsibility reporting?

Community relations concerns ongoing contact, partnerships and concerns handling with local communities, while corporate social responsibility reporting concentrates on disclosing an organisation's wider social and environmental performance.