ACT
Government

ENGAGING CANBERRANS
A guide to community engagement

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There is no 'one size fits all' approach to engagement activities. A range of methods is required to cater for the preferences of different groups in the community.

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government is committed to the principles of 'Open Government', which means:

- transparency in process and information;
- participation by citizens in the governing process; and
- public collaboration in finding solutions to problems and participation in the improved well-being of the community

Accordingly, the Government is committed to engaging effectively with its citizens in a meaningful, accountable, responsive and equitable way.

Effective community engagement has real benefits for both the Government and the community alike through access to new ideas, sharing of skills, experiences and knowledge, and consequently developing a clearer understanding of each others' priorities, needs and expectations.

A commitment to community engagement also upholds the obligations of public authorities under the *Human Rights Act 2004*. Civic expression and participation are clearly articulated in the Act which states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of borders, whether orally, in writing or in print, by way of art or in another way chosen by him or her."

The 2010 *Improving Community Engagement Report* provided advice on ways the ACT Government could strengthen its practice of community engagement, and how engagement can more effectively contribute to government decision-making.

This Guide is based on the findings from the 2010 Report and other research, and will support directorates in improving community engagement planning and practice.

It is based on best practice engagement principles and has an emphasis on:

- expanding the range of engagement methods and activities, including Web 2.0 participation technologies, so that a variety of methods are used to reach different sections of the community;

- reaching a wider group of citizens, including the hard-to-reach sections of the community as well as interest groups;

- seeking broader discussions on complex issues with the community over a longer period of time where necessary; and

- providing timely feedback to participants during and after the engagement process.

The following ACT Government Plans and Strategies also frame and guide community engagement:

- Canberra Plan - 'Towards our Second Century'

- Canberra Social Plan 2011

- Access to Government Strategy Report 2006

- The Social Compact

- Disability ACT, Public Consultations and Forums Access Guidelines (Version 2)

The Guide has two parts. The first part outlines contemporary engagement principles and practices. The second part ('The Toolkit') provides a range of useful factsheets to help plan and implement community engagement activities.

To help ensure effective engagements, directorates are also encouraged to access ongoing training opportunities to continually build their capability and capacity.

1. WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Depending on the situation in which you are working, 'engagement' can cover consultation, information, communication, education, public participation, or working in partnership.

'Engagement' is used here as a generic, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships.

Community engagement is any activity that enables the ACT Government to:

- inform the community about proposed ACT Government policies and actions;
- respond to issues raised by the community;
- provide the opportunity for the community to voice an opinion on proposed ACT Government policies, law reforms and programs;
- invite the community to submit proposals for consideration; or
- work more closely with the community to shape policy options and priorities.

Community engagement does not necessarily mean achieving consensus.

The more involved and engaged the community is in planning, program or policy issues, the more aware the community becomes of the constraints, options, and drivers for change, and hopefully the more satisfied they are with the engagement process and the outcomes achieved.

Central to design of any community engagement activity are the following principles which should guide practice and clarify expectations of government performance.[1]

1. Careful planning and preparation

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organisation and convening of the process serve both a clearly designed purpose and the needs of the participants. Tailor the approach to fit the target group. Integrate online engagement and other social media with traditional methods.

2. Inclusion and Demographic Diversity

Equitably incorporate a diversity of people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

3. Collaboration and Shared Purpose

Support and encourage participants, government and community groups, and others to work together to advance engagement goals.

4. Openness and Learning

Help all involved to listen to each other; explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes; learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate community engagement activities for effectiveness.

5. Transparency and Trust

Be clear and open about the process and its objectives, and how it will feed into decisions or government actions, provide a community record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed, and feedback to participants.

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1   Core Principles for Public Engagement prepared by National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD),the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), the Co-Intelligence Institute, and other leaders in public engagement.
    http://www.thataway.org/files/Expanded_Core_Principles_Public_Engagement.pdf

6. Impact and Action

Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference and that participants are aware of this potential.

7. Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture

Promote a culture of participation with programs and activities that support ongoing quality community engagement and provide feedback to the community.

IMPLEMENTATION

Moving towards a more coordinated and staged community engagement approach across ACT Government directorates will take time. The approach outlined in this Guide recognises the unique contribution each directorate makes to engagement with the ACT community, and acknowledges that specific circumstances and issues faced by directorates will determine the outcomes of engagements to a certain extent.

This community engagement approach is based on the view that governments cannot help to solve complex problems without the concerted efforts of the general public. Arriving at solutions will invariably involve tradeoffs and outcomes that reflect and/or balance community interest as a whole and enable budget priorities to be set. For this reason governments must engage more broadly with the community and in ways that are different from what has been tried before.

Accessibility, timing and transparency are all significant elements in getting community engagement right. For complex and controversial issues, undertaking community engagement processes earlier rather than later in the life of a policy development or project may have significant benefits. This means that the community has the opportunity to learn about the tradeoffs involved and a diverse range of community views can be considered in the development of options or solutions.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

One of the challenges ahead is for a greater diversity of Canberrans to be more actively involved in decision-making. The challenge for governments is to listen closely to interest groups, as well as to those who may have been under-represented in current and previous engagement activities.

Community engagement can take many forms and cover a broad range of activities, and works well when:

- sufficient time is built into the process for the community to absorb new information, ask questions and think about the issues – this may mean a process longer than six weeks;

- adaptive approaches are used to allow for changing circumstances;

- practitioners are clear and open about the process and how it will feed into decisions;

- practitioners look for collaborative opportunities with other ACT Government directorates;

- practitioners use a range of methods to cater for the preferences of different groups in the community;

- all participants are supported and encouraged to work together;

- everyone listens, explores new ideas, generates options, and seeks the positives with the negatives;

- feedback is provided along the way (where appropriate), as well as at the end of the process;

- for complex issues a more participative approach is employed to ensure better outcomes for participants and ACT Government; and

- the process is evaluated for effectiveness.

For more information on how to determine the correct level of community participation, refer to part 3.1.

2.1 EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The following table summarises the principles that underpin effective community engagement and provides some hints on how they can be put into practice.

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE
…is clearly scoped	Ensure that everyone (internally and externally) knows what the engagement is about and what it is not about.
….is transparent	Ensure people know what is happening and how their input is being used.
…is connected to decision-making	Gather the input, analyse it and use it in decision-making where appropriate.
…is inclusive	Ensure all those who have an interest or may be affected have a genuine opportunity to participate.
…is informative	Ensure that people have access to the information they need to participate.
…is timely	Provide opportunities early in the process for people to generate ideas and express their views
…involves deliberation	Ensure there is sufficient time for all participants to think things through, weigh up alternatives and provide feedback.
…builds relationships	Get to know people and provide opportunities for participants to appreciate each other's perspectives.
…provides feedback	Let people know how their contribution has been used or has made a difference or why contributions may not figure in final decisions made.
…builds trust	Seek to build trust in all our interactions.
…is accessible	Provide a wide variety of engagement tools and methods. Ensure the venues and materials are accessible, particularly to people with disability and those who need to use public transport.

2.2 DECIDING NOT TO CONSULT

There will be occasions when a decision is made not to consult with the community. In making such a decision the Human Rights Act requires public authorities to giver proper consideration to relevant human rights such as the right to participate in public life and the right to freedom of expression. Where consultation is not feasible a strategy that focuses on providing accessible and understandable information would need to be developed appropriate to the project.

Where consultation is deemed not feasible a number of actions need to be considered including:

*   providing information through a variety of communication channels with an explanation about the issue or project in advance of the decision being announced; and

*   an explanation about why consultation is not seen as adding value to the decision-making process.

However, in some cases government may want to obtain community input to assist with final decision-making and reporting. Even if this input may have limited impact on the end result of the project, it may prove useful to inform government of the views of the community.

If you promise the community that their input will be considered in shaping a project, then you must be able to demonstrate this in subsequent communication. For example, show how community views and suggestions have been incorporated into final plans, or provide feedback on why some ideas may have been taken forward and others not.

If community input will not influence decisions or outcomes, an information strategy is required, not a consultation strategy.

In some cases, particularly with development applications, it is the responsibility of proponents (community members who put forward a development proposition or proposal) to consult prior to a development application being submitted. The Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD) publicly notifies communities of development applications where required in accordance with the provisions of the *Planning and Development Act 2007*.

ESSD actively encourages proponents of development to consult with local communities about their proposals, and where a Territory Plan Variation is required will often require this engagement as part of the Planning Report, depending on the nature of the Variation.

3. PLANNING YOUR ENGAGEMENT

In short, the basic steps to be followed when planning your engagement are:

- determine the scope and scale of the engagement; and

- prepare an engagement strategy or plan.

3.1   SCOPING THE ENGAGEMENT

Before planning begins, it is essential to scope the engagement project to get a broad sense of the issues involved and the potential level of impact of the issue on the specific communities or the community at large.

Taking time to scope the project will help:

- increase opportunities for different voices to be heard;

- provide communities with a range of opportunities to identify their expectations, needs and priorities; and

- strengthen partnerships between directorates and communities.

Where appropriate, involve key stakeholders as early as possible in the design of the engagement process. By doing this you have the opportunity to increase the chance of stakeholder 'buy in' and ongoing commitment to the process to be used. It will also provide you with valuable insights into the practicality of your proposed approach.

When designing an engagement project it is important to ensure that any collaborative opportunities with other ACT Government directorates have been identified and where possible are leveraged and coordinated.

Savings in resource costs and time will eventuate through increased collaboration. It will also assist to alleviate "consultation overload" when asking for feedback and input from peak bodies and community groups.

Wherever possible ensure collaborative opportunities with other ACT Government directorates are identified early and engagement activities are co-ordinated.

It is very important to establish what is negotiable and non-negotiable with the community early in the process. Clearly define both during the scoping stage to avoid misunderstandings later in the project about how community feedback may shape the final outcome.

In the scoping stage, ask yourself:

- What are you trying to achieve? Why?

- Who do you need to engage?

- What specifically do you want to engage on?

- What is negotiable and non-negotiable with the community?

- How will you engage?

- Are there other related engagement activities that you can tap into?

- What resources do you have?

- What is the required timeline for the outcome?

- At what points will information updates and feedback be provided to the community, particularly during a lengthy engagement process?

- Does the process to be used have internal and external support?

- Who will have lead accountability for the process within government?

- What would constitute a great outcome for government and the community as a result of the engagement?

Establish clear scope and objectives for your community engagement prior to considering methods or techniques.

Factsheet 1 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides information about the differing levels of community engagement.

Factsheet 2 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides considerations for selecting the appropriate level of community engagement.

3.2   PREPARING AN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY OR PLAN

A good engagement strategy will pay for itself many times over by helping you focus your thinking and optimise the use of your resources.

Identify the purpose

Clearly identify and articulate the purpose of the engagement prior to commencing any detailed implementation. It is important that the purpose(s) of the engagement are agreed and endorsed at Executive and Ministerial level.

The purpose should give a clear indication of what the engagement is trying to achieve in a strategic sense, and should be capable of being measured or evaluated.

It should clearly identify how the results will be used by ACT Government and reported to the community.

Provide background

Provide a summary explaining the context in which the engagement project will take place. Outline what decisions, events or actions have occurred to give rise to this engagement activity.

Review any available research, or if necessary conduct research, to support the rationale for the engagement. Summarise the overall conclusions of any relevant research in the background section of the plan.

Identify the target audience(s)

It is essential that the engagement strategy clearly identifies the target audience or key stakeholders, and can demonstrate how the purpose of the engagement relates to them.

It is important that you understand what constitutes the 'community of interest', the 'influencers' and 'key stakeholders'. Assess the level of interest of affected groups, identifying their values and interests, and their preferences for participating in engagement processes. It is also important to clearly identify any specific communications needs and preferences, particularly if working with disadvantaged or hard to reach groups.

Sometimes, there may be a single, homogeneous target audience, however in most cases there will be multiple audiences. There is often a temptation to identify very broad target audiences (eg. 'all Canberrans'), however it is preferable to refine this to clearly identify a more tightly defined audience (or set of audiences) that can be targeted more effectively.

Do not forget internal stakeholders when planning your strategy. Other ACT Government directorates may have significant interest and influence on the outcomes of your project and need to be identified and included as early as possible.

Develop key messages

Key messages are important because they assist everyone working on the project to stay focused on exactly what is being communicated, and reduce the possibility of mixed messages during the engagement.

When developing key messages, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- the current awareness of the community, their knowledge and attitudes towards the issue; and
- the key facts, thoughts or ideas that this engagement seeks to communicate.

If necessary refine key messages to suit the audience.

Managing expectations

When planning your engagement, particularly around complex issues that may attract diverse views and/or when there are several stakeholder groups participating, it is important to consider the expectations of the stakeholders involved. Consideration needs to be given to whether any problems will arise due to conflicting expectations, and where, between who and at what stage this may arise.

Factsheet 3 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides information on managing expectations and how to act where expectations are in conflict.

Identify resources

Adequate resources should be agreed and committed. Resources can include sufficient funds to cover catering and venue hire, external consultants, or independent experts. Transport and child care costs may sometimes be offered to encourage their participation.

Develop a risk management matrix

The development of a risk management matrix is advisable, particularly if the project involves multiple stakeholders and may be controversial. It is important to clearly articulate the issues/risks that will need to be managed as part of the project, their likely impact on stakeholders, and importantly how they will be addressed.

The development of a matrix can also serve as a basis for frequently asked questions in various communications' materials and be used for fact sheets, information sessions, and briefing notes.

Factsheet 4 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides information on the benefits and risks associated with community engagement.

Factsheet 5 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides guidance on managing possible risks associated with engagement and suggests some mitigation strategies.

For more information about the reporting process and identifying an evaluation methodology please refer to section 6.2.

4. IMPLEMENTING YOUR ENGAGEMENT

4.1   TIMING

For complex and controversial matters undertake engagement processes as early as possible, so that a diverse range of community views can be considered in the development of policy and programs (rather than consulting the community about a single preferred solution).

Consider the wider ACT Government environment and determine if there are synergies with other engagements being undertaken. Consult the Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate Community Engagement Unit and visit the community engagement website www.communityengagement.act.gov.au to find out if similar engagements are being undertaken by other directorates.

When engaging peak bodies it is important to allow sufficient time for adequate consideration of your proposal, policy or community engagement strategy. A minimum of six weeks is recommended to allow enough time for organisations to provide feedback.

Discussions with organisations to consider timeframes are also useful. Many organisations rely on volunteer support and engagement activities should be conducted in ways that respect the time constraints often experienced by volunteers. 'Consultation fatigue' may be experienced by organisations that are participating simultaneously in a range of consultation processes.

As a general rule the following timeframes are recommended:

Inform (Tell) Low complexity **(2-6 weeks)**	Consult (Check direction) Moderate complexity **(6-10 weeks)**	Involve (Seek Ideas) High complexity **(10-16 weeks)**	Collaborate/Empower Very high complexity **(16 weeks +)**

Where possible avoid engagement over the Christmas/January holiday period, or consider an extended consultation period over this time. Consultations that take place during school holidays may also require an extended consultation period. This is important where a consultation involves the community sector, particularly for services that have a high ratio of women employees, as staffing during school holidays may be an issue.

Do not undertake engagement activities during the Christmas/New Year holiday period.
A minimum of 6 weeks is advisable for all community engagement activities.

4.2   PROJECT MANAGEMENT

It is important to outline the roles and responsibilities that staff and/or consultants are undertaking as part of the project. For example, who will co-ordinate the community information? Who is responsible for the performance of the activity against its objectives? Who will write the report?

Ideally, one person will assume the role of overall project manager and will be responsible for issuing the tasks/timelines schedule, updates and changes, and take responsibility for records management and reporting.

> **Factsheet 6 of the Community Engagement Toolkit is a logistics checklist which will be helpful in project managing an engagement.**

4.3   BUDGET

The amount of funding available for your engagement project will often dictate the extent of the engagement you can undertake. The significance of the issue you are engaging on may also influence the amount of budget allocated.

It is important to identify the total cost of the activity and the breakdown of costs by component activity early in the engagement process. There are a range of free or low cost engagement tools available that can help to reduce costs, including community media, marketing through established networks and using Canberra Connect's capability and infrastructure. Always consider if the engagement activity being used is the best use of resources given the available alternatives.

If a procurement process is required to engage external support or facilitation, it is recommended that you contact ACT Procurement Solutions as early as possible for advice and assistance.

4.4   ALERTING THE COMMUNITY TO YOUR ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

At the beginning of a process widely advertise the details of the engagement process, including how and where it will be undertaken, what is negotiable and what is not, and how and when a decision is expected to be made.

A range of communications' tools and materials can be used to effectively convey the details of your engagement to the community, including:

- ACT Government Community Noticeboard that appears every Saturday in the Canberra Times.
- Websites - www.communityengagement.act.gov.au must be used, directorate websites, ACT Government Information Portal ("Hot Topics" or "News and Events" sections).
- Paid Advertising - television, radio, and newspapers.
- Face-to-Face Briefings - individual or group briefings for key stakeholders.
- Media Opportunities - alerts and releases, media conferences, and editorial.

   Note: Contact with the media will need to be approved through your directorate's communication's area and approved by the Minister's Office. No external briefings or commentary should be provided to the media without prior approval.

- Online - through existing databases, e-newsletters, posts on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.
- Community media - radio and TV community noticeboards, Community Councils' newsletter and websites, whole-of-government emails, school newsletters, Canberra Connect shopfront screens, and Canberra Connect Contact Centre.
- Direct marketing - letterbox drops (direct mail delivery companies can be directed to deliver ACT Government notices to "no junk mail" letterboxes), direct mail outs, signage on roadsides, pamphlets and brochures, posters at shopping centres and clubs.

Remember that all communications material must comply with ACT Government branding requirements, and Directorate and Ministerial approvals must be gained prior to release.

If the overall budget for advertising exceeds $40,000, approval will be required through the Independent Reviewer of Government Advertising.

When selecting the most appropriate communication tool consider:

* What is your budget?

* What media/tools are readily available or free?

* Do you want to use a variety of tools?

* Which tools will work best?

* Who will develop and co-ordinate distribution of your communications material?

* Who will be the spokesperson?

Letting people know about how to get involved in your project is critical to the success of any community engagement process.

4.5   SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Providing accurate, understandable, and relevant information is vital to any successful community engagement strategy. Without quality information:

* the community may not be motivated to be sufficiently engaged;

* the community may provide feedback based on an emotional response rather than a knowledgeable response;

* the quality of feedback will be limited and may not be useful in refining your plans or identifying issues for consideration;

* time and budget may be wasted; and

* criticism is likely that the community was not appropriately engaged.

Information should be provided in clear, concise terms, free of jargon and acronyms, and presented in an easy-to-read format. Graphics, diagrams and pictures should be used wherever possible to enhance the understanding of complex concepts. Information should be available in different forms (eg. print, electronic and verbal) to facilitate ease of access for participants.

Information should clearly outline the expected timeframes for the engagement activity.

Always ensure proper advice is given to other areas of ACT Government that may be involved, have an interest, or be contacted by the community regarding an engagement activity, particularly Canberra Connect.

4.6   EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective and respectful communication underpins the community engagement commitment of the ACT Government in recognising the diverse audience and stakeholders.

Factsheet 7 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides information about useful communication techniques.

Factsheet 8 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides strategies for managing conflict and extreme views during the engagement.

4.7   ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

There is a wide range of engagement tools that can be used. A variety of these tools should be used to encourage involvement from a wide cross-section of the community. Where possible work with key community groups to determine the most appropriate engagement tools to use.

As a general rule the greater level of consultation usually requires longer time frames, more resources and the need for external expertise. However, this will be more effective in the long run in building relationships, mutual understanding, community capacity and trust.

Factsheet 9 of the Community Engagement Toolkit outlines a range of community engagement methods and tools and when to use them.

Factsheet 10 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides detailed information on how to use a number of popular engagement tools.

Provide multiple engagement tools and opportunities to participate that take into account different demographics, locations and social/ cultural preferences.

4.8   USE OF CONSULTANTS & INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

Engaging consultants and subject-matter experts to assist in your engagement activity can be beneficial in certain circumstances, particularly if they:

• bring specialist engagement and facilitation skills, and experience to the activity;

• can provide an independent and impartial perspective to the engagement activity; and

• have proven credibility and trustworthiness with stakeholders.

If appropriate you may wish to use subject matter experts who have credibility and are recognised and respected in the community. Using external experts also helps put the government at 'arms length' from the issues under debate.

It is important that the consultant/experts have no vested interest in the outcomes of the engagement and no conflict of interest.

The development of a comprehensive consultant brief is essential to ensure that both you and the potential provider have a clear understanding of the outcomes required. Your engagement strategy should form the basis of this brief.

It is essential that the correct procurement processes are followed in the selection of an appropriate consultant. ACT Procurement Solutions can provide advice and assistance prior to commencing the selection process.

4.9   ONGOING ENGAGEMENTS

In certain circumstances it may be beneficial to conduct regular, ongoing engagements. Some directorates may wish to seek feedback on their programs on a regular basis, possibly annually, to determine trends with levels of satisfaction with services.

The establishment of databases of interested community members or organisations can assist in maintaining open and ongoing communication channels. However, be sure not to 'bombard' database contacts with too much information. Remember, you may not be the only ACT Government directorate consulting with the community.

4.10   ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS

The ACT Government is aware of the importance of harnessing the capabilities of new technology to deliver improved access to government information and decision making. It aims to make as much government information available online as possible, and to open up new possibilities for the use of this information by the community.

The online environment can provide an effective platform for government to reach a broad audience. Online engagement can provide a secure space for rigorous testing of ideas, assumptions, positions, and options.

The relative freedom of an anonymous online environment removes barriers to enter the conversation that are often present in community meetings, where aggressiveness, loudness, power, shyness and assumed restrictions on the right to speak can stifle debate.

Online engagement can help draw many more people into the conversation than traditional face-to-face methods. Depending on the issue and size of the directly affected population, online environments can bring several hundred to many thousand individuals to the table, and in doing so provide a broader range of community views and opinions. It also cuts down the risk of vocal special interest groups from hijacking the debate.

It should be recognised that some forms of online engagement do not allow individuals to provide a depth of qualitative feedback.

Online engagement tools are usually less expensive than intensive face-to-face processes and also much less expensive than traditional telephone or print surveys.

It is important not to use the web as the sole method of engagement. While the Internet is effective in reaching a wide audience, some individuals and groups have no or limited access to online engagement. Therefore alternatives to online methods need to be considered.

Online engagement tools may provide an accessible option for the largest and most under-represented groups in the community to get involved in your conversations. These include working parents, carers, young people, people who are mobility impaired, shift workers - people you may not usually see at community meetings.

Use of Web 2.0 Technology

Web 2.0 is the term given to describe the transition from static html web pages to a more dynamic web tool that invites communication and a more open sharing of information. It is a conversation or interaction with, and between, interested parties that encourages collaboration and conversation.

Common applications include:

- Information sharing - Blogs, YouTube, Twitter, and Yammer.

- Content co-creation and collaboration - Wikis (Wikipedia being the most famous).

- Online social networking with a focus on the individual profile built around friendship or business networks - Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn.

- Re-use/re-mix of information across media - Mashups that incorporate video and other media.

Overall, Web 2.0 technology brings people together and creates communities of interest to discuss issues of mutual interest or concern.

Web 2.0 offers additional avenues for consultation and interaction with the community in ways that can facilitate dialogue, creativity, collaboration and partnership. It provides new ways to hear the voice of the community and to talk with them in different ways.

This means a greater opportunity for the community to act as partners with government in the co-creation of policy, planning and priority setting. The transparency and accountability of the process can help strengthen community goodwill.

Factsheet 11 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides useful information on Web 2.0 engagement tools and their application and how to make online engagement more effective.

Online tools generally allow you to engage more people, more effectively, for less money.

5. ENGAGING AND WORKING WITH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

Community engagement provides opportunities not only for citizens to be informed and included in government planning processes, but also for special interest communities and groups. This section of *Engaging Canberrans* discusses issues about including special interest communities and groups in community engagement activities.

Special interest communities are groups of people who are not necessarily organised into specific groups, but who have shared interests or are in similar circumstances – such as children and young people.

Special interest groups may include, but are not limited to, charities, cooperatives, civil society organisations, trade unions, business groups, community based organisations and citizen advocacy groups. There are special interest groups involved in a wide variety of topics such as the environment, the arts, place-based issues, heritage, business, community services, sports and recreation.

Organised special interest groups may have a broad range of functions and goals for their members and constituents. In terms of engagement with government, they can both represent and function as conduits of information to their members and constituents. These groups might represent the interests of organisations or individuals (or both); they may have an ongoing presence and relationship with the ACT Government or they might emerge in response to a specific issue; they might be incorporated, independently governed and receive funding from government or they might consist of loosely associated groups of community volunteers.

5.1   WORKING WITH PEAK BODIES

The ACT has numerous advisory and peak bodies that provide Government with expert advice in relation to their specific sector. Peak bodies are a useful resource in supporting consultation with community groups, using their existing relationships and engagement channels with service providers and consumers. These bodies should be used in the early stages of planning to check that the community engagement is appropriate and adequate.

Collaboration within and between directorates is particularly important when engaging with peak bodies, as several areas (including disability, housing, education, justice and health) may be involved in providing funding and support, and regularly require feedback and advice from them.

Peak bodies are regularly called on by the ACT Government to engage their membership on a variety of issues, particularly to provide feedback on policies and programs. In many cases their resources are limited and their capacity to engage their membership meaningfully at short notice is challenging for them. Many peak bodies have ongoing relationships with the ACT Government and might be involved in regular meetings with representatives from a range of directorates.

As you plan your engagement, check to see if there are existing reports you can refer to, or existing forums you can tap into, when consulting with peak bodies to reduce the burden of extra consultations for them.

When working with peak bodies, staggering the timing of community engagement/consultation activities often helps to reduce the increased workload experienced by them when feedback is being sought.

Special interest groups should be consulted early to ensure your engagement strategy is appropriate and adequate.

5.2 WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY SECTOR – *THE SOCIAL COMPACT*

Canberra is fortunate to have a large number of committed not-for-profit community service organisations, self-help groups, community associations and consumer advocacy groups. Community sector organisations often have a unique relationship with the groups they serve and represent, involving high levels of trust among communities of people that governments may find 'hard-to-reach'.

The ACT Government currently provides funding to more than 150 community sector organisations and works collaboratively with the sector in planning and delivering services to our community. Organisations in the community sector are diverse and have varied relationships with the ACT Government. *The Social Compact* is a framework that guides relationships between the ACT Government and community sector.

The Social Compact - A Partnership between the Community Sector and the ACT Government describes principles underpinning the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector as well as undertakings to which each sector is committed as they work together for the public good.

The principles for working together described in *The Social Compact* include trust, transparency, flexibility, respect, integrity, accountability, responsibility and continuous improvement. Undertakings to which both the ACT Government and the community sector are committed centre on working together in a way which is sensitive to the other's roles and boundaries; involvement in policy planning and development; commitment to accountability, scrutiny and excellence in governance and management; and engagement in continuous quality improvement.

For more information about working with the community sector, see *The Social Compact* found at the ACT Government community engagement website (www.communityengagement.act.gov.au).

The Social Compact is a statement of understanding about the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector. It provides a framework for relations between the community sector and the ACT Government by articulating the principles of good communication and partnership.

5.3 WORKING WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY GROUPS

When engaging with the local business it is advisable to first consult with the peak industry bodies that represent the diverse range of businesses operating in the ACT. These bodies can provide a direct link to their membership and are able to seek the input of their many members through their various networks.

Local bodies you should consider contacting are:

- The ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry - the largest Canberra based organisation representing a wide variety of business types and sizes from across the Canberra region.
- The Canberra Business Council - represents more than 5,000 businesses across the Capital Region
- The ACT Property Council - a leading advocate for the local property industry, with membership that includes investors, property owners and developers.

5.4   WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE "HARD-TO-REACH"

People can be hard-to-reach for a range of reasons, for example, representatives from small and medium enterprises may be hard-to-reach because they might be time poor; people with alcohol and drug dependence issues may be hard to reach because they might have had negative experiences with government representatives in the past. Parents and carers may be hard to reach due to their caring commitments and constraints on their availability to attend more traditional engagement activities.

Overall, people can be considered hard-to-reach if they have been under-represented, "hidden", overlooked, or resistant to engagement in the past. Hard-to-reach communities may perceive government engagement activities as irrelevant, inappropriate, inaccessible or stigmatising.[2]

Hard-to-reach communities are most effectively engaged when:

- "soft-entry-points" and natural gathering places are use, for example, holding information sessions in convenient and non-stigmatised locations such as libraries;

- timing of engagement events occurs in natural gathering places on busy days (such as payday or pension day);

- engagement activities provide food and incentives;

- engagement activities are out-of-business-hours;

- community leaders are involved;

- crèche facilities are provided, especially for parents with large families;

- synchronised with existing events and forums; and

- professionals working directly with people you want to engage with are involved.

Engaging with special interest groups can be – but may not always be – an appropriate alternative to engaging with the people they represent. The extent to which the group accurately represents a specific community may depend on the issue being considered and the group being consulted. Things to consider include how long the group has been established and its membership base.

5.5   WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Participation in engagement activities gives young people the opportunity to have a say about their future, what is important to them, allows them to 'own' decisions made about their lives, increases self-confidence and skills, and empowers them.

Their participation should be meaningful and this can only occur when:

- they are adequately informed and supported in their involvement;

- their contributions are valued;

- they believe the work they are doing has a purpose;

- they are not engaged in tokenistic ways; and

- they are provided with feedback on how their input is being used.

In certain circumstances community engagement, particularly consultation involving young people, should not take place over school holidays, particularly those that occur in December and January. It is important that engagement activities are as family-friendly as possible.

> **Factsheet 12 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides further advice on how to engage with children and young people.**

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2 Cortis, N., Katz, I. & Patulny, R. (2009). Engaging hard-to-reach families and children. National Evaluation Consortium (Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the Australian Institute of Family Studies).

5.6   WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that all members of the community are able to have their say on issues which affect them. Consulting with people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged is not just a 'nice thing to do', it is required under International and Territory law, and is supported by research evidence and ACT Government policy commitments. Participation in engagement activities gives people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged the opportunity to have a say about what is important, allows individuals to 'own' decisions made about their lives, increases self-confidence and skills, and is empowering.

Participation of people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged should be meaningful and this can only occur when:

- adequate information and support for involvement is provided;

- contributions are valued and purpose driven;

- engagement is not tokenistic; and

- feedback is provided.

While consulting with people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged might seem like 'extra' work, it will actually make your job easier in the long run and will help you to:

- meet statutory human rights obligations;

- develop more effective policy and/or programs;

- save money and time, by helping to identify problems or improvements at an early stage;

- act in the best interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged people; and

- create an inclusive community by providing opportunities to participate in democratic processes.

Engaging effectively with people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged means thinking carefully about the best method, venue, language, time of day, time of year (e.g. not in school holidays) and incentives to encourage participation.

You may also need to consider how access to transport, reimbursement of out of pocket expenses, carer responsibilities, culture, religious practices, language, gender, age, disability, income and level of literacy may influence the design and method of community engagement. Many of the strategies for encouraging engagement with hard-to-reach communities are also useful when engaging people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Research indicates that some marginalised and vulnerable groups can be distrustful of government due to previous negative experiences, cultural history and unique life experiences. Engagement processes may also have the potential to cause emotional distress and anxiety. In these circumstances successful community engagement depends on the ability to develop trust and provide the necessary support throughout the engagement.

Appropriate feedback is an important feature of engagement in these circumstances: knowing how contributions make a difference encourages engagement. You may need to consider a separate or specific feedback strategy to ensure you keep people who are experiencing disadvantage "in the loop". For example, consider summarising what has been "heard" at the end of a consultation session, specifically indicating how this will be incorporated into the final outcome of the engagement activity.

Strategies to be considered when engaging with people experiencing disadvantage include:

- basing consultation practices on informed planning – referring to demographic and socio-cultural information where possible;

- identifying and meeting with community leaders;

- utilising the experience and expertise of support workers;

- providing transport to engagement activities or reimbursement of transport costs;

- offering respite care;

- publishing promotional materials in a variety of languages that includes positive and valued visual representations of hard-to-reach groups;

- providing translating and interpreter services;

- work in partnership with respected community organisations to demonstrate trust and commitment; and

- choosing venues that are easily accessible, close to parking and transport options, and well lit for evening events.

For more detailed information on engaging with people experiencing disadvantage refer to *Social Inclusion of the Hard to Reach*, N. Brackertz and D. Meredyth, Swinburne University of Technology, 2008.

> **Factsheet 13 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides further advice to assist you with engaging with People with a Disability.**
>
> **Factsheet 14 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides further advice to assist you with engaging with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities.**

5.7   WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

When engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, it is important that strong relationships based on trust are developed from the first meeting, and that these relationships are maintained.

To create these relationships, it is vitally important that you:

- understand the specific needs and expectations of the local community you are working with;

- understand the cultural background and history of the community;

- understand and comply with community protocols;

- respect identity, values and culture;

- use family and community relationships; and

- acknowledge the country and traditional owners.

In addition, there are important procedural factors which should be considered when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Experience has shown that empowering the community, by helping them make changes, is far more successful than making change for them.

Procedural factors that need to be considered include:

- having a clear vision about the outcome you are seeking;

- seeking a genuine understanding of the community's perception of an issue (assume nothing);

- being open and transparent, and creating accountability mechanisms;

- being flexible to meet different needs;

- constantly engaging with the community over a significant period of time; and

- feeding back information to the community.

Involving respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups in the design and delivery of the engagement is preferable. For non-indigenous staff, ensuring appropriate cross-cultural training is undertaken prior to the engagement is recommended.

For large scale or high impact initiatives, consideration should be given to early engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council.

> **Factsheet 15 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides useful pointers for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.**

6. CONCLUDING YOUR ENGAGEMENT

6.1   FEEDBACK TO THE COMMUNITY

It is also important to close the loop with any engagement activity you undertake. If you have taken the time to communicate and the community has taken the time to provide input, then time needs to be allocated in the engagement project to provide the outcomes of the engagement activities to the community.

This is important in order to maintain any trust built with the community through the engagement process, and where appropriate to demonstrate that their input has been appropriately considered.

Although it is understood that the final decision on any policy or proposal is made by the ACT Government, feedback to participants shows how community input may or may not have influenced the final outcome and completes the information loop. Providing feedback conveys that the community's contribution is valued and has been taken into account, even if the final decision was contrary to views held by some groups and individuals.

There are a number of options available to provide feedback to the community once the engagement has been completed. These can include:

- letters of acknowledgement and thanks for participation in the process, including a summary of feedback/outcomes;

- a community information session advising of outcomes;

- public release of a report;

- posting information on the outcomes or progress with the engagement on the Community Engagement website and/or directorate website;

- advertising in The Canberra Times Community Noticeboard that outcomes and/or feedback is now available (with the relevant web address);

- providing summary information at Canberra Connect Shopfronts or libraries; and

- a letterbox drop of outcomes in an affected area.

Wherever possible provide the outcomes/feedback in an easily understandable form and always include an executive summary. Lengthy reports can provide the detail but may often go unread.

If the final decision/report is expected to be delayed for any length of time after the engagement activity, the time lapse should be communicated to participants as part of the engagement process.

It is important that when posting information on the progress and outcomes of the engagement project that version control is maintained, particularly in an online environment.

All documents posted on websites, including the Community Engagement website, must be clearly dated and versions identified. Documents that are not current or have been superseded must also be appropriately archived and accessible to the community online if required.

Factsheet 16 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides information about preparing a feedback report.

6.2   EVALUATION

The main reasons for evaluating engagement activities and programs are to:

- support continuous improvement to the project and process;

- assess the performance of the project against its objectives;

- provide input to future projects; and

- support improvement of the practice of engagement with the community.

Planning for evaluation should be done before the engagement begins.

Evaluation can be undertaken by an external body (such as a consultant) or in-house.

There are four questions to ask to ensure a thorough evaluation.

1. **What is considered to be a successful project?** What are we seeking to measure? There should be an overall community participation goal; a promise to the community; specific engagement objectives throughout the decision process, and a set of values, commitments and/or best practices guiding the implementation of the engagement project. Each of these areas will require specific results for which it is important to understand our performance.

2. **What will measure success?** Performance indicators are elements that can be directly observed or measured that will demonstrate the degree to which the desired performance has been reached in each key result area. There must be a balance struck between measuring hard to measure indicators such as a change in community attitude and measuring easier to collect data such as how many people attended an event.

3. **How is data collected?** Think about how to collect relevant data to help measure success, and how this data will be used to evaluate the identified performance indicators. Data must be representative of all participants and issues that are important to the project.

4. **What does the data mean and how will it be used?** Evaluating what the data means is important to ensure the right decisions are made for improvement. It is important to assess and understand the limitations of the data and not simply use data to reinforce a pre-conceived position.

Focus of evaluation

There are two main areas for evaluation of community engagement:

- the process and tools used to implement community engagement, or "how successfully did we plan and run the engagement project?"; and

- the outcome of the community engagement or "what difference did the engagement activity make?"

Process evaluation

Process evaluation provides information about what is happening throughout the planning and implementation of the community engagement project. It involves examining, describing and documenting the project's activities and processes. It is the most commonly used evaluation approach and is frequently characterised by qualitative assessments.

Example issues for process evaluation include:

- Stakeholder identification – have all individuals and groups with a stake in the process and its potential outcomes been engaged?

- Program design – could the process have been designed differently? Were the stakeholders provided an appropriate level of influence, given the issues involved? Were the stakeholders' needs met?

- Technique selection – would other techniques have achieved our community participation objectives more efficiently or effectively? Were the tools and techniques used appropriate to the level of participation at which the project was pitched?

- Technique implementation or process – were the techniques used effectively? What could have been done differently or better? Did the staff and team approach the activities with the right attitude?

Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluation assesses the overall effectiveness of a project in achieving its stated goals and objectives. It generally requires some form of planned evaluation design to measure impacts over time and determine whether the impact was the result of the project. Impact evaluation usually requires significant resources and expertise and is often characterised by quantitative assessment methods.

Example issues for outcome evaluation include:

- Outputs and outcomes for community engagement –
    a. What happened as a result of what was done?
    b. Did the outcome result directly from the project or process?
    c. Did the project build trust and develop relationships?
    d. Were the established goals and objectives achieved?
    e. Was the promise to the community met? If so, why? If not, why not?

- Level of community satisfaction with the project or process – to what degree did the stakeholders and the community agree that they had appropriate levels of influence on the decision-making process?

- Impact of the engagement process on the decision-making process –
    a. Was the decision affected?
    b. Did better decisions result from the engagement process?

- Overall value of the engagement project – did the overall results of the project justify the resources spent?

- Lessons learned – what key learning experiences should be transferred to future projects?

Factsheet 17 of the Community Engagement Toolkit provides further advice to assist with evaluation.

6.3   ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Directorate Annual Reports must include the following community engagement information:

- details of significant community consultations undertaken during the year;
- tools used to engage with the community, eg websites, forums, focus groups;
- the people/organisations who participated in the consultations;
- approximate numbers; and
- the outcome/results of the consultations.

Directorates are requested to use the following format.

Line Area	Project	Consultation Process (tools used)	Groups/Individuals consulted	Approximate number consulted	Outcome

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

FACTSHEETS

1. DIFFERING LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Careful consideration needs to be given to determining and delivering an appropriate level of engagement, deciding which stakeholders should be involved, the issue to be considered and the objectives of engagement.

Information, consultation and active participation can be considered along a community engagement continuum, with increasing levels of engagement and influence towards the 'empower' end of the spectrum.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
Community participation goal	To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain community feedback on options and/or decisions.	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. Key stakeholders may be involved in determining the engagement process.
Promise to the community	We will keep you informed as the consultation process continues.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and expectations, and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed. We will provide feedback on how community 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 where possible.
Example Techniques to Consider:	• Fact sheets • Web sites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberative polling • Blogs	• Citizen juries • Committees

1. DIFFERING LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
Guidelines	Know who you are trying to reach and how they are most likely to access and understand the information. Ensure information provided is high quality, consistent, timely, appropriately targeted, clear and easily understood by the target audience.	Ensure the purpose of the consultation is clear. Understand the most effective way to reach the target audience. Allow enough time for feedback. Coordinate requests so that you ask for views once, not several times. Provide feedback on the results of consultation. Present all information simply and clearly. Ensure adequate resources are allocated to the process.	Ensure all relevant people are given the opportunity to be involved. Ensure you maintain a commitment to enabling their involvement. Consider carefully what processes and/ or structures are appropriate for the purpose.	There must be clarity about the extent of decision-making power that is delegated. Avoid any misunderstanding by clearly establishing the basis for decision-making, the processes and roles and responsibilities. Carefully consider and clearly define governance arrangement where formal partnerships are involved.
Ask yourself	Do you need to address misconceptions or alleviate concerns? Do you need to raise awareness of a process, plan or project? What is the best method to address these issues? What resources are available?	Do you need to review an existing program or service? Do you need direct feedback from key stakeholders? Do you need a representative community sample? Do you need to develop or build on existing relationships? Do you need to pay for participants to attend the consultation?	Do you have a complex or controversial issue to deal with? Do you need to introduce or test a changed or new program or service? Do you need to seek new ideas or solutions? How do you best achieve that? Do costs associated with transport, childcare costs need to be factored into? What are the costs associated with catering , venue and facilitator?	Do you need the community to define their own vision for the future? Do you need the community to actively commit to an in depth and lengthy process? Will the issue have a significant and lasting impact on a particular segment of the community as a whole? Is there an existing ongoing forum you can tap in to? Have you approval for the associated costs?

*   Based on the IAP2 Community Participation Spectrum

2. SELECTING LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

A number of factors will influence the engagement methods and tools that you may wish to use.

Be mindful of the following factors when planning your engagement:

ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS INCLUDE
Goals and objectives	• Why are we engaging with the community? • What do we hope to achieve from the engagement? • How much time do we have? • Do the benefits of engaging outweigh the costs of not engaging?
Community to be targeted	Who are we targeting? • A geographic community? • An ethnic or faith community? • An indigenous community? • A professional community? • A community of interest? • Some combination of the above? • Are other agencies also engaging this community? Is collaboration possible?
Political environment	• What level of political support or awareness exists about the proposed engagement? • Is your process part of a broader government agenda? • Is this a contested issue?
Capacity to influence	• Is this a government or a community initiated activity? • What decisions have already been made? • What decisions can the community have input into?
Legislative environment	• Is engagement required by legislation? • Are any parts of this project or engagement process supported or constrained by legislation?
Policy and planning cycles	• Where does your engagement fit with the policy or planning cycle?
Resources	• What resources are available to support the engagement? • Skilled facilitators and managers? • Information and communication technologies? • Engagement structures such as Advisory committees? • Budget allocation? • Staff time?
Corporate culture	• Is there a community engagement framework, policy or similar to support this process? • Is there a high level of understanding of, and commitment to, engagement? • Is there an openness to use more innovative engagement processes?

2. SELECTING LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS INCLUDE
Demographic features	• What is the age and gender mix? • What levels of literacy exist? • What is the socio-economic mix? • What languages are spoken in the community? • What cultural protocols are adhered to? • Do community members have access to transport?
Preferences for engagement	• Have community members expressed particular preferences regarding engagement? • Face-to-face meetings? • Workshops? • Online?
Capacity for engagement	• Do community members have the knowledge needed to participate? (eg to critique planning models) • Do community members have the resources needed to participate? (eg time, internet access) • Do community members have the skills needed to participate? (eg public speaking) • Do community members have access to necessary infrastructure needed to participate? (eg child car networks, transport and disability access)
Existing engagement structures and processes	• Are there existing networks, committees, structures to support engagement within the community? • Are there sporting, religious, professional and other groups who already engage with the community? Will they support this engagement? • Are there existing newsletter, radio stations, websites etc the community access?
Nature of impact	• Who is directly impacted by the issue? • Who is indirectly impacted by the issue? • Who is interested but not necessarily impacted? • Is public opinion positive, negative, divided or indifferent?

Source: ACT Government, Community Engagement Guide 2011

3. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

WAYS TO HELP MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

There are many ways to also help manage expectations, bridge the expectations gap and move things from 'What's in it for me?' to 'What's in it for everyone?'

First, and most importantly, is the stakeholder and community identification process.

- know your stakeholders and communities — who they are, what drives them, what are their priorities and hot buttons, who oversees them and who do they oversee, who are they accountable to and how, who are sufficiently secure in their positions to talk freely (such as business people, leaders of voluntary organisations, clergy, agency staff), different skill and experience levels.

- how do they make decisions — the style of decision making, who makes the decisions, and whether they are part of a team or loners.

Steps for managing expectations

Steps for Managing Expectations

- Involve customers / stakeholders in defining needs and wants
- Celebrate met expectations (interim successes)
- Demonstrate a shift to broader concerns
- Communicate changes
- Realign or change expectations
- Measure performance
- Assure that processes are credible and open
- Follow through on commitments
- Communicate realistic expectations and do not create false hopes
- Set realistic expectations on budget scope and benchmarks
- Establish approach to "market" the project
- Assess risks and address them accordingly
- Understand the values of customers / stakeholders groups through communications

3. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Also consider:

- having clear parameters in terms of ACT Government's resources and statutory limitations (know your negotiables and non–negotiables);

- identifying specific roles to be undertaken by key stakeholders, including community, ACT Government and any partners;

- the ways conflict will be managed and differing views and priorities addressed;

- the ways decisions and priorities will be communicated to stakeholders;

- that not all issues can be addressed, and the importance of seeking stakeholder priorities to agree what can reasonably be achieved; and

- monitoring, reviewing and adjusting the outcomes if necessary, with an emphasis on continuous improvements and current information about needs and priorities.

Be honest

Be open and honest with people. Discuss the overall needs of an issue to get people to think beyond their own locales, the costs involved in meeting everyone's expectations, any budget and design limitations, the implications and constraints that apply to a decision, and the department's requirement to provide services/policies etc for all members of the community with differing needs and expectations.

Dealing with existing expectations requires a common approach throughout the engagement process and time to brief and update participants and other interested parties along the way. Educate to increase awareness, give constant feedback and manage expectations rather than change expectations.

Remember, do not try to change expectations, just manage them.

Take the time to explain the context of each individual or group's situation, because reaching an understanding about why people hold different views can then help to build a resolution.

Remember, no surprises.

Warn stakeholders of possible issues early in the process. Bring strategies and alternatives, not just bad news.

Share the good news around.

Dealing with conflicting expectations

The ACT Government is no stranger to conflicting expectations, especially when there is a diversity of views to deal with because people see things differently. Resolving these conflicts is essential when engaging people, as this will encourage discussion of options and help work towards joint decisions.

3. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Ways to respond to conflict include:

• bringing hidden conflicts out into the open;

• disagreeing with ideas and not people involved;

• sharing responsibility for the conflict;

• focusing squarely on the issues;

• not taking sides;

• not making promises that cannot be kept;

• not withholding information to gain a tactical advantage;

• allowing for breaks in the engagement activity to assist rethinking; and

• respecting sensitive data.

Other things to think about include:

• encouraging participation in decision making;

• developing good relationships;

• making meetings more productive; and

• encouraging creativity.

Working towards consensus

Reaching consensus is important if genuine participation is desirable. Consensus is different to 'majority rule', as the former involves cooperative decision making, with the ACT Government working with stakeholders and not competing.

Consensus does not mean that everyone involved will be completely happy with the process or outcomes. Rather, the focus is on reaching a decision that is acceptable to the diversity of people involved.

A useful way to look at consensus is to break it into five levels to help solve impasses.

1. I can easily support the decision.

2. I can support the decision but it may not be my preference.

3. I can support the decision with minor changes.

4. I can support the group but not necessarily the decision.

5. I cannot support the decision unless major changes are made (Rebori, 2001).

Consensus can be achieved when there is:

• unity of purpose;

• equal access to participation;

• enough time for decisions to be reached;

• agreement by all involved to a problem-solving process; and

• mutual education and cooperation.

3. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Agreement through negotiation

If the interest and issues of those involved in the engagement activity differ significantly, then negotiation can help.

Negotiation works best when:

- people are separated from the issues and problems;
- there is a strong focus on the underlying needs and not positions;
- options are developed that result in mutual gain; and
- fair, equitable and objective processes are used.

Preparation
(objectives, available options, agenda)

Clarify objectives
(departments and stakeholders)

Making proposals
(areas of potential agreement, mutual elements, stakeholder alternatives to rejected proposals)

Bargaining
(exchange of concessions directed at real needs)

Agreeing
(acknowledge and record points of agreement, if no firm conclusion aim for a principle agreement)

Following up
(monitor implementation of agreement, provide information on how things are working and any problems that arise)

(Source: Adapted from New South Wales Office on Social Policy, 1993)

Queensland Government, Department of Transport and Main Roads, (formerly Department of MainRoads), Community Engagement: Resource Guide, p 53

4. BENEFITS AND RISKS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BENEFITS

Good engagement practices have multiple benefits for communities and ACT Government agencies.

From a community perspective, good engagement practice:

- empowers communities to contribute to defining their own vision/s and creates a greater sense of community spirit;
- helps build community capacity to engage, raises community awareness about issues and helps them to be better informed and understand our activities;
- provides opportunities for people to have greater access to the department and be involved in our decisions, leading to a sense of ownership of the issues and solutions;
- leads to better decisions and solutions that are more tailored to community needs;
- incorporates wider and more diverse inputs; and
- leads to better outcomes for the community.

From a departmental perspective, good engagement practice:

- helps ACT Government agencies to tap into local knowledge and what will work and what might not work;
- helps to understand and respond better to community issues;
- gives a wide range of perspectives on issues;
- helps to better manage expectations;
- helps to minimise community misconceptions and misinformation about why things are done the way they are;
- helps reach the best outcome from the available public purse;
- helps build better relationships and public trust in government and public servants through open, transparent and accountable processes;
- leads to sustainable policies, programs and services and improved efficiencies in coordination; and
- delivers outcomes that contribute to a better quality of life for the community.

From an ACT Government perspective, good engagement practice:

- satisfies community expectations to be involved and have a say in government beyond the vote;
- increases credibility and accountability;
- improves democratic outcomes;
- leads to better and more acceptable decisions;
- fulfils statutory requirements;
- shapes more effective public policy, programs and service; and
- can result in cost and time savings by addressing community issues much earlier in decision-making.

4. BENEFITS AND RISKS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RISKS

Working with communities carries some risks and these must be carefully managed. Risks and suggested strategies include the following.

Risk 1. Lack of sufficient time available for engagement.

Suggested strategies

Allow plenty of time to plan and prepare the engagement activities. Understand the purpose of the engagement – if time is limited and people's contributions cannot influence decisions or a decision has already been reached, then consider the appropriate level of engagement and what information should be disseminated to reflect the decisions.

Risk 2. Community expectations may be raised unrealistically.

Suggested strategies

Be clear about the issue at hand, the resources available, the negotiables and non-negotiables, whether the engagement is about the present or future. Be careful not to promise more than can be achieved. Know the political context of the engagement activity. Build on any engagement that may have already taken place.

Risk 3. Having to engage after a decision has been made.

Suggested strategies

- Avoid false promises – know the boundaries of your engagement brief and purpose of engagement.
- Look at the issue to see what type of community engagement is relevant – it may be that information and consultation are appropriate (a road project is decided and the department needs to inform and consult with the community about this), or only information is appropriate.
- Check if the community can influence some part of the decision before choosing active participation (for example, a road requiring upgrading is adjacent to small business and road closures are necessary; there is an opportunity to be flexible in the timing of the closure so as not to disadvantage businesses economically).
- Ask participants about their perceptions of the purpose of the engagement and what they feel their involvement should achieve to dispel any misconceptions.

Risk 4. Engagement can expose diverse and often conflicting views and issues.

Suggested strategies

- Everyone has a view and the engagement process must include time to understand the issues and respond appropriately.
- Remember, not everyone can be engaged with about everything.
- Work out who your stakeholders are and plan to engage them.
- Think about the issue or challenge they are to be engaged on.
- Use a phased approach and start with the main ones.
- Give people time to off-load and express their views. Listen to what people say, and take the issues on board.
- Be prepared to listen to anger and conflict and hone personal negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

4. BENEFITS AND RISKS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- At an appropriate point, get the group to consider resolving some of the difficulties they have expressed by coming up with solutions themselves.

- If an issue does not relate to your field of expertise or is an issue for another department, take down contact details and refer the issue to the appropriate area/other department.

- Pilot possible solutions and learn and improve as you go.

Risk 5. The method used for engagement may lead to unrepresentative responses.

Suggested strategies

- Know your community and its social structures.

- Use a mix of methods, qualitative (seek more in-depth opinions) and quantitative (measure satisfaction or opinions numerically) data.

- If existing community groups are not representative of the community (for example, the community has a high proportion of people from non-English-speaking backgrounds but no representatives from traditional groups), then explore the use of a variety of methods that reach more people.

- Postal surveys usually get a limited response but can be a good information medium.

- Focus groups are good for common- sense opinions on complex matters.

- Telephone surveys can give a quick response to questions.

- Talk to community leaders and elders about their local people.

- Personal interviews provide an opportunity to work with people who want face-to-face contact or who cannot easily access the staff of the department.

You may need to explore more innovative ways of engaging people who are excluded.

Risk 6. Difficulties in engaging certain communities and individuals.

Suggested strategies

- Know your community and its readiness to engage with you.

- Learn about past engagement experience that may have been contentious, and community issues that arose from that experience.

- Understand the socio-demographic characteristics of the community (look at education, age, income, home ownership, ethnicity, and household structures – lone person, sole parent).

- Tap into existing community structures to reach others.

- Take the time to build trusting and meaningful relationships.

4. BENEFITS AND RISKS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Risk 7. No provision given for feedback throughout the engagement process.

Suggested strategies

- Incorporate feedback into your engagement plan. It is an important part of engagement.

- Use flip charts to record issues and concerns (once people see these recorded they are usually comfortable moving on).

- Take names and addresses and get back to people. Let people know what has happened to their inputs, how they were or were not used and the reasons why.

- If the feedback is likely to be contentious, consider taking a senior staff member along so that your role as the facilitator of the engagement process is not compromised.

Community engagement should have an effective risk and issues management strategy. A strategic approach will:

- ensure greater awareness of risk expose;

- ensure more efficient use of resources;

- lead to more effective contingency planning;

- lead to enhanced decision making;

- lead to better identification of opportunities; and

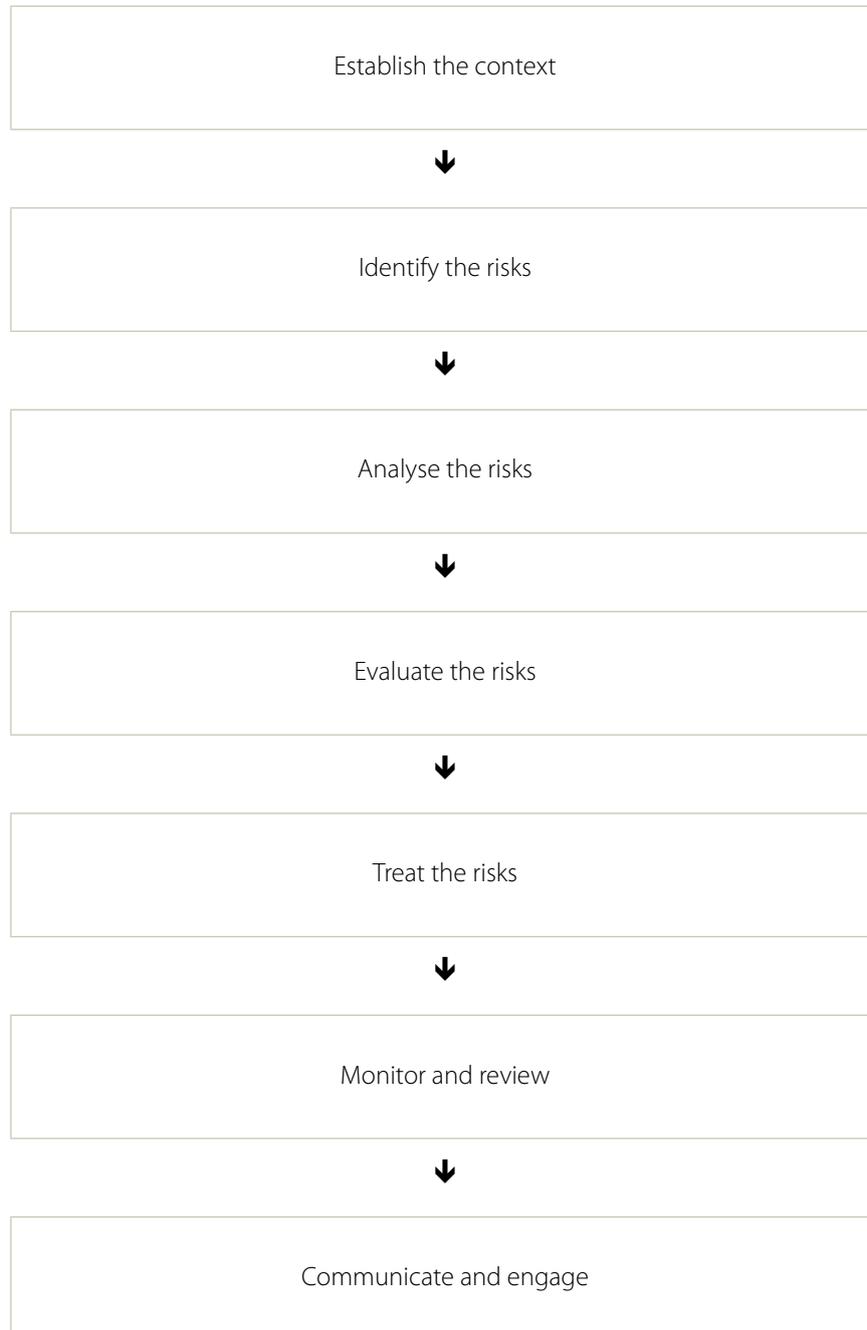- result in reduced incidence of undesirable outcomes.

Further information

This information has been compiled from the following resources:

- Maroochy Shire Council (2003) Public Participation Program Manual, www.maroochy.qld.gov.au

- Queensland Government (2004) Engaging Queenslanders: Community engagement in the business of government, www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au

- Engagement tips Queensland Health

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

A good community engagement process should have a risk management strategy built in. The strategy should:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Establish the context           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Identify the risks             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Analyse the risks              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Evaluate the risks             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                Treat the risks               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Monitor and review             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│             Communicate and engage           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Source: Queensland Government, Department of Transport and Main Roads (formerly Department of Main Roads) Community Engagement Resource Guide, p 74

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK MITIGATION STRATEGIES

RISK	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Confusion on purpose and scope of engagement and unrealistic expectations.	• Clearly define the purpose and scope of the engagement activity and constantly reiterate. • Be honest and clear about what the engagement activity is trying to achieve.
Community has expressed concerns about consultation overload and fatigue.	• Provide sufficient feedback time • Stagger consultations • Work with other Directorates to identify synergies
Community / directorate distrust.	• Be open and honest • Be consistent and work at developing relationships
Difficulty in obtaining representative participation and views.	• Undertake a rigorous stakeholder scan • Use networks and contacts
Difficulties emerge during conduct of engagement.	• Be flexible and adaptable to address emerging issues
Emergence of misinformation.	• Firmly but respectfully correct wrong information
Major disagreement among stakeholders.	• Identify areas of agreement and compromise • Give participants the opportunity to comment report findings prior to release
Conflict during the process of engagement.	• Acknowledge people's issues • Meet key stakeholders individually to clarify issues of concern
Engagement can arouse false expectations.	• Be open about the constraints, scope and limitations of the engagement
Physical intimidation or harassment.	• Conclude the engagement and reconvene at a later date if necessary
Lack of co-ordination across government leading to community feeling overwhelmed with consultation.	• Collaborate and co-ordinate engagements through CMD Community Engagement Unit • Liaise regularly with other Directorates

6. CHECKLIST FOR PUBLIC EVENTS

LOGISTICS CHECKLIST FOR PUBLIC EVENTS

Planning

- Identify main issues for the meeting or event.

- Identify main stakeholders who should be invited, including Ministers if appropriate.

- Set clear objectives and expected outcomes for the event.

- Decide how feedback from the event will be recorded and used in the process.

- Set the time line: dates for the event, invitations, advertising, publications.

- Select main activities (e.g., short lectures, slide shows, small discussion groups).

- Choose an appropriate location.

- Determine information needs: brochures, hand-outs, displays.

- Establish team and assign tasks.

- Allocate funds and other resources.

Develop the agenda

- Prepare a detailed agenda with times and activities.

- Appoint chairperson or facilitator.

- Designate speakers and resource persons.

- Choose recorders/note-takers to record proceedings, comments and questions (decide what level of detail you need for your reports and analysis - you many not need "every word".).

- Assign tasks to speakers, resource persons, and recorders.

- Prepare presentations.

Publicity and advertising

Prepare the following:

- Press releases for TV, daily and weekly newspapers.

- Invitations: letters or phone calls to various stakeholders.

- Notices to send to stakeholder organizations and individuals.

- Posters.

- Newspaper ads.

6. CHECKLIST FOR PUBLIC EVENTS

LOGISTICS

Before the event

- Reserve an appropriate room, considering size, access (including transport options)comfort and lighting, seating formation.

- Prepare programs or handouts.

- Prepare nametags or name cards (on meeting tables).

- Prepare sign-in or registration sheet (request contact details for feedback).

- Prepare comment sheets and/or evaluation questionnaires.

- Produce displays (e.g., posters, maps).

- Prepare overheads, slides, video or PowerPoint presentation.

- Arrange for overhead or slide projector, PowerPoint projector and screen.

- Arrange for sound system: microphone and speakers, lectern.

- Organize refreshments.

On the day of the event

- Consider your audience to ensure your attire, consultation methods and communication styles promote effective engagement.

- Post direction signs and banners.

- Check and pre-test facilities, equipment and lights.

- Bring or arrange for extra projector bulbs, spare extension cords.

- Set up seating and table arrangements.

- Set up information tables, displays and sign-in table.

- Arrange hand-outs and other informational materials.

- Set up refreshments.

During the event

- Greet people at door, if possible.

- Register participants, if appropriate.

- Provide sign-up for a mailing list, comment sheets and evaluation questionnaires, as needed.

- Start on time or explain delays.

- Check if everyone can hear and see.

- Do introductions of speakers - and participants, if it is a workshop or small forum.

- Review agenda and objectives of meeting.

- Carefully monitor timing and speakers, according to the agenda.

- Ensure that everyone who wants to speak does so, and that no one person dominates.

- Record key comments and input on flip charts, overheads and/or in reporters' notes.

- Identify next steps, including how you will report back to participants.

6. CHECKLIST FOR PUBLIC EVENTS

• Make sure participants have signed up and filled in comment sheets.

• Make sure participants have contact information for follow-up.

After the event

• Hold de-briefing with organising team (staff, consultants).

• Review participant comment sheets and evaluations.

• Review recorders notes.

• Prepare report summarising all comments, or incorporate into project documents.

• Evaluate the event and identify lessons learned.

• Revise the rest of the public engagement program, if needed.

• Prepare/add to mailing list

• Assign follow-up tasks, including feedback on the event posted on website (e.g. one or two page overview of key message and themes arising and next steps information).

Source: Maroochy Shire Council Community Engagement Toolkit 2003

7. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Consideration needs to be given to how best communicate complex and specialised information in accessible ways. This recognises that many projects that the ACT Government may seek community views on, will be dealing with planning, development and technical considerations.

Technical experts, which can include engineers, scientists, technicians and planners, have access to information that can be critical to the success of a project. It is also true that their specific field, technical experts develop a 'language' and ways of expressing ideas that can be very difficult for non-technical people to understand.

This presents a very real dilemma - how to ensure that the public have access to the information they need, and how to ensure that in doing so the technical experts feel their contribution has been understood and valued.

Another example is engaging the community around proposed amendments to legislation. This also requires careful thought on how to present complex information in ways that will encourage feedback and views from the community, particularly those people and groups that may be most the impacted by any proposed changes.

Origins of the 'Problem'

It is easy to assume that all we are required to do is tell people what we know, and that this will be absorbed and become part of their knowledge set.

The truth is that people only hear some of what we say when we speak in unfamiliar technical language or jargon. This in effect pre-filters what is heard and makes it more likely that the information will be misunderstood by the listener. Despite the best intentions of both speaker and listener, this situation invariably results in miscommunication.

The following table provides a snapshot of some useful communication techniques:

SKILL	WHAT YOU NEED TO DO	HOW
Empathy	People respond as though they have been heard when you show that you know how they feel, that you are aware of what concerns them	Identify the emotion that seems apparent in the speaker's voice and comments, eg "it sounds like you feel that your concerns are being ignored"
Drawing people out	Helps people to clarify and refine their ideas. Useful when speaker is thinking out loud or when listeners are not clear. It validates the contribution of the speaker.	Use after paraphrasing. You might say, "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" Can simply use gestures to prompt people to elaborate.
Mirroring	Captures people's exact words. Some need to hear back their exact words in order to feel heard. Useful when brainstorming – good for suspending judgment and affirming people. Builds trust.	Paraphrase with a mellowed tone. Remain warm and accepting. Use their words not yours. Very important when using flip chart – NEVER use your own words because you think they are superior. If statements are too long to record, ask for a headline or summary phrase from speaker before recording.
Gathering ideas	When you want to build a list of ideas quickly. Use with mirroring and help people into the groove of using 3 to 5 words only.	Concise statements of task (eg for the next ten minutes please call out the pro's and con's for this option. We'll build both lists at the same time") Encourage group to suspend judgment or comment. No idea assassinations Use body language and brisk actions to maintain all viewpoints

Source: Advanced CE Masterclass, Twyford M

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

MANAGING CONFLICT AND DEALING WITH EXTREME VIEWS

Communities and individuals have diverse and often extreme views. The way that people act and use language reflects their system of values, beliefs and principles, and what they know to be true. It is also a way to reinforce individual or social identity.

What are extreme views?

Extreme views are opinions and statements expressed through language or behaviour that can be unacceptable to groups of people or individuals. Generally, the scope of extreme views includes language or behaviour that causes offence to others, or is derogatory, vulgar, disrespectful or unacceptable to wider society. This is different to language used to present an underlying reasonable point of view.

Guidance when engaging

Some general points to consider:

- always pre-plan engagement activities, thinking through the various scenarios and possible group dynamics you may face;
- aim for a reasoned discussion and not arguments (the use of a structured agenda can help);
- have a set of ground rules at the outset of the engagement and be prepared to enforce them – for example, a contract for engagement that states sexist, racist, ageist, or other extreme views is not permissible;
- ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout the process;
- use flip charts (butcher's paper) to record issues, then follow these up;
- try to limit inputs from outspoken people and seek the inputs of others to give equal time;
- provide opportunities that help build community and individual capacity to engage with the ACT Government;
- utilise other participants to quell adverse views by asking the group: 'What do you think about the views of x?';
- consider learning basic greetings in different languages if your community is linguistically diverse; and
- where appropriate enlist translators or community leaders to assist with the process.

Challenging extreme views

One way to deal with extreme views is by being constructive and non-aggressive. This does not mean that you want to control people or 'gag' them.

Do:

- set a positive image of the ACT Government in the community by including different people and cultures in engagement and in corporate publications;
- challenge views that are provocative and manipulative;
- get to the heart of why people hold a certain view and counter ill-founded beliefs and false perceptions with facts;
- counter negative comments with a positive statement;
- ensure you do not agree (wittingly or unwittingly) with extreme views; this can reinforce negative attitudes;
- tell people that vulgar and abusive language will not be tolerated; and
- ask participants if they understand how their language and views can offend others.

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

Dealing with protesters

Sometimes, even with the best process, there will be situations when communities and individuals will protest loudly about the organisation's decisions. Some may feel their issues were not dealt with, the outcome was not what they wanted, and they were not listened to, and or just totally disagree, even with a good engagement process.

In dealing with protesters, consider the following:

• seek senior management advice about the issue and who should mediate (depending on the sensitivity it might require Ministerial involvement);

• if there are safety issues, such as site hazards and personal safety, arrange for joint discussions between site personnel, protesters and the police;

• explain to protesters what the ACT Government and/or its contractors must do (obligations to continue work);

• do not make promises that cannot be kept;

• put in place measures that avoid confrontation between workers and protesters;

• arrange a meeting with protest leaders, chaired by a neutral person, have a negotiated agenda and ground rules, keep a written record, and consider holding the meeting on the protester's home ground (Adapted from VicRoads, 1997).

Structuring issues and managing conflicts

Managing conflict involves a good understanding of the issues. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. Whatever approach is taken, the goal should be to move the parties involved to a common agreement, by getting commitment that a problem exists; agreeing on the nature of the problem, and that working together will get the best outcome (Dicker, 2001).

One way is to manage issues is using the **DRIVE** model to categories issues:

• **D** – Data or factual issues related to the facts about the problem.

• **R** – Relational issues that reflect the nature of the relationship.

• **I** – Interest issues that impact upon what needs those involved are trying to serve and what they are trying to achieve to meet those needs.

• **V** – Value issues involve individual sets of values that dictate attitudes, and involve issues about what is 'right' and 'wrong'.

• **E** – Emotional issues are linked to the way in which an individual's goals and needs are met, and include concepts such as pride, dignity and fairness (Lewthwaite, 2000:94-95).

Grouping issues helps to identify the tools needed to manage them, including:

• Enquiry – find out why the issues have led to the conflict (use your own words to paraphrase what the other person has said and to ask if they feel they were understood, offer your own feelings and understanding of the issue).

• Control – stepping back from the issues and your own feelings, using relaxation techniques.

• Receiving – receive the other's comments without interrupting, repeat the comments to show you are listening and valuing, and to open up conversation.

• Requesting – request the other person's way of dealing with the problem.

• Reviewing – review the possible options, and honestly disclosing your feelings in a way that is acceptable to the other party (Lewthwaite, 2000:94-95).

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

Counselling, mediation, negotiation and conciliation

Counselling is good to use in the first stages of a dispute or as a preliminary to a major process. It can help break down barriers and identify alternatives to current stances. Counselling does require some training and experience, especially in situations when there could be physical or psychological factors that require additional support.

Mediation is a means of dispute resolution that involves a third party who does not have authority to make decisions or recommendations, but controls or facilitates the process. It can lead to joint problem solving to differences.

Advantages include:

- mediator is independent;
- parties work together towards a solution;
- greater commitment to getting an outcome;
- process is controlled;
- relatively inexpensive.

Disadvantages include:

- time consuming and takes time for people to accept mediation as a positive tool;
- difficulties can arise when there is an imbalance of power between the parties involved.

Negotiation is a process by which the parties reach agreement by resolving their differences.

Advantages include:

- involves all parties directly in the process;
- creates a sense of ownership with the decision reached not belonging to a third party;
- leads to a better understanding by all involved;
- exposes the reasons behind deep-seated feelings;
- reveals hidden agendas.

Disadvantages include:

- time consuming;
- requires commitment by all involved;
- people may lack the courage and experience to negotiate on equitable terms;
- can be imbalance in power and authority;
- inequities in resources and access to information.

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

From time to time, situations can arise when it is necessary to use conciliators as a facilitator to reach resolution or agreement, such as when legal actions must be taken or responded to. This person should be credible, skilled and fully briefed. The proceedings should be followed closely, reported and reviewed.

Advantages include:

- independent third party
- less threatening than more formal processes
- non-confrontationalist
- attempts to get the parties to talk to each other
- places options on the table for consideration
- more flexible
- uses guidance and expertise of the conciliator
- sets strong direction through recommendations
- provides time and space for research and information gathering.

Disadvantages include:

- recommendations come from a third party
- parties might not be committed to the recommendation
- has a quasi-legal atmosphere
- does not require agreement
- can be viewed as a pause or cooling off technique.

General tips for contact with communities, groups and individuals

Try to:

- Learn about the communities, groups and individuals and their issues when engaging.
- Accept that different cultures have different values and behaviours.
- Give people your name.
- Take people seriously.
- Communicate and give information in appropriate ways.
- Listen and use eye contact, acknowledge that you understand what people are saying by using positive gestures.
- Let people get things off their chest and then repeat key points to them.
- Ask them what they want as an outcome.
- Have all the facts ready.
- Be aware of your own body language (non-verbals) because how we appear can send an instant message to people.
- Take responsibility for resolving issues/problems, even if you cannot deal with these personally.
- Where possible, honour any promises made – if a promise can not be honoured, be open and honest about the reasons.

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

- Record incidents and explain later to your manager/project leader.

- Be assertive by asking people to refrain from vulgar or abusive language, and advise that if they continue to be abusive you will terminate discussions and reschedule at another time.

Try **not** to:

- take comments and criticisms personally.

- be disrespectful (not listening, talking over people, being discourteous).

- react angrily or defensively and rise to the 'bait', even if this is how you are being treated.

- be alone with an aggressive person.

Do not:

- deliberately give people inaccurate information to fob them off.

- bluff - if you do not know the answer, say so and give a commitment to find out and respond later.

Remember:

- At all times when dealing with stakeholders, stay safe and secure.

- Stick to the facts.

- Ideally, do not engage people alone.

- Keep good records of your dealings for later reference.

- Get to know your communities and individuals and groups and their issues, past and present. This will help you to understand and respond to any likely contentious situations.

For more information

This information was compiled from the following resources.

- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, Five-stage engagement planning cycle, http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/intro/print.jsp

- Dicker, L. (2001) Making Conflict Resolution Happen, Business + Publishing.

- Levine, S. (2002) The Book of Agreement, BK Publishers.

- Lewthwaite, J. (2000) ed, Negotiate to Succeed, Hawksmere.

- Oldham Council (2003) Guidance on Dealing with Extreme Views, http://www.oldham.gov.uk/extreme_views.pdf

- Department of Transport and Main Roads (formerly Department of Main Roads), Community Engagement Resource Guide

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

SOME 'DO'S' AND 'DON'TS' WHEN BEING CRITICISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

DO:

Become aware of your own listening habits
Share responsibility for the communication
Concentrate on what the speaker is saying
Become curious to find out what is going on
Listen for the total meaning, including feelings
Observe the speaker's nonverbal signals
Adopt an accepting attitude
Express empathetic understanding
Listen to yourself as others might hear you
Close the loop' of listening by taking appropriate action

DON'T:

Mistake not talking for listening
Fake listening
Interrupt impulsively
Pass judgment too quickly
Make arguing an "ego-trip"; don't argue
Ever tell a speaker, "I know exactly how you feel"
Overreact to emotional words (get defensive)
Give advice unless it is requested

8. MANAGING CONFLICT AND EXTREME VIEWS

MANAGING HOSTILE SITUATIONS

Remember

- Environmental issues can arouse strong emotions, including anger and hostility.

- Hostility is usually directed at you as a representative of an organisation, not you as an individual.

- Dealing effectively with hostility can build trust and credibility.

Some things you can do

Acknowledge the existence of hostility	• You are sending the message that you are in control • Never ignore hostility. Acknowledge the "elephant in the room"
Practice self-management	• Recognise your apprehension • Controlling your anxiety to build your confidence, concentration, and momentum • Listen
Be prepared	• Plan, prepare, and practice your presentation as well as responses to anticipated questions • Know what you want to say well enough that you can say it "from the heart"
Communicate empathy and caring	• Recognise and acknowledge people's frustrations • Use eye contact, even although avoiding the gaze of someone who is angry is a natural reaction • Assume a listening posture, arms unfolded at your sides • Wait for responses from your listeners
Track your messages	• Turn negatives into positives. Identify opportunities for desirable outcomes • Bridge back to key messages that you need people to consider Shift attention from emotions to outcomes

9. ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

To meet the promise made to stakeholders (see the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum) and achieve a successful overall project outcome, it is important you select the appropriate tools for the engagement.

The tables below provide a number of options, are not necessarily representative of all possible approaches, and should be used as a guide only.

TABLE 1

INFORM (TIMING: 2 – 6 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Information Sessions Public gatherings where people engage at their own pace, and are invited to drop in individually to view plans, ask questions, give opinions, or have a chat.	• Use clear jargon-free, inclusive language – avoid acronyms • Use easy to read diagrams and eye-catching visuals • Have technical experts on-site to answer questions	• Control of information/presentation • Opportunities to clarify misinformation • Reach a wider variety of people • Build community capacity • Evaluation and readjust approach	• Some groups may be left out of briefings • Inaccurate information may be passed on to the community • Expectations may be raised • Information may be used inappropriately
Printed Materials • Canberra Times *Community Noticeboard* • Fact Sheets • Newsletters • Newspaper Advertising/Inserts • Brochures/Pamphlets • Reports • Letterbox drops • Personalised invitations	• Keep it short and simple • Make it visually interesting and engaging but not too busy or slick • Proof read all documents • Trial the material with other staff members • Use language that is inclusive and jargon free • Always include opportunities for comment • Explain community's role and how comments will affect project decisions • Offer interpretation services	• Can reach a large target audience • Community look for information in regular place and format e.g. Community Noticeboard • Allows for technical and legal reviews • Documentation of community involvement facilitated • Mailing list developed	• Distribution planning inadequate • Materials do not reach the mark • Materials not read • Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts • Information misinterpreted
Displays • Canberra Connect shopfronts • ACT Libraries • Community centres • Shopping centres • Schools • Cabinet in the Community • ACTION buses	• Establish regular sites • Make a distribution list • Make sure staff at locations are fully briefed • Consider use of 'big screens' in Shopfronts • Make sure materials are up-to-date	• Information is accessible to the community at little cost • Community can ask for further information	• Staffing of displays can be costly • Sites are overcrowded with information • No active promotion of materials • Upkeep of information at sites not well managed.

9. ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

INFORM (TIMING: 2 – 6 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Websites • Community engagement website • Directorate website • ACT Government portal • Facebook • Time to talk website • User group blogs • Canberra Connect • ACT Government online feedback submissions	• Needs to be visible and easy to navigate • Keep information updated • Ensure links are working	• Capable of reaching a large audience at low cost • Popular information resource	• People without access disadvantaged • Technical difficulties • Hard to navigate

TABLE 2

CONSULT (TIMING: 6 – 10 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Printed Materials, Displays, Website	Refer to Table 1	Refer to Table 1	Refer to Table 1
Briefings Face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders, peak bodies, agency staff and Community Councils to share information and respond to questions.	• Keep it short and simple • Use clear jargon-free, inclusive language • Use easy to read diagrams and eye-catching visuals	• Control of information/ presentation • Opportunities to clarify misinformation • Reach a wider variety of people • Build community capacity • Evaluation and readjust approach	• Some groups may be left out of briefings • Inaccurate information may be passed on to the community • Expectations may be raised • Information may be used inappropriately
Surveys/Questionnaires Used to gauge broad community opinion and attitudes and gain quantitative and qualitative data. Typically undertaken online, by phone, or face-to-face and use blanket, random, or targeted distribution.	• Surveys/Questionnaires should be developed using specific guidelines and trialled before distribution • Collection and method of analysis to be considered and clarified • Level of engagement and parameters need to be clear	• Can gather information from people other than those with special interest • Gather information from people who might not attend meetings • Can gather specific information • Statistically tested results have more credibility	• Response rate can be poor • Communities can be over surveyed • Can be labour intensive • Questions may be misinterpreted • Results might not be trusted • Results might not be fed back to the community effectively

9. ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

CONSULT (TIMING: 6 – 10 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Subject matter/ technical 'experts' Use of respected experts in a particular field who are invited to attend briefings, meetings, workshops to provide advice.	• Representatives must be perceived as credible by communities • Ensure the experts have access to information about the community's attitudes and expectations	• Build credibility and address community concerns about equity • Facts in dispute can be debated and consensus reached	• Resource availability may be limited • Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities and may lack empathy with community concerns
Community Forums One or more public meetings where local residents are invited to share their opinions and ideas	• Be there when you say you are going to be • Consider the demographics of the area and time sessions accordingly • Greet people at the door and explain the format, • Provide background sheets	• Facilitates a wide variety of people being engaged • Break down perceived barriers • Fosters communication • More convenient for people • Engages people more effectively • Minimise aggressive approach to staff	• Special interest groups may boycott or disrupt • Groups may use 'dots' to lobby for special interests • Staff resource intensive • May not be accessible to people who rely on community transport

TABLE 3

INVOLVE (TIMING: 10 –16 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Printed Materials, Displays, Website, Briefings, Technical 'Experts', Community Forums	Refer to Tables 1 and 2	Refer to Tables 1 and 2	Refer to Tables 1 and 2
Focus Groups Small group discussion that can generate debate on a particular topic and help gain insight into views and attitudes	• Clear tasks • Relevant representation • Skilled facilitation • Give people a task eg "good/bad" dots to place on displays to record their preferences	• Provides opportunity to test material • Verify prior assumptions • Raise unexpected additional benefits	• Participants may feel restricted by the approach • May be perceived as exclusive • May be costly

9. ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

INVOLVE (TIMING: 10 –16 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Individual Interviews One-on-one discussions with key stakeholders to gain detailed information on their views and attitudes	• Be clear and open about the intent • Consider questions carefully to gather relevant information • Ensure effective record keeping methods are in place • Be inclusive • Be equitable	• Gather clear understanding of community concerns and issues • Individuals feel inclined to provide input based on personalised format • Able to reach more people by varying timeframe for interviews	• Can be very time consuming • Participants can take their issues out on the interviewer • Participants are tired of being interviewed on a range of issues and will not engage willingly
World Cafes A meeting process featuring a series of simultaneous conversations in response to predetermined questions.	• Know how you plan to use community input before the workshop • Decide how you are going to manage the group – rules for engagement • Use trained facilitators and give them clear instructions to ensure the aims of the workshop are achieved • How are you going to feed back outcomes of workshop to participants	• Participants can use the opportunity to raise their concerns, needs, issues • Foster equity and credibility • Opportunity to hear the "silent" voices • Special interest groups get to listen to other voices • Unexpected additional benefits • Relational benefits	• Small number of participants • Resistance to breaking up into small groups by some participants • Special interest groups monopolise the workshop • Participants alter the agenda • Facilitators not impartial or not skilled enough to deal with some behaviours • Information session format used rather than workshop format • Feedback not recorded effectively
Field Trips Guided site visits or tours of areas under discussion usually involving key stakeholders.	• Set up booking system to manage demand effectively • Make accessible to diverse groups • Provide itinerary/tour guide • Plan question/answer session • Plan refreshment break and provide water during the trip • Consider safety	• Opportunity to develop rapport with stakeholders • Increase knowledge of issues and process for all involved • Unexpected additional benefits	• Number of participants can be limited by resource availability • Intention can be misinterpreted • Project site may reveal unintended conditions • Aggrieved participants may take the opportunity to monopolise captured audience

9. ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

TABLE 4

COLLABORATE (TIMING: >16 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Charrettes Typically involves intense and possibly multi-day meetings involving key stakeholders working together to promote joint ownership of solutions and to defuse confrontational attitudes. Further information can be found on the website www.charretteinstitute.org/charrette.html	• Plan how the "Design-in" will take place • Provide clear information and guidelines for the participants • Provide clear parameters • Provide technical support • Provide opportunities to foster creative ideas	• Can create effective partnerships and working relationships with communities and individuals • Can develop a sense of trust for all concerned • Can identify issues and concerns in early stages of the project • Can result in improved outcomes	• Participants bring unrelated agenda to the session/s • Not enough time allowed for sessions • Small representation of community • None of what is discussed in the session/s is incorporated into the final design • Future expectations cannot be met
Citizen Juries Involves a "jury" made up of people selected "at random" who question expert "witnesses" / specialists called to provide different perspectives on a topic. Process is supervised by an advisory panel with relevant knowledge and interest in the outcome. A summary report is prepared and members of panel subsequently decide whether to or act on elements of this report. Some websites which provide more information include www.activedemocracy.net/articles/protocol.pdf and www.gavinmooney.com	• Ensure the sessions are managed by a skilled facilitator • Be clear how the results will be used • Ensure a cross-section from the community • Consider current levels of expertise of participants	• Great opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue • Positions of interest can shift • Limitations and possibilities can be identified • Can dispel misinformation • Can build credibility • Can provide unexpected benefits	• Group selection can be mistrusted • Participants may not show up on the day • Sessions can lose focus • Cost can be extensive

9. ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

COLLABORATE (TIMING: >16 WEEKS)	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Deliberative Polling Combines small-group discussions involving large numbers of participants with random sampling of public opinion. Its overall purpose is to establish a base of informed public opinion on a specific issue. Citizens are invited to take part at random, so that a large enough participant group will provide a relatively accurate representation of public opinion. For further information, including an ACT case study, visit www.ida.org.au/deliberative.php	• Ensure a skilled facilitator is used • Commit to full process • Consider resources required and check against budget and hidden costs • Aim for a cross-section of participants from the community • Plan to develop capacity in communities	• Participants can be exposed to views and arguments from different backgrounds • Special interest lobbying can be diffused • Can develop capacity in communities • Can provide unexpected benefits	• Mistrust of the organisers and unfamiliar process can hamper participation • People do not have the time required to commit to the process • Timeframes are unrealistic • Agenda too ambitions or not specific enough

10. PRACTICAL USE OF SOME POPULAR ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group can facilitate valuable discussion and help you gain important information on stakeholder's views and any potential 'hot' issues.

Organising a focus group

Engage a skilled facilitator if the appropriate skills are not available in-house. Provide information to participants a few weeks beforehand, particularly venue and date and time.

The information should include the purpose of the focus group, what will happen to the information, confidentiality, what is expected of participants and why they have been selected, how their feedback will be used.

Conducting a Focus Group

Focus groups should have no fewer than six participants in order to get a good group discussion and no more than ten participants so that less assertive participants will still contribute to the conversation. The focus group should preferably go for no more that 90 minutes.

Questions should be designed to stimulate participants to generate ideas and solutions, and need to be carefully crafted to guide the discussion. A few open-ended interview questions are probably needed to focus the discussion.

A good moderator can help keep the discussion focused on the major issues, manage dominate participants, and bring out quiet participants.

At the end of the focus group reinforce the purpose of the focus group and intentions. Be sure to thank participants and let them know where more information is available from and where they can provide more information.

Reinforce what the key themes were, and what was supported or rejected by more than one participant. Prepare a brief written summary of key themes as soon as possible while they are fresh then later refer to recordings if applicable.

COMMUNITY FORUMS

Community forums provide an opportunity to gather opinions, raise awareness, generate new ideas, test ideas, and legitimise directions.

Community forums give people of diverse backgrounds a chance to express their views and are a first step toward understanding the community's needs and resources.

Organising a community forum

Engage a skilled facilitator if the necessary skills are not available in-house.

Hold meetings at different locations to get 'real' representation, and schedule the forum at an easy-to-find, community location which is accessible and comfortable - for example, an ACT Government library, school or church hall. Hold the forum at a time to avoid time conflicts with work and school.

Communicate the forum as widely as possible, using advertisements in local media, community service announcements, letter box drops, through the local Community Council and media releases.

Personally invite community leaders and diverse community members to attend the meetings and ask them to recruit others as well.

Engage a facilitator who is known and respected, is neutral on the topic, has good listening and group process skills, and can keep things on track.

10. PRACTICAL USE OF SOME POPULAR ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Conducting a community forum

If time and group size allow, let all participants introduce themselves. Agree upon a set time for completing the forum and keep to it.

Provide information about your organisation, if appropriate. You can also pass around a sign-up sheet to get on a mailing list or to help out in other ways.

Seek to ensure that all attendees get a chance to express their views, rather than allowing the forum to be dominated by a vocal few.

Record the discussion on each of the topics and use a scribe to record results. Conclude with a summary of what was achieved. Prepare a written summary of ideas and publish on the website with mention of opportunities for further involvement. If you have a mailing list, consider emailing results to participants.

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Community surveys are a great way to gauge stakeholder views and are a means of collecting valuable information. Options can include conducting the surveys in the traditional paper or telephone method, or online which is proving to be more popular.

Organising a community survey

Construct questions that provide the information needed to achieve survey objectives. Ask clear, well constructed and concise questions. The information drawn from a survey is only as good as the questions asked.

Additional questions can be added to gather critical demographic and other lifestyle data such as gender, marital status, income level, and job title.

Complicated surveys impact response rates and predispose respondents to not participate in future surveys. In most cases, respondents should be able to complete the survey within 10 to 15 minutes.

Conducting a community survey

There are a number of ways to conduct a community survey. Four common methods include:

* conducting the survey using available in-house resources;

* engaging an external organisation or consultant;

* developing an electronic survey using an online survey tool, such as Survey Monkey;

* seeking support from a local organisation such as a youth, community club, university students to conduct the survey in the street.

It is important to clearly define the purpose of the survey with respondents, setting their expectations from the beginning.

People are more likely to participate when they know the reasons for conducting the survey, what information will be requested, and how their feedback will be used.

It is important that respondents feel good about the process and the organisation gets the information it needs to make better, more informed business decisions.

Good data analysis is the key to a successful survey. Analyse the data to identify trends, highlight unexpected findings, and draw conclusions. Be sure to provide a summary of data, and provide actionable recommendations where appropriate.

10. PRACTICAL USE OF SOME POPULAR ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

ROUNDTABLES

Roundtables are one of the more flexible engagement formats and may look quite different from session to session. The one thing that they have in common is that each allows for extended discussion among a cohort of colleagues or subject matter experts.

Participants are usually from the same business background who face similar challenges and can provide a mutual level of understanding and support. The format usually includes a presentation followed by an in-depth discussion.

Roundtables are excellent venues for giving and receiving targeted feedback, engaging in in-depth discussions, and meeting colleagues with similar interests.

Organising a roundtable

Information on the roundtable should be provided to participants a few weeks beforehand and should include purpose of the roundtable, venue, and date and time.

Bring ample copies of all materials that you wish to share with session attendees, or distribute in advance. Be sure to include your contact information on the first page to encourage follow-up.

It is useful to have one or two prepared questions at the ready that you can use to stimulate the discussion.

Conducting a roundtable

At the first meeting, you may want to share why you initiated this meeting and what you would like to see happen and ask the attendees why they came. This will get the group primed for the brainstorming session later in the meeting.

Discussion to confirm future meetings, including frequency, format, date, time, and location as well as topics, issues, and the concerns roundtable members want discussed.

The group should decide if the topics raised are for roundtable discussion only, pulling expertise from the members, or if they want to solicit an outside expert to discuss the issue (inner-circle discussion to presentation and facilitated discussion).

At the conclusion of the roundtable, gauge all attendees' ideas and opinions once again, as thought patterns may have changed when all viewpoints have been shared.

WORLD CAFES

A World Cafe is a meeting process featuring a series of simultaneous conversations in response to predetermined questions. Participants change tables during the process and focus on identifying common ground in response to each question.

They are designed to foster open communication and sharing within a group and bring to the surface areas of commonality and draw people into common problem solving.

World Cafes can remove the formal atmosphere of the traditional meeting, adding to participants comfort and involve a wide variety of people in a meaningful way, rather than in a confrontational setting. They can gain a high quantity of responses on specific topics in a short time, and build community among divers participant.

10. PRACTICAL USE OF SOME POPULAR ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Organising a World Cafe

Prepare compelling question(s) for discussion and prepare copies for each table.

Prepare written directions for table hosts outlining what is to be accomplished at each table.

Determine how to document the findings of the group conversations (butchers paper, sticky notes, paper on a sticky wall).

Invite target participants.

Tables should be set up with chairs around each table, with a maximum of around 4-6 per table, preferably using a round table. The goal is to make the setting look conducive to conversation and different from a standard meeting format.

The seven principles of World Cafes:

1. Set the context
2. Create hospitable space
3. Explore questions that matter
4. Encourage everyone's contribution
5. Cross- pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
6. Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
7. Harvest and share collective discoveries

Conducting a World Cafe

Ask one person per table to volunteer to serve as host. This person remains at their table through the session.

Welcome participants and ask table hosts to take their seats. Then ask other participants to take a seat at any table. When everyone is seated explain the format of a World Cafe as a series of conversations among the people at different tables.

Request participants record comments and points of agreement using the butchers paper or sticky notes.

Table host welcomes participants, reads instructions and facilitates group discussion to accomplish the assigned task.

When the facilitator rings the bell, everyone except the table host randomly moves to a new table. People should not visit any table more than once and should try to share what they have heard.

To conclude, tables share a common theme with the group at large. Also, to conclude, consider having groups post summaries along a wall. Then direct participants on a gallery walk to view the results.

It is not necessarily important to document responses to each question from each table as it is to capture summary thoughts at the end of the discussions if the questions have been designed to build upon each other.

10. PRACTICAL USE OF SOME POPULAR ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

CHECKLIST FOR FACE-TO-FACE ENGAGEMENTS

Materials and Equipment

☐ Flip charts/butchers paper

☐ Electronic whiteboard

☐ Pens/ markers

☐ Adhesives (blu-tack, sticky tape, thumbtacks, etc)

☐ Copy of any information sent

☐ List of ground rules for participants

☐ Laptop/notebook to record proceedings

☐ Name cards/ table name displays

☐ ACT Government contact details

☐ Tea/Coffee/Water and/or refreshments

☐ Extension Cables

☐ Laptop

☐ Litepro

☐ Information about the project prior to the meeting

☐ Ensure disabled access

☐ Hearing loops

☐ RSVP list/ attendee list

Venue

Inform reception that a meeting is taking place to guide attendees on arrival.

☐ Set up signs to guide people to where the meeting will take place.

☐ Familiarise yourself with where amenities are located.

☐ Familiarise yourself with emergency exits.

☐ Arrange seating so all participants can see each other.

☐ Check equipment is working properly.

☐ Avoid venues where alcohol is served.

☐ Facilitator, scribe.

11. ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

TIPS FOR ONLINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- If you engage online you must back your consultation with robust statistics relating to visitor numbers and comments.

- Think about the questions you ask and make them specific to the issue so that your audience can instantly relate to the issue.

- Widely promote and advertise your engagement in the community. If you don't tell the community it's there, they cannot be expected to find it. Use the traditional media, mail-outs and local networks as well as links, social network sites, and any other means to ensure that your community find the consultation. Direct email local community organisations. In addition Canberra Connect can arrange for any multimedia advertising you may have to be displayed in each of the shopfronts.

- Place a prominent link or advertisement to your consultation page on the ACT Government Information Portal. This can be arranged through Canberra Connect.

- Consider the users perspective when developing on-line material, making sure it is *Findable, Scanable, Readable and Concise* (source: 4 Syllables and Dey Alexander Consulting 2011). Will need to confirm usage.

- Pick an easy to remember URL and make it prominent on all of your project collateral.

- Provide relevant information in a format that is easy to read. One page summaries are good, photos are great, and videos are fantastic.

- Track the traffic that the consultation is attracting and consider follow up in the community if you are not satisfied that sufficient numbers have viewed the consultation. Remember, in most cases, the number of visitors, not comments, is the truest reflection of success.

- Be consistent in your use of online consultation so that over time your community gets used to participating in this way.

- Use online engagement tools repeatedly to build a community of people you can contact every time you launch a new project.

- Interact with visitors to the forum – they are more likely to come back and much more likely to tell their friends that you are listening.

- Use social networking sites like Facebook and community forums to get the message out. List your consultation on active local Facebook pages and other social networking sites.

- Set out the parameters of the discussion upfront. This includes moderation rules, closing dates, how this sits with the decision process and what feedback people should expect.

- Set facts straight, answer basic questions but don't get drawn in. Have clear internal protocols for interacting in the consultation.

11. ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

WEB 2.0 TOOLS AND TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Goal	Provide balanced and objective information and assist understanding.	Obtain communty feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Work directly throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	Partner each aspect of the decision including alternatives and solution.	Final decision making in the hands of the community.
Promise	Keep informed.	Acknowledge concerns and feedback on role in decision.	Concerns directly reflected in alternatives.	Incorporate advice and recommendations in decisions.	Implement community decisions.
Tools					
Basic Website	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Document Sharing	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Blogs	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Feedback Form	XX	XXX	XXX	XX	XX
Forum		XX	XX	XXX	XXX
Polling		XX	XX		
Photo Sharing	X	X	X	X	X
Online Video	X	X	X	X	X
RSS Feeds	XX	XX	X	X	X
Presentations	X	X	X	X	X
Podcasts	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Micro-blogs	XX	XX	X	X	X
Geospatial Location	X	X	XX	XX	X
Events Planning	X	X	X	X	X
Document Editing		X	XX	XX	XX
Wikis				XX	XX
Mashups	X	X	X	X	X
Surveys		X	X		
Desktop Widgets	X	X	X	X	X
Social Networks				XX	XX

Essential	XXX	Recommended	XX	Optional	X

Note: Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation

12. ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Why should I engage with children and young people?

It will make your job easier if you consult with children and young people because:

- children and young people are active participants in our community today;

- children and young people often have different views and experiences to those of adults;

- involving children and young people in decision making is actually required under international and Territory law, and is supported by research evidence and ACT Government policy commitments;

- consulting with children and young people will actually make your job easier in the long run – engaging with them will help you to:

  - make more effective law/policy, and deliver more effective programs;

  - save money and time, by helping to identify problems or improvements at an early stage;

  - meet statutory human rights obligations;

  - act in the best interests of children and young people; and

  - create a child-friendly city by providing opportunities to participate in democratic processes.

What should I consult with children and young people about?

- Consider occasionally conducting an informal 'child impact assessment' in relation to your work responsibilities. If you are helping to draft a law, or write a policy, or implement a program, in what ways does your work impact on children and young people?

- All areas of government work affect children and young people in some way – they, and the people they live with, use most ACT services and facilities, and are affected by many of the Territory's laws and policies.

- Think about when it might be helpful to have a more youthful perspective on the work that you do. If you are preparing a particular outcome (such as a new law or policy) you might plan a consultation activity within the drafting process. If you are involved with ongoing work (such as service delivery) you might survey your young clients to understand their experiences of the service.

Which children and young people should I talk to?

In order to define your consultation project, you will need to think about which groups of children and young people you wish to contact.

Children and young people are not a coherent group. They have a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Start to think of the different 'groups' of children or young people that you wish to consult with. For example:

- Young adults, teenagers, children, preschoolers, toddlers or babies.

- Children and young people who walk to get to places, ride bikes, catch buses, are driven in cars, or drive their own cars.

- Children and young people who attend public schools, independent schools, alternative education programs, home schooling, or who are not engaged with school.

- Children and young people who are comfortable with reading and writing, who are less confident, or who have learning difficulties

- Children and young people who go online all the time, or who don't have access to a computer.

- Children and young people who work part time, or who don't work.

- Children and young people who participate in sport, music, art, drama, dance, or none of these.

- Children and young people who attend temple, mosque, synagogue, church, or none of these.

12. ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

• Children and young people who have recently moved to Australia, who are learning to speak English, or who speak two languages at home.

• Aboriginal children and young people, or Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

• Children and young people who never get sick, who have regular temporary illnesses, or who have a long term chronic illness.

• Children and young people who have a physical disability, or an intellectual disability.

• Children and young people who care for a family member with a physical illness, mental illness or a disability.

• Young parents.

• Children and young people who are homeless, or who live with foster carers.

• Children and young people living a youth justice facility, mental health facility, or out of home care facility.

These categories do not define children and young people; they are just one aspect of their identity. Some children and young people fit within many of these groups; some do not fit within any. The categories are not meant to be labels but to be flexible, fluid concepts which help us think about the diversity of circumstances in which children and young people live.

If you are interested in consulting with very young children, you may need to arrange to speak with the people who know them best, such as their parents, teachers, carers or health professionals.

Some practical issues to consider when consulting with children and young people

There are some differences in the way you might consult with children and young people, compared with adults:

• **Inviting children and young people to participate.** Most methods of alerting adults to consultation opportunities (such as newspapers, or talk radio stations) will not be suitable for communicating with children and young people. Think about the group of children and young people you wish to contact, and how they communicate with the people in their lives.

Consider placing invitations on email networks or online social networking sites. Consider placing posters at places where particular groups of children and young people might visit (eg cinemas, shopping centres, sporting venues). Or ask people who work with children and young people to circulate information (eg youth workers, teachers, or maternal and child health nurses).

• **Providing supporting information to enable children and young people to participate.** It is important that children and young people are fully informed about the nature of the consultation, what they are being asked to do and how their input will be used. This means consultation, providing information both verbally and in writing, with cultural sensitivity, and in a way is suited to the age of the children and young people involved.

• **Selecting engagement tools/methods.** In general children and young people will be more engaged if you adopt some creative techniques in your consultation. Consider whether it is best to communicate in writing or through speech; individually or in groups; on paper or online. There are resources available with some interesting ideas for consultation methods (see list below).

• **Selecting a venue**. Identify venues that are accessible to children and young people. Consider going to where children and young people are (eg schools, shopping centres, youth centres, cinemas, bus interchanges, GP clinics), rather than asking them to make a special trip to a central venue. If you are asking children and young people to travel to a venue, anticipate how they might do this easily and safely.

12. ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Selecting a date and time.** Many children and young people have different schedules to adults. Do you want your consultation to run during school term or school holidays? Do you want to meet with children and young people during school hours, or after school? Are you hoping to contact young people on weekends when some of them will be at work? Do you want your activity to coincide with Youth Week or Children's Week? Avoid exam periods if you are hoping to contact college students. Remember to consider transport and safety issues if you are planning an evening event.

  Do not undertake engagement activities during the Christmas/New Year holiday period', particularly for any consultations that involve parents, schools and/or teachers.

- **Managing expectations.** Ensure that children and young people understand what will happen following the consultation. Be clear about whether participation is confidential or not. Explain whether their input will influence a decision (and don't promise more than you can deliver).

- **Providing feedback.** It is generally considered good practice to provide feedback on the outcomes of a consultation. Think about how you will offer to contact children and young people once the results are finalised, and what level of information you can provide them.

  Acknowledging children and young people's contribution is considered good practice – this could be through a letter or email of appreciation; acknowledgement in the foreword of any printed or online material or the development of a summary version of the consultation outcomes in language appropriate for children and young people.

- **Obtaining children's consent, and permission from parents/carers.** Consider the nature of the consultation, and the age and capacity of the children and young people, and decide how you will ask them and their parents/carers for consent to participate.

  If your consultation asks people to contribute a reasonable amount of time and effort, or takes place over a period of time, or invites children and young people to attend an activity, generally it is appropriate to obtain consent both from the child or young person, and their parent/carer. They need to consent not only to their participation, but o the use of any material they contribute (whether words, artwork or photos). They should be clearly told that they can change their mind at any time, and stop participating.

- **Remuneration.** If you are asking children and young people to give a reasonable amount of time or effort, it is appropriate to acknowledge their contribution through some form of remuneration. Just because they are young does not mean their contribution is less valuable than that of an adult.

Balancing Protection and Participation

Consulting with children and young people can be an accessible, achievable and enjoyable part of the work that you do. It is important to recognise that children and young people are active participants in our community, and they have valid things to say. However, we also need to put in place special measures to ensure their safety and wellbeing during consultation processes.

Ensure that any proposal for a consultation activity with children and young people has been approved by your supervisors or managers. You may need to conduct a risk assessment to ensure you are providing a safe and healthy environment for children and young people to participate in.

Ongoing engagement (develop relationships)

If you regularly work on policy or programs that impact on children and young people, you may want to consider developing ongoing relationships with groups of children and young people, so that the process of consultation is a regular practice rather than an isolated event.

12. ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some suggestions for getting to know the youth and children's services sectors, and developing relationships:

• Join local email networks, such as Youth Coalition of the ACT weekly e-bulletin

• Go to Youth Coalition of the ACT monthly youth sector forums

• Get a copy of the Big Red Book produced by Youth Coalition of the ACT

Contact Agency Funding Program managers in the Community Services Directorate to distribute information or provide a presentation at sector meetings (youth and family support, out of home care, community development, childrens' services.

FURTHER RESOURCES

ACT Children & Young People Commissioner

You are welcome to contact the ACT Children & Young People Commissioner (CYPC) if you would like to talk through you ideas. The CYPC encourages agencies to consult with children and young people on issues that affect them, and can offer guidance about appropriate strategies and approaches. Contact CYPC on 62052222 or ACTkids@act.gov.au

Contact details for a range of organisations that provide services in the ACT are available from Factsheet 18 – Useful Contacts.

There are lots of resources available to help you think about creative ways to engage with children and young people, and involve them in decision making which affects their lives. cision making which affects their lives.

• **Kids Central** (Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University) http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/our_research/research_centres_-and-_institutes/institute_of_child_protection_studies/kids_central/

• **TAKING PARTicipation Seriously** (NSW commission for children & Young People) http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/director/resources/participationkit.cfm

• **Involving Children & Young People: Participation Guidelines** (WA Commissioner for Children and Young People) http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/files/resource/Participation%20Guidelines%20-%202009.pdf

• **Child Safe Child Friendly** (NSW Commission for Children & Young People) http://kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/working/safefriendly.cfm

• **Improving Legislation for Children and Young People** (WA Commissioner for Children and Young People) http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/content.aspx?cId=259

Information provided by the Children & Young People Commissioner – ACT Human Rights Commission and ACT Youth Coalition

13. ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

A 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey indicated that there were 45,200 people in the ACT, or one in seven people, who reported having a disability.

People with disability represent a diverse range of community interest and may include employees or employers; board member; advocates; parents and carers, and potential, existing or past consumers of services.

The ACT Government has legal obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2004* (ACT), *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT) and *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwth) to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of people with disability.

When engaging with people with a disability, it is important to ensure that the engagement tools/methods that you enlist are accessible to the disabled community.

For example, a workshop may be the most appropriate strategy for your community engagement initiative, but you will need to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the venue is accessible to someone in a wheelchair and the content is delivered in a way that it is accessible to someone with a hearing impairment.

Practical issues to consider when consulting with people with disability

- **Selecting engagement tools/methods.** In general, it is best to use several engagement tools/methods so that the whole community, including people with disability, can be engaged. For example, an information session may be the best method of engagement, however live captioning, Communication Access Remote Translation (CART), hearing loops, written documents, documents in Braille and online resources and focus groups are tools that may need to be incorporated into the information session to properly engage all participants.

- **Promoting community engagement.** When inviting and/or promoting community engagement to people with disability, ensure that information is available in alternative formats (i.e. written, electronic, spoken etc). It is also important to advertise your community engagement session through channels that people with disability can and do access (i.e. radio that targets people with sight impairment[3], community mailing lists[4], and free community newsletters[5] and advertise with community agencies and/or groups which support people with disability and their families and carers).

- **Accessible formatting.** Some people are unable to read standard print because of sight impairment, a physical disability or a cognitive disability.

  Below are some examples of accessible formats that will allow information to be used by people with different types of disability.

  - **Electronic documentation.** People with disability may have access to 'screen reader software' which is a computer software program that identifies what is being displayed on the screen and then interprets it through text-to-speech, sound icons or a Braille output device. Because the software has difficulty translating anything other than plain text, the following guidelines apply to all documentation distributed electronically:

    - All materials, including emails, promotional materials, invitations etc should be written in plain text, i.e.: without graphics, pictures, symbols, tables, borders or shading,

    - Multiple columns cannot be used because the screen reader will not recognise the breaks between the columns, and

    - Material should be distributed in word or .txt format. All others are not accessible by the software.

  - **Braille or audio.** People with disability have the right to request information in alternative formats such as Braille or audio. To convert your documents to alternative formats contact the Canberra Blind Society[6].

  - **Printed information** should always be made clear and easy to understand through the use of plain English, short sentences, clear headings, no jargon; and where possible through the use of pictures or diagrams.

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3   Radio One RPH – 6241 4076 radio1rph@bigpond.com
4   Cd-net – www.cdnet.org.au – which is ready by over 900 people working in the ACT community sector; Disability ACT Registration of Interest database – 6207 1086 disabilityACT@act.gov.au
5   The Canberra Chronicle and e-newsletters
6   The Canberra Blind Society, 6247 4580 or canblind@tpg.com.au

13. ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

- **Formatting.** Documents should be produced in a minimum font size of 12 point and where possible 14 point or larger on brochures and advertising. They should be written in a plan sans serif font such as Arial or Helvetica and the text should be presented uncluttered with an absence of background graphics, patterns and watermarks behind the text.

- **Easy English** is a format where information is summarised and expressed in short sentences and symbols or picture which convey a single idea or concept. Further information on creating easy English documents can be found at: www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/cms/frontend/resource/id/194.

• **Be as informative as possible.** People with disability may be discouraged from participating in community engagement activities because they are unsure of they are accessible to them. When promoting or inviting people to your community engagement include as much information as possible to ensure that people with disability know that they can participate with ease. For example, if holding an information sessions, include information on the venue's accessibility, the parking, public transport options. When inside the venue, include information on how to get to the meeting room, if a hearing loop will be organised, if an interpreter is offered, what the catering situation is like etc.

• **Reimbursing people with a disability for costs incurred to participate.** The cost of being part of consultations can deter people with disability and their family members from engaging in consultations. You may wish to consider reimbursing for costs incurred to participate. Costs incurred may include, using wheelchair accessible taxis, paying for an attendant carer, family members paying for respite care so they can get to consultation etc.

Engagement events

Workshops, forums, information sessions and focus groups can be a great way to get a diverse range of people together to discuss ideas. When organising an event for people with disability there are additional requirements that need to be considered, these include:

• **Choosing an accessible venue.** Whenever possible, ACT Government events should be held in fully accessible venues. You should always see the venue before you confirm the booking to ensure that it is fully accessible as some venue operators may claim their venue is accessible when it isn't.

  Some key features of a fully accessible venue are:

  - Clear paths from public transport, car parks and drop off points as well as to accessible toilets,

  - Car parking that is a reasonable distance from the front entrance and includes an appropriate number of disabled car parks,

  - Without steps of ridges between the car park and the reception,

  - Lifts that include controls that can be reached by people in wheelchairs and are accessible to those with sight impairments,

  - Amenities for disabled persons,

  - A hearing loop is installed, and

  - Close to public transport.

  As a rule of thumb, keep your community engagement practices as easy as possible, both for yourself and for the participants. If you require additional staff to hold doors open, or escort people to and from the bathroom all day, it will take away from the positive work that is trying to be done with the community engagement practices.

• **Accessible presentations.** When presenting information in a live setting it is important to use different mediums to adjust to the audience. For those with sight impairment the spoken word may be best, while those with a hearing impairment may need captions, a written document or sign language interpreter.

13. ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Some tips to consider when making a live presentation more accessible, include:

- Provide easy to read hand outs that follow the presentation,

- Read out the overhead or PowerPoint presentation; don't assume that the audience can clearly see the words on the screen. Introduce each new screen verbally and read the relevant contents aloud before discussing issues in more detail,

- Ensure additional staff are available to answer questions and assist with the ease of participants,

- Regardless of if someone with a disability requests it or not, open captioning should be used for all ACT Government videos, DVDs and CD-ROMs,[7]

- If requested by an attendee with a hearing impairment, provide an interpreter.[8] Please note that because of the shortage of interpreters and equipment in the ACT, sufficient warning, preferably of between four and six weeks, should be given to enable bookings to be made well in advance,

- Make sure platforms are accessible for the speaker/presenter if they have a mobility disability, and

- Where possible, make consultation papers and presentation document available prior to the event, so participants can get a handle on the subject matter through their own means.

- Other things to think about when organising an event including:

  - **Additional staff** may be required to assist people throughout the event. Examples of assistance may be in helping to complete a survey, making a cup of tea, guiding to the amenities or helping interpret.

  - **Catering.** If the venue only serves buffet style food, some people may find it difficult to carry or hold food and to eat without placing their plate on a table. Also think about accessible utensils, e.g. for people who have limited arm mobility bendable drinking straws are appropriate.

  - **Evacuation procedures.** Ensure that event staff are available to assist and are briefed on evacuation procedures.

  - **Existing consultations.** Consider running your consultation as part of an existing local disability agency meeting. By tapping into an existing community based forum where people with disability already meet, you may be able to achieve maximum participation.

  - **Guide dogs.** If people with vision impairment have a guide dog with them, bring a water bowl and let people know where the dog can relieve itself.

  - **Outdoor events.** For ACT Government events that are held outdoor, it is suggested that you hire portable toilets, ensure accessible parking close by, supply rest stations or occasional seating places and produce an access map for the event.

  - **Recording the event.** People may wish to tape record the event/meeting/information session, if this is the case you will need to think about providing permission

  - **Seating arrangements**. All attendees should be able to intermingle with each other. People with disability should not all be place in one area, or in rows at the front of the back. Accessibility seating should be spread throughout the venue. There should be plenty of room for people to manoeuvre wheelchairs and two metre aisles between the chairs and people using wheelchairs should have clear access to the front and back of the room, as well as to the exit/entry doors.

Further resources

ACT Government Department Housing and Community Services. (2010). *Engaging Canberrans: A guide to engaging and communicating with people with a disability.* Canberra: ACT Government, available at http://www. dhcs.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/172592/Engaging_People_with_Disability.pdf.

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7   Agencies that provide captioning services include: www.thesubstation.com.au; www.redbeemedia.com.au; www.captioningandsubtitling. com.

8   Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreting services and trained lip-speakers can be obtained from the ACT Interpreter Service 6287 4391 or act.terp@iimetro.com.au

14. ENGAGING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

There are a number of steps to take when engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the early stages of an engagement activity will:

- inform decision making about whether the target community would prefer to be engaged via whole-of-community processes or by processes targeted to particular ethnic groups;

- support the selection of engagement techniques, which are most likely to be;

- supported by culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and

- assist in developing institutional trust and establishing connections.

Understanding the community to be engaged

Researching the community prior to an engagement activity will assist in working with that community. The information researched could include:

- **facts and figures** - migration and settlement history and experiences, immigration categories, demography, geographic location, and cultural makeup (e.g. religion, languages and dialects);

- **priorities and concerns** - including social issues affecting the community, language and literacy levels, nature of social capital and networks in the community, sensitive issues, differences within the community, expressed needs, and family and community responsibilities; and

- **engagement issues** - including attitudes to government, existing services and projects connecting with the community, levels of experience and capacity regarding engagement.

Engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse communities can occur via specially targeted and customised processes or as part of broader community engagement initiatives.

Advice should be sought from culturally and linguistically diverse community members to identify which approach is likely to be most appropriate. Gaining an understanding of the community to be engaged will enable a critical appraisal of the kind of engagement and participation most likely to be effective.

Developing a communication strategy

Before starting an engagement activity, it is important to develop a communication strategy.

The way information is presented, received, understood and analysed is culture specific in all groups including groups proficient in English.

It is important to understand how information will be best received by the communities you seek to engage. Ensuring people feel able to understand what is said and to express their views, needs and opinions will minimise frustration, miscommunication and loss of time, and maximise motivation to participate in current and future engagement processes.

Remember it is Government policy to use professional interpreters in situations of communication difficulty.

Depending on the scope of an engagement activity and communication strategy, it may be useful to:

- develop a statement of recognition of diversity that places high priority on meeting the language needs of citizens of non-English speaking backgrounds;
- confirm language requirements. For example:
  - languages spoken by clients and strategies to identify these
  - languages spoken by staff
  - need and funding for interpreters or bilingual facilitators
  - appropriateness of multimedia strategies (e.g. video conferencing)

14. ENGAGING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

- support bilingual and multilingual staff to seek accreditation for their language skills;

- develop and deliver staff training on cross-cultural communication, the use of interpreters and engagement skills;

- expose staff to different accents and uses of English by people for whom English is a second language; and

- develop dissemination strategies for translated materials (e.g. through community workers or leaders, ethnic media).

Cross-cultural communication skills are fundamental to achieving successful engagement and these can be achieved through training and practice in the long term.

In the meantime, it is important for staff to ensure sufficient time is allowed in engagement processes for people whose first language is not English to articulate their ideas and needs.

Choosing and implementing engagement techniques

In choosing the most appropriate technique to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, consideration should be given to:

- the nature of the issue (single issue and interest group focus or multilayered affecting the broader community);

- the nature of the community;

- government and community timeframes;

- the profile of an issue (potential for media interest, conflict);

- the amount and type of resources available for engagement;

- the capacity of individuals or communities for engagement;

- the nature of any support or incentives which may be helpful in enabling or encouraging community members to participate (e.g. transport assistance, access to training); and

- the purpose and objectives of engagement (e.g. to gather information or to test options).

Information-sharing techniques

The keys to successful information sharing include the cultural specificity and relevance of information provided, the appropriateness of the means of dissemination and the communication strategies developed to support the information sharing process.

If information is provided in languages other than English, it is important to ensure community members can provide feedback to government in those languages.

If you are considering surveys or questionnaires as a way to both share information and elicit responses, remember that written approaches may be less likely to engage people who are not proficient in English.

It may be more productive to use bilingual staff to share information and undertake face-to-face interviews or focus groups. Some multicultural organisations can be contracted to organise focus groups.

Awareness-raising programs can raise community knowledge about a particular issue or the work of a particular agency. Displays can inform the public, stimulate discussion and engagement and can build familiarity and trust over time. The inclusion of posters, artwork and photos that depict multicultural images can foster a sense of inclusion in a non-verbal manner.

Education and awareness programs undertaken as part of cultural events (e.g. festivals, religious celebrations, community gatherings) can reinforce the mainstreaming of diversity and social inclusion.

14. ENGAGING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Government newsletters to ethnic organisations or individuals, and stories or advertisements in ethnic media can be sources of information, which encourage broader engagement.

The cultural sensitivity of the issue, language and literacy issues, and timing are key factors to consider.

Consultation techniques

Some communities are over-consulted and are sceptical about it. Some feel consultation is a 'rubber stamping' exercise and that key decisions are made elsewhere. Some communities may not know why government is consulting with them or treat engagement with suspicion.

These attitudinal issues must be addressed during the planning phase to ensure effective outcomes. Ensuring communities understand how their input will influence policy or decision making, and why providing prompt feedback is important can be useful strategies for overcoming scepticism.

Community events and meetings can be key engagement strategies that make use of existing community structures, allow for expression of a sense of hospitality (eg. via the provision of food and drinks), demonstrate respect for community processes and bring balance to power relations by enabling meetings on 'familiar turf'.

Community events and meetings can also enable collaboration about key issues, though not everyone has the confidence and skills to speak at large forums or have their voices heard.

In some communities issues of respect to Elders and other protocols do not enable equal participation by all members of that community in a meeting or event. Where this is the case it may be important to hold separate meetings with sub-segments of the community, such as young people or women.

Reaching out to the community

Effective engagement with a broad cross-section of any ethnic community can take time and commitment. Knowledge of community networks, social structures, political and social divisions and other relationships will assist in reaching a wide range of people in the community.

Effective engagement requires that materials be translated and engagement methods be modified to be compatible with cultural characteristics and social norms.

It is important to identify where community members obtain information and to ensure that there are multiple strategies for dissemination. It is also important that ethnic communities have a variety of experiences of engagement with government.

Some have consultation or engagement fatigue while others may have experienced a lack of consultation or no connection at all.

Many culturally and linguistically diverse community members have a range of work, community and family commitments, and participating in consultation activities may not be a priority, particularly if the expected results are not obvious or tangible.

There are a number of ways to identify and connect with members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities including:

*   through organised, formal ethnic, cultural or religious organisations and their leaders;
*   by identifying and connecting with informal leaders, Elders, healers;
*   by identifying and connecting with informal groups such as women's groups, prayer groups, dance groups;
*   through funded multicultural agencies and community workers;
*   through ethnic or language school networks;

14. ENGAGING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

- through ethnic media (e.g., newspapers and radio), ethnic business associations and other professional networks;

- through mainstream agencies in locations where there are higher densities of culturally and linguistically diverse community members (eg. neighbourhood centres, health centres); and

- through other government sources including schools, local Assembly Members, government mailing lists and databases.

It can be important to minimise the complexity of information and processes when planning an engagement activity. For example:

- invitations to meetings and events should be user friendly, free from jargon and in a suitable format (e.g. letter, verbal invitation);

- information should be provided in languages other than English before the activity is held;

- additional face-to-face meetings could be planned to overcome a lack of information; and

- procedures and processes should be simplified and technological barriers minimised.

Building trust

Building trust is a key way to demystify government. Some strategies to build trust Include:

- establishing long-term relationships,

- using bilingual staff,

- providing regular information,

- developing public relations activities,

- holding open days,

- providing one-on-one support to clients to interact with agencies,

- ensuring accessible services and staff, and

- explaining processes, structures and systems.

Seeking the advice of community members and involving them in planning engagement processes are also likely to build trust.

Providing feedback and evaluating engagement

Feedback is critical to successfully engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Feedback allows community members to know their views have been heard and understood.

By providing appropriate feedback, public sector agencies can enhance partnerships and collaboration with communities, demonstrate commitment to agreed outcomes and provide motivation for ongoing engagement with government.

Feedback can be enhanced by ongoing evaluation processes to assess the cultural relevance of aspects of the engagement process, the appropriateness of techniques, levels of participation and emerging issues.

There is a wide range of methods for providing feedback including reports, newspaper articles, individual letters, public meetings and face-to-face contact. Appropriate communication strategies must be considered when providingfeedback, with attention paid to layout, language and presentation.

14. ENGAGING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

IN SUMMARY:

Engage communities as early in the process as possible.

Input in the planning phase will promote effective engagement and can save you from heading in a direction that will not work for ethnic communities.

Build trust.

Seek to understand needs, current views and opinions. Initially involve sector representatives and other trusted support people. Be clear about expectations and roles. Avoid tokenism and build relationships.

Recognise diversity within communities.

Differences exist between culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and also within groups. Take time to understand communities and offer a range of targeted engagement strategies.

Allow time.

Sector representatives and community leaders need time to encourage the participation of community members, for trusting relationships to build, and for information to circulate.

Build capacity.

Support public sector staff and community members to undertake research, liaise with key knowledge holders, and undertake formal training and identification of champions.

Avoid over-consultation.

Plan well and liaise with others who might also engage the community of interest. Seek advice from the sector.

Address language issues.

Consider the need to have written, electronic and verbal information translated or made available in plain English, and to employ bicultural workers or interpreters at face-to-face engagements.

Ensure engagement is adequately resourced.

Make sure resources are available to support translating and interpreting, to hire appropriate venues, and for catering, child care, transport support and capacity building. Consider partnerships with multicultural organisations and build engagement into work practices.

Demonstrate respect.

Understand at what stage people are in the settlement process and engage accordingly.

Acknowledge community protocols, beliefs and practices. Avoid stereotypes. Be honest. Promote engagement rights and responsibilities. Respond effectively to community-initiated engagement. Ensure your attire, consultation methods and communication styles promote effective engagement.

Provide feedback on the outcomes of engagement.

Ensure participants are aware of responses by noting feedback in the notes of meetings and making such notes available. In the longer term, your response or actions undertaken in light of engagement can be communicated, and communities invited to provide information on the outcomes they themselves have achieved.

Source: Engaging Queenslanders: An introduction to working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), Queensland Government (Department of Communities) 2007

15. ENGAGING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

The guiding principles to practising engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are:

- understand and respect community structures and cultural diversity;
- recognise cultural values, perspectives, knowledge and different life experiences;
- be aware of community capacity and resources;
- commit to the project to achieve outcomes;
- be transparent and inclusive towards engagement; and
- support individual and community development opportunities.

Planning for the engagement

- Determine how best to involve the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the engagement process, including the establishment of the engagement approach and outcomes.
- Establish what is in it for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and inform them to generate interest.
- Determine their expectations where possible to facilitate open and transparent processes.
- Plan for short-term wins to demonstrate progress.

Remember:

- Decisions on the issues made prior to engagement will not be looked upon favourably and will diminish trust.
- Be clear about:
  - the approach and outcomes of the project; and
  - what is to be achieved, including desired results of the engagement.

Preparing for the engagement

- Contact the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to:
  - seek advice on contacting existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies and networks; and
  - assist in identifying suitable stakeholders within the community to gain an understanding of the issues, gaps and suggested improvements.
- Identify as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as possible to involve in the engagement, including those within government and community organisations.
- Be creative in terms of the structure, approach and activities.
- Utilise established events to promote engagement, for example use sports events to set up a stall to provide information.
- Focus on specific issues and tailor specific questions, rather than going into detail on general matters.
- Gain an understanding of the internal dynamics of the local community.
- Find out the most suitable times to conduct engagement.

15. ENGAGING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Undertaking the engagement

- Always demonstrate that you are:
    - acting in the best interests of the local community;
    - adaptable to change;
    - actively listening; and
    - respectful to existing traditions and cultures.
- Use a variety of media including visual aids.
- Engage on neutral territory.
- Allow opportunities for people to offer information in confidence.
- Present specific issues.
- Clarify if not sure about body language, eye contact or a perceived lack of response rather than assuming meaning.
- Provide clear and consistent explanations to prevent misunderstandings.
- Clearly explain the benefits to maintain interest in the engagement activity.
- Provide food and beverages.

Remember:

- Engagement activities are sometimes not well attended by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Do not assume all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples share the same views – views could be extreme.
- Refrain from expressing personal beliefs, views, ideas and solutions.
- Some women may not be comfortable sharing information in the presence of men.
- Be flexible and allow sufficient time for the engagement.
- Ensure your attire, consultation methods and communication techniques promote effective engagement.
- It may be necessary to pay transport costs, or arrange transport to and from the activity.

After the engagement

- Provide feedback to the community that includes a summary of all the different ideas for further comment or action.
- Present a copy of the final report to the community.
- Thank participants and community personally.

Remember:

- Reflect on the engagement process and outcomes for lessons learnt.
- It is important that mistrust of government is not generated through the engagement activity by not following-up or because the outcomes do not meet the expectations of the participants.

15. ENGAGING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

IN SUMMARY:

Make personal contact with the community

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples generally appreciate more personal forms of communication. This is usually achieved through face-to-face communication. Introduce yourself personally - initial communication via the phone or by email (especially for a first meeting) should be avoided.

Get to know the community

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may be wary of talking to people they don't know. Getting to know the local community on a personal level can assist greatly, particularly when they feel they can trust you.

Spending time with members of the community outside of your designated meeting time can also be very beneficial in building the relationship. Staying for a coffee or a chat will usually be welcomed.

Understand the local issues

Always ensure that you know the origins and history of the issue you wish to discuss and its relevance to the local community before you begin your engagement. Be sensitive to personal and historical experiences of the people being consulted.

Be patient

Whenever engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, you may find that things can become time consuming and not all your deadlines may be met. It is important to build this into your timeframes.

It is important to ensure that you do not impose your organisational time constraints on others. Try to allow extra time to obtain results. You may find that it takes several meetings with several individuals to achieve results or outcomes.

Meetings may also not start at the specified time and important information might be shared outside, rather than in the meeting room.

Do not expect an immediate verbal acknowledgement or response. Allow enough time for reflection on the topic discussed.

Always be mindful of consultation and engagement fatigue, and be aware of other engagement activities being undertaken with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community to assist in avoiding cross-over and consultation overload.

Communicate effectively

Remember when communicating that the meaning may not be clear to everyone - avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, technical speak, or words that may have an alternative meaning.

Use your own style of speech. Do not try and mimic talk, speech or accents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

There are important aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communication which relate to non-verbal exchanges of information. These include:

- positive use of silence which must not be interpreted as a lack of understanding; and
- the use of indirect eye contact which implies respect in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

15. ENGAGING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

USEFUL LOCAL NETWORKS

Please refer to attachment 'Reference List of Quick Contacts' for a more comprehensive contact list. .

GROUP	DESCRIPTION	DETAILS	CONTACT
United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC)	UNEC is a significant Indigenous body providing advice to the ACT Government in relation to heritage and connection to land matters for the Ngunnawal people.	UNEC is made up of representatives nominated by each of the Ngunnawal family groups. The Council meets up to four times a year.	Secretariat and administrative support for UNEC is provided by the ACT Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. 6207 1667 or oatsia@act.gov.au
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body	The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body was established so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT have a strong democratically elected voice.	It consists of seven people who are elected to represent the interests and aspirations of the local Indigenous community.	Mr John Law 6205 2551 John.Law@act.gov.au
TAMS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers	Internal resource to assist and support Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders employed within TAMS.	Can provide information to all TAMS and ACT staff.	Adrian Brown 6207 0078 Adrian.brown@act.gov.au
TAMS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network	Internal TAMS staff network facilitated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer.	Provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed across TAMS the opportunity to network and support each other.	Adrian Brown 6207 0078 Adrian.brown@act.gov.au
Aboriginal Corporation for Sport and Recreational Activities	Facilitates sporting programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including a variety of sporting teams the Boomunulla community oval.	Boomunulla Oval is a place to meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in an informal setting. Can also be used to place/advertise publications	6295 8557 0411 967 608 (Manager) 0403 552 522 (Sports Development Officer) boomanullaoval@optusnet.com.au

16. PREPARING A FEEDBACK REPORT

CONTENTS OF THE FEEDBACK REPORT

Being able to report back on how stakeholder's feedback has influenced the decision making process demonstrates democracy at work and the value of stakeholder input.

If you are preparing a Feedback Report you should consider including the following:

- format, length and writing style to encourage accessibility for the intended audience;

- an introduction and background information;

- outcomes of the engagement process, including any issues or trends identified;

- qualitative and quantitative data;

- exact words and phrases used by people in comments to ensure they recognise their input and become aware that other people may express different opinions to their own;

- privacy issues need to be considered, so do not identify people by name in the feedback report – keep comments anonymous unless prior approval is sought;

- a section on questions raised by the community and directorate responses; and

- a summary of how the information has been analysed with any clear outcomes. This information is important as it demonstrates how varying views and aspirations are taken into account by decision makers within the broader policy and strategic frameworks.

17. EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

EVALUATION TOOLS

To evaluate the success of your engagement, you will need to collect evidence before, during and/or after your engagement activities.

Collecting evidence in this field is often more complicated than other aspects of project evaluation. Reasons for this include:

- Community engagement is a relatively new field of expertise and subsequently has not been tested and measured as extensively as other methods.

- Results are more commonly exhibited through better relationships, trust and connectedness – all of which are difficult to observe or articulate in tangible or hard-science terms.

- The effects of engagement activities are often not obvious for some time after the completion of the activity or project.

TOOL	DESCRIPTION
Structured interviews	Why is the agency engaging the community? What does the agency hope to achieve from the engagement What time commitments must be met? Do the benefits of engaging outweigh the costs of not engaging
Structured interviews	A face-to-face exchange with an individual. Standardised questions are carefully ordered and worded in a detailed interview schedule. Each subject is asked exactly the same questions, in the same order. The schedule consists predominantly of closed questions (see Questionnaires).
Semi-structured interviews	A face-to-face exchange with an individual. Uses an informal interview guide where questions are predetermined and the interviewer probes for more information. A loose interview guide is used to ensure that the same format and topics are covered with each respondent but exact wording is not predetermined
In-depth interviews	Repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words. (Note: Semi-structured interviewing is one way of doing in-depth interviews.)
Questionnaires: face-to-face, telephone, mall	Often used in formal surveys.
Concept mapping	Concept mapping is a structured process, focused on a topic of interest, involving input from one or more participants, that produces an interpretable pictorial view (concept map) of their ideas and concepts and how these are interrelated.
Delphi technique	A form of interactive (postal/email) surveying that utilises an iterative questionnaire and feedback approach, and provides participants with an opportunity to revise earlier views based on the response of other participants.
Focus groups	Involve gathering people together to discuss a topic, usually in the presence of a moderator to pose questions to 'get the ball rolling' and to help the discussion stay on track.

17. EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

TOOL	DESCRIPTION
Nominal group technique	A group process which involves the following steps. 1. Divide the stakeholders into homogenous 'nominal' groups. 2. Within each nominal group, the stakeholders each generate a 'private' list of responses to the question. 3. Key ideas are presented to the group by each participant and a composite list or chart is constructed. 4. The list is reviewed intensively by the group. 5. Each stakeholder then privately ranks the list for its utility, relevance, etc. 6. The ranks are discussed by the group and each stakeholder again ranks the ideas. 7. These ranks are converted to scores that reflect the group's priority. 8. A general forum of all nominal groups is held.
ORID	A technique for structuring a facilitated group conversation based four levels of question. 1. Objective questions 2. Reflective questions 3. Interpretive questions 4. Decision questions.
Most significant change: story technique	A form of 'monitoring and evaluation' for program management and is designed to run throughout the life of a program. The approach is based on collecting and systematically reviewing stories of significant change. The stories are collected from those most directly involved (e.g. farmers, extension staff and field workers). The stories are then reviewed on a monthly basis. Each level of the program hierarchy (e.g. field workers, project coordinators, regional committees and funders) are involved in reviewing a series of stories and selecting those they think are the most significant accounts of change. They are then required to document the selected stories and explain the criteria used. It is intended that the monitoring system should take the form of a slow but extensive dialogue up and down the project hierarchy each month.
Goal attainment scales	A self-evaluation technique for combining qualitative and quantitative data in a 5-point scale of expected outcomes stated as: • +2 much more than expected outcome • +1 more than expected outcome • 0 expected outcome • 1 less than expected outcome • 2 much less than expected outcome An important feature of goal attainment scales is that the stakeholders are involved in developing consensus on the most important aspects of the goals to be achieved within a particular timeframe. They are also involved in identifying the likely range of desirable and undesirable outcomes of the activities undertaken.
Global assessment scales	A single global index of the functioning of an individual, group, object or event. For example, it can be used to evaluate the overall functioning of a farmer discussion group at 3-month intervals. Global scales range from 0 to 100. The range of scale values is from 1 - representing the most non- functional outcome imaginable, to 100 - which is the hypothetically most successful outcome. Global scales differ from observation-specific scales in that they refer to the overall character of an object or activity (i.e. the holistic or global character of an object or activity). Once developed, the scales are then scored using subjective judgements. They tend to deal with change that is not easily quantifiable.

17. EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

TOOL	DESCRIPTION
Peer/expert review	Can refer to six quite different processes at different stages of a project for different purposes. • Review of project proposals during development. • Review of project proposals and selection of those to be funded. • Review of program or staff performance for purposes of accreditation. • Review of program or staff performance for purposes of improvement. • Review of project on completion for purposes of validating processes and findings. • Review of papers prior to publication. The process can involve peers or experts. It can be based on site visits, interviews, or review of documentation.
Photo-language	Participants select photos to describe how they are feeling. The photos provided are often evocative.
Direct measurement	Information may be collected in a number of ways: by watching, listening, and documenting what is seen and heard; or by asking questions, sharing in activities and noting comments, behaviours and reactions.
Photography/video recording	Uses photography to capture visual images.
Project records	Review of available documentation from and about a project.
Logs and diaries	The use of participant or staff records to capture events as they occur. This can include diaries, farmer records and learning logs.
Secondary sources, including demographic data	The use of participant or staff records to capture events as they occur. This can include Use of information that already exists. For example, demographic data (census, social security), meteorological data and environmental data.

Source: Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment, Effective Engagement: Book 2 p42

17. EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Possible questions to ask stakeholders

- Did the stakeholders think that decision makers were sincere in their desire to obtain community input?
- Did participants feel they had input into the design of the engagement process?
- Did participants feel the process was sufficiently flexible to address issues as they arose?
- Did participants believe they had the information needed to contribute at the level they desired?
- Did participants perceive that their input was fairly considered during the process?
- Was it clear to participants how their input was used?
- Why did stakeholders who did not participate not become involved?
- Was the final decision generally acceptable to the community? How do you know?
- How satisfied were participants that their input was used to arrive at the final decision?

Possible questions to ask decision makers

- Did the decision maker(s) feel the input from stakeholders and from the process was useful?
- Did the level of engagement meet the needs and expectations of the decision makers?
- To what degree did decision makers think the input from the community contribute to a better overall decision or to a better decision-making process?

Possible question to ask both stakeholders and decision makers

- Did participants, both the community and the decision makers, understand the objectives, promises and processes? How do you know?
- Was the process implemented as planned?
- What was changed and why?

In general, ask yourself:

- Who was involved in the engagement?
- Who participated and how?
- What groups did not participate?
- How did the methods of engagement impact on participation levels?