Government of South Australia
Department for Education and Child Development

Involve us

A resource for engaging with the community

Acknowledgements

The Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) acknowledges the contributions of many people to the development of this resource for community engagement.

Contributions were made by members of government and non-government agencies from around South Australia and interstate, as well as community members and DECD personnel.

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Use of these materials

These materials are to be used in accordance with the recommendations set out herein.

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Foreword

Our central role is the education and care of children and young people to support them in reaching their full potential. This may require support for their families, and it also requires working with a much wider group of people. As a department, we want to make strong connections with members of local communities and organisations to obtain community support, guidance and ongoing input for our work. This will help to ensure that we respond appropriately to local needs and that we deliver the highest level of education and care services to children and young people and their families. Achieving service excellence and connecting with communities and forming relationships within them will ensure we remain accountable to the South Australian public.

This community engagement resource forms part of a suite of resources that will support the growth and sustainability of local partnerships and shared responsibility for the development, care and support of children and young people statewide.

Please use this resource to enhance and improve the way you involve the community in your everyday business.

Tony Harrison

Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child Development

Part 1:
The why, what and who of community engagement

Why

Introduction

Rationale

The success of the department's goals and achievements depends, to a significant extent, upon strong community partnerships and collaboration. Through engaging with the community and valuing the voices and opinions of our stakeholders, we are likely to benefit in multiple ways, both as a government agency delivering key services to South Australians and as an organisation that is seeking to continuously improve its business practices. Ultimately, our stakeholders will benefit the most from the process of effective community engagement.

Who are our stakeholders? They are more than 180 000 children and young people in South Australia who attend public schools and early childhood services; parents and other caregivers in South Australia; the (approximately) 20 000 babies born in South Australia each year; children up to four years who are the clients of the Women's and Children's Health Network; the 12 000 children identified by their communities as being at risk of abuse or neglect; the 2600 children in our care that we support through Families SA; and all South Australians.

Policy context

The South Australian Government, through *Better together*[1] and the department's *Brighter futures*[2], is committed to the inclusion of community voice and participation in all aspects of service delivery and policy that ultimately impact local people at a local level. As well, the principles underpinning the DECD Teaching for Effective Learning Framework[3] offer insights into how valuable community voice and participation can be in the business of teaching and learning.

1 *Better together: Principles of engagement*, 2013, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia.

2 *Brighter futures … From blueprint to action*, 2013, Department for Education and Child Development, Adelaide, South Australia.

3 *South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework guide: A resource for developing quality teaching and learning in SA*, 2010, Department of Education and Children's Services, Adelaide, South Australia.

Six principles

Principle one: We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly

Principle two: We know who to engage

Principle three: We know the background and history

Principle four: We begin early

Principle five: We are genuine

Principle six: We are creative, relevant and engaging (p 12)

Better together: Principles of engagement

This government publication describes principles of engagement that provide a strong foundation for building excellent engagement practices:

> *Our vision is for the Government to make better decisions by bringing the voices of communities and stakeholders into the issues that are relevant to them. To make this happen, we want to nurture a public service which has the skills to engage with the community and drive a culture which respects and welcomes community input.* (p 7)
>
> *Six principles*
> ***Principle one:*** *We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly*
>
> ***Principle two:*** *We know who to engage*
>
> ***Principle three:*** *We know the background and history*
>
> ***Principle four:*** *We begin early*
>
> ***Principle five:*** *We are genuine*
>
> ***Principle six:*** *We are creative, relevant and engaging (p 12)*

Brighter futures … From blueprint to action

This DECD document records the following benefits and priorities of community engagement:

> *Stronger community-led engagement in determining local provision. (p 5)*
>
> *Greater emphasis on the views of children and young people in shaping policies and practices that affect them. (p 5)*
>
> *At a local level [DECD] will partner preschool and school networks with local communities and the agencies serving them to build sustainable integrated service hubs in the reach of local families. (p 5)*
>
> *At a regional/network level … services and resources will be provided based on evidence of need and community feedback through a population planning model, including addressing the needs of priority groups … [Service provision will be based upon strengthened] accessibility of services to children and young people regardless of background or location. (p 6)*
>
> *At a system level [DECD] will establish greater flexibility in how our funding can be used to support children and young people by shifting decision making responsibility closer to the young people who will benefit, through our population planning mechanisms and community engagement. [DECD] will establish system-wide approaches to listening to the voices of children and young people and community engagement, and assign one office as advocates on behalf of children. (p 6)*

Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Framework

This DECD framework and accompanying resources offer access to methodologies, practices and tools that foster and develop the voices and preferences of children and young people in all aspects of their learning. Through the development of practices by teachers and those who support the learning relationships of children and young people, the TfEL principles espouse the principles within this resource; that is, to place engagement, participation and democratic relationships within and across all realms in DECD, particularly those in teaching and learning.

Using this resource

Let it be known — the community engagement process is not quick, easy or something that can be rushed. It intends to reach into a community and identify, in a very interpersonal way, what matters to people from all walks of life and how their strengths and passions can make a difference towards improving the status quo. The process is as rewarding as it is challenging.

This resource will support your work and will become a useful 'ready reckoner' once you have mastered a deeper understanding of the value and practice of community engagement.

Part 1: The why, what and who of community engagement provides the information about the value and practice of community engagement.

Part 2: Community engagement resources provides the resources you will need to support your community engagement process.

The resource is rich with links and references for further learning, examples, case studies and ideas that reinforce your community engagement process. The online version of these references and links will continue to grow as new ideas and practices evolve locally and globally.

Before you begin

It is easy to consider that community engagement is something that an agency can just 'do'. However, success in this enterprise requires more than following a process. Culturally, it is important that your service, school, preschool or team is moving towards optimum engagement readiness to ensure the process produces the best possible outcomes and supports the overall objectives of your focus as well as the objectives of the entire organisation.

The following list of engagement readiness criteria highlights some of the key characteristics which, when at their optimum, will ensure success in community engagement:

- People are **accessible**.
- Decision making is **transparent**.
- Engagement approaches are **adaptable**.
- Decision making is **devolved**.
- People value and excel at **conversations**.
- There is **capacity** and **capability** to engage effectively.
- People are **committed** to seeing the engagement process through.
- There is strong, **committed leadership** to good engagement principles.
- There is clear and **consistent messaging**.
- People **keep their word**.
- Engagement is **purposeful**.
- Engagement is **embedded** in strategies and operations.
- People are willing to **innovate** and take a risk.

The Engagement Readiness Matrix, found in Part 2, offers the criteria that will assist you in starting to identify if you are moving in the right direction toward a culture that is consistently considering the community in its everyday approach.

Shared understanding— Glossary of terms

Child/young person: Means a person up to the age of 18 years, and includes young adults with developmental disabilities attending education settings. Some publications and contexts use only child/children to denote anyone up to 18 years.

Community: This is a grouping of people with something in common. It may be where they live, residents of a suburb, a shared interest, members of a car club, a culture such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a group of parents, or a community that comes together online such as members of Facebook or an online self-help group (often called a 'virtual community'). Communities can also be called populations (see definition below).

Community development: Community development is the process of working with a community to bring about positive change. All members of the community must be given the chance to take part in the process, and they can choose how much and how long they want to be involved. Change must be driven by the strengths, needs and wants of the community.

Community partnership planning: Community partnership planning is a structured way of thinking about planning. It uses an agreed process to help a community identify 'what they want to achieve', 'how they will measure it', 'what needs to be done' and 'whether it has worked'. The community partnership planning process uses evidence, includes the voice of the community and requires work with partner organisations, so that the best strategies can be chosen to address community needs.

Education and Child Development (ECD) partnership: The local partnerships model aims for a 'self-improving school system' with distinct advantages flowing from collaborative work. It is expected to be an evolving, developmental process that requires both energy and commitment from site leaders and educators to move beyond the current school clusters and informal partnerships. All government schools and preschools (842 sites) will be part of an ECD local partnership, and resources (including staff) will be used more effectively, providing efficiencies and savings to both the local partnership sites and to the whole department.

Engagement: In this document, the term 'engagement' is used when people choose to participate with others in an activity for a common purpose. It may take place virtually, as in responding to an online survey or being part of an online chatroom or blog, or it could occur physically, as in being part of a council planning meeting, a forum or a public event.

Parent/s: In this document, it means and includes natural parents, step parents, foster parents, guardians, grandparents and any other relative or other person caring for a child or young person.

Partnership: A partnership is a relationship between two or more stakeholders who work together for a common goal. All partnerships involve building trust between members and sharing resources. A partnership can be informal or involve a formal signed agreement between the partners that directs how the relationship works and the roles and responsibilities of the partners.

Population: Similar to a community, a population is a grouping of people. The terms 'community' and 'population' can be used to mean the same thing. In this document, the word 'population' is used when we mean a larger grouping of people, such as all the people in the State or all children aged 12–18. The term 'community' is used for a smaller group, such as the people linked to a school.

Stakeholder: This is any person who has an interest or 'stake' in an issue. A stakeholder can be an individual, a group or an organisation. There will always be some stakeholders who have more of an interest in the issue than others, and will be 'key stakeholders'.

Principles that matter in community engagement

Principles of engagement

Six simple statements can be used to support a sound practice of community engagement or public participation. They are based on the *Better together* principles of engagement.

- Know why you are engaging and communicate this clearly.
- Know who to engage.
- Know the history and background.
- Begin early.
- Be genuine.
- Be creative, relevant and engaging.

If your process looks and feels a bit like this, you're on the right track:

- It is not a 'talk fest'. You work to a purpose and remain solution-focused and clear with everyone about what you hope to mutually achieve. Ensure expectations of all involved are clear and decisive.
- The right people are involved. They are the experts of their own needs and desires, circumstances and community. You have considered carefully who is a part of the process.
- The process has integrity, authenticity and is not a 'free for all' or a 'whinge fest'.
- This community or group of community members has a story, a history, expertise, skills and experience. You do not dismiss their experiences for the sake of hastening your own outcomes.
- The process is adapted to the audience to remain respectful, appropriate and mindful of local themes relating to the community (eg casual, informal, flexible).
- The participants recognise this is not a token gesture. You are not asking this community to share information or have input for the umpteenth time. You help the community to understand that their story is valid and will have an influence.
- You consider engagement as the initial part of a process or change agenda, and it is undertaken at a time that is most applicable to you commencing with the most amount of information and advice at the earliest point of your plan.

- This process offers and represents the most human and non-bureaucratic side of your agency. You speak within the context of local culture, language, nuance, values and understandings.
- You place yourself in the 'shoes' of the community and wonder how you might respond or feel. This process leaves people feeling worthy and valued.

Afterwards, you should be able to say:

- The activity was well planned, considered, fun and engaging.
- You have left an indelible mark on your community/stakeholders from the overall experience, as well as what you have mutually achieved through your shared approach.

Why a relationship with the community is important in your work

Schools, preschools, services and programs are offered a finite amount of time to make the largest possible impact on the lives of children, young people and their families in public education and care and through Families SA in their work supporting families and children.

Our impact is intended to be significant during these times, be it a school day, an appointment, or a parenting program in a local children's centre. We hope to then continue to inform and influence the lives of children and young people after they exit through the gate each day. Despite our best efforts and the deployment of exceptional resources by quality educators, staff and practitioners, our organisation will not be the sole influence on the life chances of a child or family.

> *The quality of life for children and families in communities depends on the strength and diversity of all the institutions and organisations that serve and support them, not exclusively on schools.*[4] *(p 2)*

Greater global trends now focus on the concept of 'place-based policy' and a community-based approach for planning, implementing and sustaining services for children and young people.

Place-based policy is where change comes from the community level and through partnerships. It is about not just targeting funding to a place but also coordinating diverse local resources to maximise the benefit to that place or community. Place-based policy values local decision making and control: '… to the extent possible, programs should allow for communities to identify distinct needs and address them in appropriate strategic ways'.[5]

The organisation has an enhanced improvement and accountability framework (eDIAf) with four domains including 'Connect', which highlights the community engagement approach. The framework states that preschools, children's centres and schools are responsible and accountable for developing strategic relationships and partnerships with families and the local community (see diagram).

4 *Making community an authentic part of school and community partnerships*, Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2012, available at http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/making-community-authentic-part-school-and-community-partnerships.

5 *Making community an authentic part of school and community partnerships*, Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2012, available at http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/making-community-authentic-part-school-and-community-partnerships.

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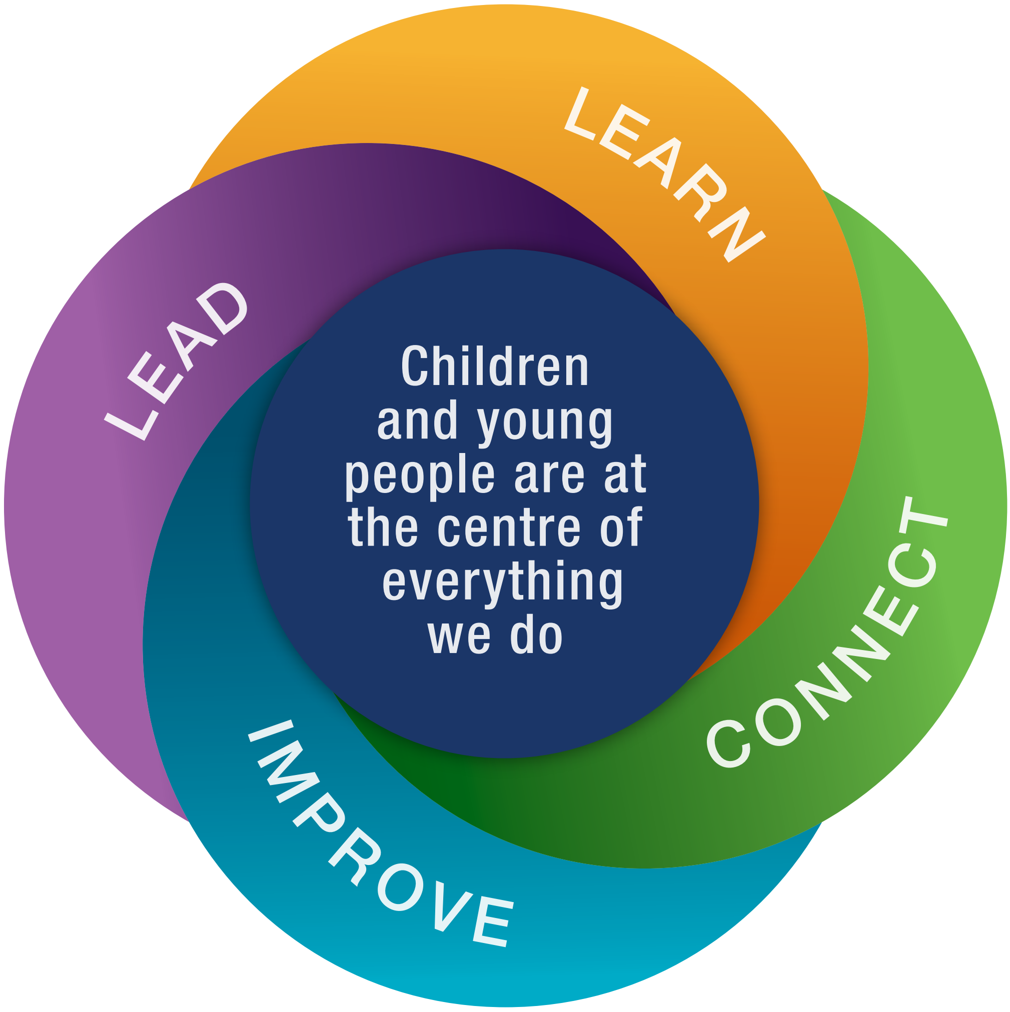


Enhanced DECD Improvement and Accountability framework (eDIAf)

CONNECT

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2007

Partnering with parents, families, other education or care institutions, local businesses and community organisations enhances the learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people and enables educators to better meet their needs and aspirations.

This requires each of our sites and services to:

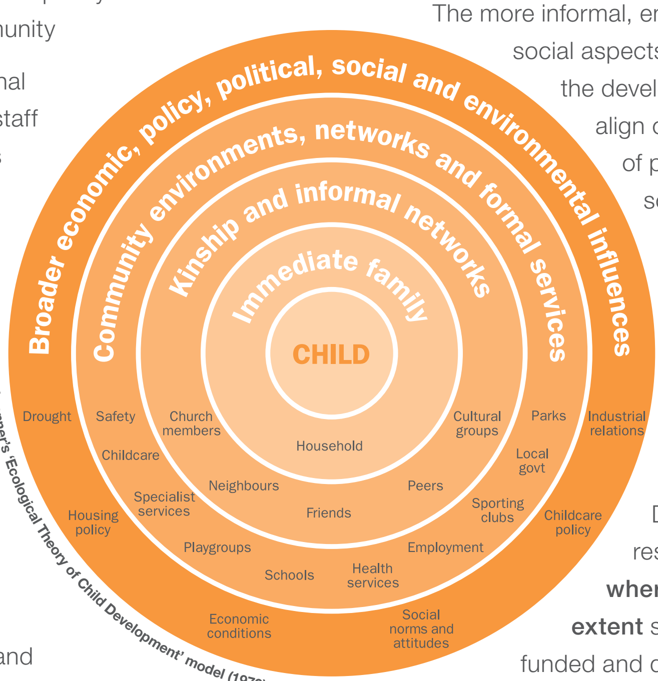
- view parents as integral members of the site or service community, working in partnership with staff to promote high expectations and aspirations for learning achievement
- develop sustainable partnerships that continuously improve outcomes for learners, build staff capacity and involve the broader community
- develop professional cultures in which staff collaborate across and within sites to build consistent and coherent approaches to teaching and the delivery and monitoring of learning
- provide opportunities for families, children and young people to shape policies and practices that affect them.[6]

This is underpinned by research and practice into the relationships between each of the domains to support the overall goals of the organisation.

Like eDIAf, each discipline within the organisation has a framework that emphasises the importance of community engagement and relationships between each service and the extended families and communities in which they operate.

A comparable model to eDIAf exists within the early childhood, child and family health and child protection realms. The national *Early years learning framework — Belonging, being and becoming*[7] is another framework within which our systems recognise the importance of engagement beyond the walls of our services.

The diagram based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Child Development (1979) depicts the influences and necessity for connectedness between those influences around a child. This reinforces the notion that 'children are at the centre of all we do', and that parents are the 'first educators'. Our role in supporting the children and their parents as a society rests both in a formal and informal approach.



Bronfenbrenner's 'Ecological Theory of Child Development' model (1979).

The more informal, environmental and social aspects that also support the development of children align closely with the role of parents, families, schools, services and the government in ensuring all children can reach their full potential and that their fundamental needs are met through the model.

Decisions made that result in **how**, **when**, **where** and to **what extent** services are offered, funded and delivered for children, young people and families in South Australia should be determined with the voice and influence of those who will be most affected.

Our organisation has the opportunity to support the very first part of a journey of human development and to continue delivering quality services for the benefit of children and young people, in partnership with their families and communities. The earlier this value-adding or intervention commences, the greater the prospect of success in school completion,

6 Enhanced DECD *Improvement and Accountability framework*, 2013.

7 *Belonging, being and becoming*, available at http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework.

Success hinges on the respectful relationships we develop with our communities. Our communities have a right to be involved, to have a voice and be given a chance to influence the policy that impacts them the most.

positive life chances and meaningful citizenship for the children and young people we serve.

The greater the investment we make in delivering these services based upon the strengths, needs and desires of communities, the greater the local commitment to success and ultimately sustainable modes of service that will outlive political cycles and funding cycles.

Success hinges on the respectful **relationships** we develop with our communities. Our communities have a right to be involved, to have a voice and be given a chance to influence the policy that impacts them the most.

Many people are excluded within communities for many reasons, including poverty, culture and geography. Whatever the reason for this exclusion, society has a responsibility to support the inclusion of families and individuals so that all may have a voice and influence in decisions that will affect them. It is our professional, social and moral responsibility to do whatever it takes to reach all sectors of the community and support their participation in all aspects of community engagement.

The process of engaging all sectors of our community — even those who are hard to reach or more difficult to engage — will ensure that our responses to their needs are well founded and offer the influence of a whole community as to how decisions are made, and service delivery is led from within and by communities. In particular, the value that is placed on the voices of children and young people and their rights as respected and equal citizens will inform the way we offer genuine and responsive services and programs through the organisation.

Remember that consulting with community is not always a one-off conversation. True community engagement is a continual endeavour that can occur many times and for a range of different purposes. Community engagement is about the relationship your site or service has with the community. It will very likely grow to become a deeper and more reciprocal relationship as engagement processes and activities continue. It may end up looking more like a partnership — one that began with a conversation or simple process of bringing people together. This is the start of creating greater social capital in your service and in the wider community.

What might your relationship **with the community look like?**

Children's centres and preschools

- Families and the community are involved in the governance and wider decision making of your site or service (eg governing council, committees, service plan).
- Members of the community attend forums or celebrations, AGMs, working bees, theme days, consultations, etc.
- Other services work with you to deliver services or activities to your children/families as a part of a shared decision or process.
- You meet regularly with other stakeholders/partners to jointly deliver programs, or collaborate on how to resolve identified needs.
- Volunteers attend your service or site and are involved in a range of ways in the day-to-day activities.
- You ensure regular communication and opportunities for feedback by families and the community (eg newsletters, Facebook, interactive forums).
- You access some of the community resources and expertise to support the development of children (eg cultural connection to local people, visit to aged care facility).
- Families are involved in specific planning and dialogue about their children.
- Allied services are a part of the site-based service delivery and planning on service delivery.
- You host forums with a wider audience on decisions that might impact many (eg building design, operating hours, healthy food policy).
- The voice of the children and families informs the culture and operation of your site or service.
- Parents access parenting programs and capacity building opportunities that your service offers.

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Schools

- Parents and the community are involved in the governance and wider decision making of your site or service (eg governing council, committees).
- Parents are supported and encouraged to be involved in committees that link the school with the wider community (eg parents and friends committee, uniform committee, sporting networks).
- Your site has a healthy volunteering culture and is a place of welcome to all families and community members (within the scope of your site) to build the capacity of your school and students.
- Big decisions are tabled for a wider input from families and the community (rather than just the executive of sitting committees and current governance structures).
- Community assets and services are a big part of the way you deliver services, learning and wellbeing support to students and families.
- Programs are offered to students that engage them with experiences that are not delivered from within your school but still complement your curriculum and learning environment.
- Your site has a strong student-voice approach to operating and your students have broad opportunities to engage with wider citizenship activities.
- You foster two-way communication opportunities through newsletters, online or web-based forums that promote celebration and ideas or feedback.
- Your infrastructure is considered a community asset and available to a wider community than your enrolments or clients (eg sporting oval, library, meeting rooms, stadium, pool).
- Local experts/identities attend your school and share their knowledge, experience and skills with students to enhance their learning experience and connect with other learning opportunities beyond the classroom/school.

Agency services

- The opportunity of involvement in decision making, influencing outcomes and offering feedback is extended to staff and internal stakeholders, thus increasing morale and a commitment to action from within.
- Ongoing and strong connections exist with advocacy groups, parent bodies, cultural authorities and the organisation to inform multiple aspects of policy development and service delivery.
- There are standing committees that review services and outcomes and inform practice to ensure that outcomes are relevant and successful.
- Collaboration in service and program delivery across organisational disciplines and the community is undertaken.
- Case conferencing on unique community groups, individuals or families that require a concerted and intensive approach is undertaken.

Benefits of community engagement **and partnerships**

While some aspects of community engagement continue to provide outcomes and generate ongoing success, others have a limited time and purpose. Each is valuable and contributes to a bigger picture. Some of the ultimate benefits of engaging with communities are outlined below.

Benefits at the site/service/local level

- Social and learning outcomes for children and young people improve through wider participation of families and the community in the education and parenting journey.
- Families feel they are a more valued and included part of the learning and parenting journey and validated as the 'first educators' and the primary influence in a child's life.
- Strong and sustained partnerships emerge that support your goals and share the responsibility/resourcing.
- You have access to willing stakeholders on a continual basis to support governance and decisions in your site or service.
- Families get more value from your site or service goals, as they apply to their children or the community.
- You get support in the education and development of children and young people from parents and families who, through a relationship with your site or staff, understand their role or how they can support the learning and development of their children.
- Volunteering parents and community members model behaviour and 'generosity' to children and young people, and the wider community perpetuates more of the same.
- Programs are more sustainable with local ownership and pride, given the involvement of a broader local group in their development.
- There is greater cultural and social capital within your site through wider engagement with the community.
- Commitment to joint action (in collaboration) results in more holistic outcomes for children and young people when parents and community partners have become involved.
- Families and communities who have become more involved show greater confidence in the organisation's systems.

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Benefits at the regional level

- There is equitable resourcing (eg human resources/financial/programs) to communities where local input and influence provides evidence of need.
- There is a strengthened capacity across networks and partnerships that foster collaboration, pooled resources and a sense of connectedness to other services and the wider community.
- Teaching practice is enhanced through stronger links with and greater understanding of their local community by teachers and site leaders.
- Because positive relationships are formed through the community engagement process and active participation, greater social capital is developed within complex sites and communities.
- The community has a clearer understanding of issues presented by the organisation and of the community's role in potential solutions.
- Where the community is involved, sustainable outcomes are more likely due to the community's local ownership of the outcomes, inclusion in the process and pride in the outcomes.

Big picture benefits— Organisation and societal levels

- The organisation demonstrates accountability to the community, promoting a greater confidence in our services.
- Our processes achieve credibility from a societal perspective through democratic and inclusive approaches.
- Transparency in decision making is building a strong culture and service philosophy with internal personnel and external stakeholders.
- There are formal and high level partnerships and accountability across sectors to achieve place-based outcomes consistent with unique complexities, rather than overarching and broadly focused responses by government.
- Through shared responses across agencies, communities and sites and a more refined and concerted approach to the 'whole child', there are more sustained long term outcomes with education attainment and retention, ultimately impacting social capital, productivity and participation outputs measured on a wider scale economically.
- Ideas and insights gained from local input and community partnership planning methodologies ensure better targeted and well-informed resourcing.
- Our services become more connected with local regions as a part of the wider community and more accessible, 'user friendly' and inclusive, thus creating greater confidence in the organisation as a whole.
- Internal stakeholders such as staff and advocacy groups are valued, included and involved in decisions that impact them as well as the children, young people, families and communities they serve.
- Through engaging with community, we support the development of people who are being helped to obtain the same social respect, personal dignity and economic and social, cultural and civic opportunities as all others within their community.[8]
- Overall, the communities within which we work become more socially inclusive, and a sense of citizenship by a greater number of community members is evident.

8 *Re-thinking social policy: Place-shaped as well as people focussed.* SA Centre for Economic Studies, 2013, ISSN 1445-6826

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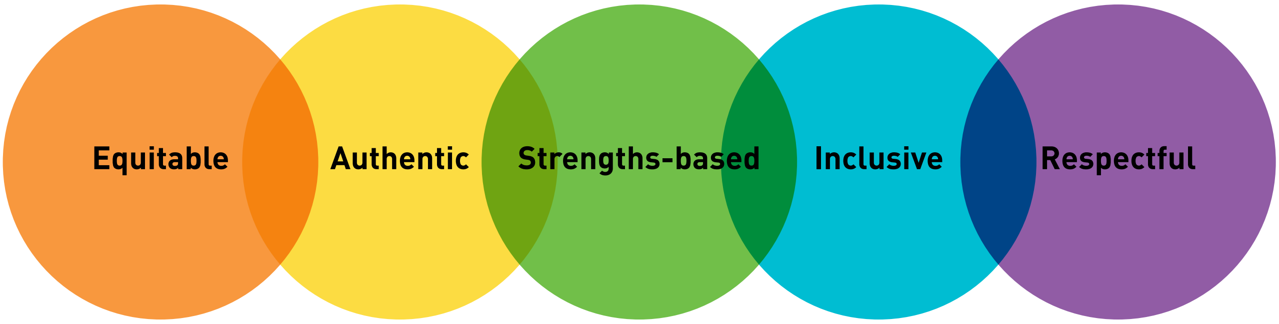
What

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is many things; it can be referred to in a number of ways and be undertaken to achieve a range of outcomes.

Processes that engage others should be:



Different voices, opinions, values and experiences come together in a context of community engagement. The more diverse the input through the process, the better and more creative the outcome will be.

While the process of community engagement will bring a depth and breadth of concepts and ideals together, it will not always be an easy process. **Consensus** — where most people mostly agree — is not always guaranteed. What is important is that as many people as possible have had a say in choosing what the community wants.

The following publication will help you develop a deeper understanding of consensus building in community engagement processes: go to http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/area?command=record&id=30&cid=6.

The greater the investment in this process, even the tricky bits, the greater the relevance and meaning of the outcome.

Leave your agendas at the door. Respect that the community is the expert and has a collective wisdom to support your goal. The agendas are yet to be created through the rightful and democratic process you are about to undertake.

Community engagement — sometimes also called public participation — is an all-encompassing term and is interchangeable with terms such as parent engagement, youth engagement, family engagement, youth participation, children's voice and parent voice.

Community engagement can be:

- a chance for people to **have a say** about things that could affect them
- a way to influence decisions through **participating** in a process or activity
- about encouraging and creating ways for people to engage with **equitable**, **fair** and **democratic** opportunities in order to be heard
- about forming **relationships** with people, groups, stakeholders and partners in any number of ways to make decisions, plan or achieve a set goal
- an event or process that values **opinions**, **ideas**, **culture**, **skills** and **knowledge** of a range of people and their experiences to bring about change or improvements.

Introducing the IAP2 — Spectrum of public participation

There are different levels of engagement. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model shows five levels of engagement (see adjacent). In this model, community engagement is called public participation.

Each level of community engagement is identified to fit with a goal. Each level is supported by a possible resource that can assist with facilitating that level of community engagement. Usually, the activity will fall into one of two categories and sometimes both. These are to ‘share information’ or ‘bring people together’.

The spectrum begins with informing the public, which is a simple and potentially once-off engagement goal, to the other end of the spectrum — empowering the public — where local decision making and influence rests with the community.[9]

This spectrum will be referred to throughout this guide and become very useful in your planning and evaluation.

9 http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/iap2s-public-participation-spectrum

The IAP2 levels

Inform: Is about **one-way communication**. The key to *Inform* is that you openly and honestly explain to the community about the decisions you are making. The goal here is to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. The promise to the public is that ‘we will keep you informed’.

Consult: Is about **two-way communication**. The key to *Consult* is to provide information to the community and stakeholders and then gain feedback. The goal here is to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. The promise to the public is that ‘we will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision’.

Involve: Is about **two-way communication with a focus on input** rather than just feedback. The key to *Involve* is to gain ideas from the community and stakeholders very early in the process and to use these ideas as the basis for your options. For example, you might put together two options for your strategic plan, based on the community’s input. You then need to provide these options back to the community and stakeholders and gain further feedback. The goal here is to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. The promise to the public is that ‘we will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision’.

Collaborate: Is about **partnering**. The key to *Collaborate* is to work very closely with the community and stakeholders, who should provide a recommendation to the work you are doing or seeking partners to achieve. The goal here is to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. The promise to the public is that ‘we will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible'.

Empower: Is about **empowering your community** and stakeholders to make the final decision. The goal here is to place the final decision making in the hands of the public. The promise to the public is that 'we will implement what you decide'.

Inform
Consult
Involve
Collaborate
Empower

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goals	To provide the community with information to help them understand the issue	To get feedback from the community on an issue	To work directly with the community to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered	To partner with the community at every stage	To place final decision making in the hands of the community
Service's promise to the community	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to you and give you feedback on how your input has influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed and we will give you feedback on how your input has influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice in developing solutions and will incorporate your advice into decision making wherever possible	We will implement what you decide
Example techniques	• Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses	• Surveys • Focus groups • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberate polling	• Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions


Local need
Transparency
Evaluation
Community
Relationships
Information
Time

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Planning for **community engagement**

Know why you are engaging and communicate this clearly

Start your planning process by asking '**Why?**'. What is the purpose of this engagement?

The big picture has been covered as to the reasons why, as an organisation, we are engaging with our communities. Now, you can refine this rationale to one or two specific goals. It is important to keep your reasons for engaging concise so that you can measure how effective you have been and, importantly, how you communicate this to others.

Each step of the planning process should be aligned with the evaluation process. It is important to begin the process with the end point in mind, and what you hope to be able to demonstrate is how you achieved outcomes and what those outcomes were.

This is where you consider the IAP2 engagement spectrum alongside what you hope the outcome of your engagement will be.

At this time, do you want to **inform**, **consult**, **involve**, **collaborate** or **empower**?

Ask what this engagement activity will have an impact on; for example:

- planning process
- identifying a local need or wish
- a democratic process to reaching a decision
- a strengthened relationship to support your work/community needs
- inclusion of the community to demonstrate transparency and provide timely information and responses that are relevant to them.

Before you get too involved in your planning, you must identify what the 'not negotiables' will be. The goal you have set and how much influence the community has in the finished process will always be guided by things such as legislation, policy, budget and time. It is important you identify these parameters and communicate them to those you are engaging with.

Know who to engage

It is important to think about **who** from a local community should be included in your engagement process. You will be able to plan how to go about the process when you are very clear about who will be involved. Making the very best use of the activity sometimes means 'less is more' and, at other times, you might like to have the broadest audience possible. Whom you invite and how many depends on what you want to achieve. Some of the cohorts might include:

- parents and families
- children and young people
- business and industry
- other services and community partners
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with special needs, or from minority groups
- elderly people
- internal stakeholders/staff/colleagues
- regional and remote residents
- all of the above
- a select mixture of a small representative group from many groups or smaller communities or populations.

It is especially important to gather the views of people who don't usually have 'a voice'. Many people are not used to being invited to contribute, or may have cultural or social backgrounds that have isolated them from participating in the community.

Some of these groups may include the long term unemployed, or people who speak a different language or are refugees.

To be sure that you get all views and perspectives from the community, build a plan that includes the opportunity for people from all backgrounds or situations to be involved. This ensures an impact on the widest number of community members along with a process that builds the capacity of local people to understand the local issues that affect them and how to be a part of the solution or outcome.

A large focus of your work will be on creating strategies for community members who are isolated, be it socially, physically, economically, geographically or culturally. This will always remain an essential lens to place over your planning and engagement approaches. The sustainability of your approaches with communities will be determined by the amount of local ownership and investment by local people.

Effective strategies on how to best engage with a range of different people and groups will be covered a little later in this resource.

Depending on the process you are planning and whether you or your team are local, you may identify key people who have certain qualities that will support your activity or who will be 'champions' supporting the process of engagement. These people might include community leaders, 'action' people, change agents or well-connected community members. As locally connected people, they may be able to assist in identifying local people who can offer the sometimes unheard perspectives that bring the best information and ideas to your process.

If it happens that you do not belong to the community you are hoping to engage with, it is very important that you **do your homework**. Communities can sometimes resist any attempts to engage them if someone from outside hasn't done appropriate background work.

Always remember there are people within each community who know the natural connecting points for your needs. Sometimes, just asking the right person from within local government, the local youth sector or an industry group can fill a room with the right people for your purpose.

Know the history and background

There is always a lot of information available about the community you would like to engage with, through a range of different access points. You can research such data online, consider the data you have through the services you already deliver and report on, and consider the policies that apply to the areas you wish to engage the community on.

Whatever your reason for engagement, it is vital that you research the history and the 'story' first. Sometimes, the information and data you source will be consistent with the conversation you have with the community and, sometimes, it will be contradicted by what members of the community tell you. Either is fine, as your intent is to be thorough and get **the big picture view** of things. Having lots of information through your desktop research is never a reason not to engage with the community. The most important aspect of your work should be seeking the input and influence of local people. This is their right and the organisation's responsibility. The rich stories that come from connecting with local people are a more important influence on the outcomes than spreadsheets and data sets. These stories also help you to understand more deeply the needs of the community and, therefore, how you can be responsive through your services.

Some communities have suffered 'death by consultation', or been surveyed, emailed or canvassed on a number of occasions for a range of reasons. It is incumbent on you to research to what extent this has occurred and try very hard not to duplicate a process. Failing to do so, or being unclear with a community about your intent, will result in an unsuccessful engagement activity and fractured relationships without trust or respect.

Always consider how the community can enhance and enrich the outcomes of what has happened before your engagement quest, and leave them with a lasting memory of the **mutually valuable experience** your engagement activity has had.

Begin early

The earlier in your process that you engage with the community the better. Once you have done your research and clarified your purpose and with whom to connect, timely contact with your community will ensure that they feel a sense of commitment, influence and ownership over where their input goes or, in the very least, be among the first to know, as opposed to the last or uninformed altogether.

The key to sustainable outcomes in communities is that local ownership and, therefore, commitment to action and ultimate pride will keep things alive, long after the dollars dry up. When capacity exists locally to the extent that government or management is no longer required to the level that it once was, sustainable outcomes are achieved.

The sooner you connect with the community in a process, the less likely you will have a pre-determined outcome. The very essence of community engagement at whichever level you choose is that the community are the experts of their own community and local needs. No amount of data or assumption can paint the real picture like a conversation with real people and the subsequent formation of a relationship, where they are part of the journey, should that be the intent of your work or their defined needs.

The risk of not engaging early is that the community may feel disempowered and resentful if a decision is made or a service offered that didn't involve them. Another consideration is that if the decision made or outcome that occurs without community engagement is not needed, is irrelevant or inappropriate, it may result in a waste of resources, questionable credibility, lack of transparency and a loss of confidence.

Without placing the appropriate importance on community engagement in your work, be it for a single conversation or a sustained partnership, any activity that is intended to engage the community that is not **early** in a process or plan will hamper progress and lose time on a greater scale than if engagement occurred at the outset.

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Plan for planning

Why is the organisation engaging the community?

- What is the promise to the public?
- What does the organisation hope to achieve from the engagement?
- What influence will the outcomes of engagement have within the organisation?

A well informed local perspective to ensure relevance of our program
Forming an ongoing working relationship with parents of our students

Link to site improvement plan
Response to eDIAf accountabilities
Program will be more relevant with local ideas

Who is the organisation engaging?

- Who are the target cohorts/stakeholders? Why have they been identified?
- Identify local champions, knowledge sources, links and networks before finalising engagement target group

Families, children/young people/Aboriginal people
Non-government sector/service providers
Business sector/industry

Refer to local government and local service directories to identify potential local practitioners or community groups/networks:
youth sector network, mental health network, local training organisations

What is already known about the community or the engagement topic to build from with the stakeholders/target group?

- Identify available sources of information that can be obtained before engagement
- What does the data reveal that can target the process towards the story behind the data?

- Local LGA website
- Organisation data
- ABS data
- Local workforce data
- Office for Youth

Plan for planning

Starting early in the process with a plan will clarify your thinking. The plan could consist of the very messages you convey to your target community. Two examples of this sort of early planning are shown here. One example — a flowchart — is on the left. The other is in a questionnaire format, shown below.

1. Why are we engaging? (ie the purpose of this engagement)
   - 1.1 What do we promise to those we engage?
   - 1.2 Where does the information/outcome of our engagement go? / What will it influence?
2. Who are we engaging and why? (cohort descriptors eg Aboriginal parents)
   - 2.1 Explicit descriptors of who will be in the group and where they are from (if specific organisation, site, representative group)
3. What have we already learned through our research that informs the process we will undertake and how can we build on this/enhance through engagement?
4. What are the 'non-negotiables' we need to consider? (eg policy, legislation, timelines, funding)
5. How can we use our local links to support the logistics of our engagement activity?

Once you have populated your template, you will know some of the important information, including **with whom** you're engaging and **where** and **why**.

This plan for planning offers a simple way to bring all of the desired outcomes together and, therefore, guide the steps you can take to achieve your community engagement goal.

Before you focus on the remaining principles of engagement, it is time to have a close look at the IAP2 engagement spectrum and consider where on the spectrum your engagement should sit. When you have worked out which **level of engagement** you are working towards, you can plan the activity to maximise the engagement outcome. Use these steps to help you in this process:

- **Step 1:** Consider what you would like to achieve through engaging with the community. On looking at the spectrum and identifying which of the goals is closest to your goal, the level of participation will become clear.
- **Step 2:** Next, identify on the spectrum what the outcome/promise to the community will be, based on your goal and the level.

- **Step 3:** When you are comfortable with these aspects, you will be able to identify how you engage the community. Some example techniques are described on the following pages and many others provided in Part 2: Community engagement resources.

Identifying the level should then lead you to the associated commitment you will be making to the community. If your intended goal does not align with the promise to the public that you see with your chosen level of engagement, then reconsider how you might better align them in your planning. It is better to anticipate this before you are in the process of engagement so that expectations remain clear for all involved.

Community engagement, like all relationships or human interaction, is not an exact science. There will be times when you will need to bounce between the levels of engagement to ensure all needs are met and relationships maintained. As long as you remain true to the principles and do not have a pre-determined outcome in mind, it will all work out.

The nature of community partnership planning and, indeed, of relationships is that reflection and review is an important part of getting it right. Also, consider that you may be looking to start at one end of the spectrum and continue with the same stakeholder group/community members right to the other end and beyond meaning the process will need to be flexible and responsive. It will eventually become more than something you are driving or initiating.

The techniques and tools of engagement in Part 2 will assist you to move through the process in the smoothest possible way.

Go to **Part 2** to see how the levels of engagement of the IAP2 spectrum relate to tools and techniques that might be used and associated implications for cost, time required and difficulty of execution.

IAP2 Quick reference guide

Fuller descriptions of techniques can be found in Part 2.

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Briefings	Presentation to the media or organised groups to raise awareness, provide information, answer questions and generate interest in participation	• Opportunity to reach a wide variety of individuals and stakeholders • Opportunity to expand contacts database • Builds community goodwill	• KISS – keep it short and simple • Bring visuals • Use show and tell techniques
Central information contacts	A designated person who serves as a single point-of-contact for enquiries about the project	• Controls the flow of information to stakeholders • Conveys the image of accessibility	• List a person, not a position • Keep contact person local • Make sure messages are kept up to date
Databases	A central contacts register used to record stakeholders' contact details	• Ensures all contacts are stored in a central location • Creates an easy solution for distributing information	• Update regularly
Telephone hotlines	A widely advertised telephone number that provides information and directs callers to a person who can answer their questions or to a machine to record their comments	• Controls the flow of information to stakeholders • Conveys the image of accessibility • Easy to provide updates on project activities	• Make sure contact has sufficient knowledge to answer most questions • List a person, not a position • Keep contact person local
Information kiosks	A station where project information is available	• Can reach large numbers of people • Can use computer technology (eg touch screens) to make the kiosk interactive and to gather comments	• Make sure the information presented is tailored to your target audience (eg youth, parents, teachers) • Place in high traffic areas (eg shopping centres, public libraries) • Can be temporary or permanent
Information repositories	Locations where project background materials are available for review by stakeholders	• Relevant information is available to the public without incurring costs or complications of tracking multiple copies sent to different people • Can set up visible distribution centres for project information	• Make sure personnel at location know where materials are kept • Keep an inventory of items • Track usages through a sign-in sheet
Press releases	Stories pitched to the media to inform the wider public on project milestones	• Informs the media of project milestones • Press release language is often used directly in articles • Opportunity for technical and legal reviews	• Emails, press releases and media kits, with a follow-up phone call • Foster relationships with editors and journalists (especially education media)

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Advertisements	Paid advertisements in major metro and/or community newspapers	• Reaches broader public	• Determine best days and best newspaper sections to reach your intended audience • Avoid rarely read sections
Printed public information materials	Written material delivered directly to stakeholders including: • Fact sheets • Newsletters • Brochures • Issue papers • Progress reports • Direct mail letters	• Can reach large target audience • Encourages written responses if comment form is enclosed • Facilitates documentation of public involvement process	• KISS — keep it short and simple • Make it visually interesting • Include a postage-paid comment form to encourage two-way communication and to expand mailing list • Be sure to explain public's role and how public comments have affected program and policy decisions
Responsiveness summaries	A report that provides feedback to the public regarding comments received and how they are being incorporated A formal way of responding to every public comment in writing	• Effective way to demonstrate how public comments are addressed in the decision making process	• May be used to comply with legal requirements for comment documentation • Use publicly and openly to announce and show how all comments were addressed
Internet tools	Websites providing information to the public	• Reaches across large distances • Makes information accessible anywhere at anytime • Saves printing and mailing costs	• A good homepage is critical • Each web page must be independent • Put critical information at the top of the page • Use headings, bulleted and numbered lists to steer user • Avoid too many words
Blogs	Diary of comments published on a website	• Appeals to younger audience • Makes information widely accessible	• Update regularly • Ensure content is interesting and will be widely read among younger groups
Wikis	A website that allows users to add and update content on the site using their own web browser	• Appeals to younger audience • Enables higher involvement of stakeholders	• Ensure information is accurate • Monitor regularly to ensure no vandalism

Techniques for collecting and compiling input

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Comment forms	A form given to people to complete and return, either electronically via the website or in hard copy	• Provides input from those who would be unlikely to attend meetings • Provides a mechanism for expanding the mailing list	• Use pre-paid postage • Include a section to add name to mailing list • Document results as part of public involvement record
Surveys	Surveys to collect stakeholder feedback on various issues for input into planning and to improve future community engagement Can include: • Telephone surveys • In-person surveys • Mailed surveys • Opinion-8 SMS surveys • Online surveys	• Provides traceable data • Reaches broad, representative public • Provides input from individuals who might not attend meetings • Provides input from cross-section of public — not just those on the mailing list • Higher response rate than other communication forms • SMS surveys can be used to engage stakeholders who may not have access to the internet, and can appeal to a younger target audience	• Make sure use of results is clear before technique is designed • Be precise in how you set up website for internet surveys • Survey should be professionally developed and administered to avoid bias
Interviews	One-on-one meetings with stakeholders to gain information for developing public involvement and consensus-building programs	• Provides opportunity for in-depth information exchange in a non-threatening forum • Provides opportunity to obtain feedback from all stakeholders • Can be used to evaluate potential committee members	• Interviews should be conducted in person, particularly when considering candidates for committees • Determine key talking points
Feedback registers	A randomly selected database of stakeholders created to give feedback to an agency, business or organisation about its services, priorities, projects or contentious issues	• Useful in gathering input from stakeholders on an ongoing basis • Provides useful input without requiring people to come to meetings	• Think through what terms the participants should have (ie timeframe) • Using an independent organisation to select the participants will help dispel any concerns of handpicking participants to influence responses

Techniques for bringing people together

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Appreciative enquiry processes	A facilitated process to discover past and current best practices that inform and inspire participants as they co-create and implement their ideal future	• Creates high level of engagement and commitment to change as an ongoing process, not a one-time event • Fosters positive, grassroots level action • Connects the community by celebrating stories that reflect the best of what is and has been	• Requires whole system involvement; participants should be representative of the potentially affected public • Process requires an especially high level of engagement by core team members
Brainstorms	A process involving a number of stakeholders gathered under casual circumstances to put forward different ideas	• Casual process, which might suit young people better than a more formalised process • Fosters interaction between those involved	• Requires participants who are willing to speak out
Deliberative forum	A deliberative forum focuses on finding common ground for action Through deliberation, participants see the issues that affect them from different points of view and move from an individual perspective about making choices to weighing the consequences (benefits and costs) of their choices	• Participants openly share different perspectives and end up with a broader view on an issue • A diverse group identifies the area of common ground, within which decision makers can make policies and plans	• Considerable planning is needed • Process should be facilitated by a trained moderator • Deliberation should occur in small group (8 – 20 people) • Larger group may need to break into several forums
Deliberative polling	A highly structured process that enables a randomly recruited group of people to explore a specific issue or topic and then present their opinion after considering the pros and cons	• Can tell decision makers what the public would think if they had more time and information • Exposure to different backgrounds, arguments and views	• Do not expect or encourage participants to develop a shared view • Hire a facilitator experienced in this technique

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Dialogue	Discussion across stakeholder groups to create shared meaning and solve problems Dialogue can be used in a number of different public participation techniques, including deliberative forums and study circles	• The group engages in the art of thinking together and creates shared meaning on a difficult issue • A new understanding of a problem or opportunity emerges	• Requires discipline to intentionally suspend judgement and fully listen to one another • Participants need to be open to communication that engages both thinking and feeling • Participants need to feel safe and speak truthfully • It is important to craft questions to be addressed
Fairs and events	A central event with multiple activities that provide information and raise awareness of a project, issue or initiative	• Focuses public attention on one element • Conducive to media coverage • Allows for different levels of information sharing	• All issues — large and small — must be considered • Make sure adequate resources and staff are available
Focused conversations	A conversation between stakeholders used to gain an understanding of people's views on a certain issue and to stimulate feedback	• People learn new information and insights on a complex issue • People learn to respect and understand other views • Leads to individual or collective action	• Plan the series of questions ahead of time and don't skip a step • May be used in many different settings, from debriefing a process to exploring the level of agreement on a given topic • Be clear on the intent of the conversation
Focus groups	A group interview designed to listen and gather information from separate groups on a particular issue	• Provides opportunity to test key messages prior to implementing a program • Works best for a select target audience (eg youth)	• Conduct at least two sessions for a given target • Use a skilled focus group facilitator to conduct the session
Ongoing advisory groups	A group of stakeholders assembled to provide public input to the planning process	• Provides for detailed analyses of project issues • Participants gain understanding of other perspectives, leading towards compromise	• Define roles and responsibilities up front • Be forthcoming with information • Use a consistently credible process • Interview potential committee members in person before selection • Use third-party facilitation

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Open space meetings	A self-directed format that enables an unlimited number of participants to create and design their own work or discussion groups related to a central theme	• Provides structure for giving people opportunity and responsibility to create a valuable product or experience	• Include immediate summary of discussion • Important to have powerful theme or vision statement to generate topics • Need flexible facilities to accommodate numerous groups of different sizes • Ground rules and procedures must be carefully explained for success
Study circles	A small group where participants meet several times to discuss critical issues The group looks at a problem from many points of view, explores possible solutions and makes plans for action and change	• Large numbers of people are involved without them meeting at the same time and place • A diverse group of people agrees on opportunities for action to create social change	• Work best if multiple groups working at the same time in different locations and then coming together and sharing • Study circles are typically structured around a study circle guide
Symposia	A meeting or conference to discuss a particular topic involving multiple speakers	• People learn new information on different sides of an issue • Provides a foundation for informed involvement by the public • Provides an opportunity for presentations by experts with different views on a topic	• Requires upfront planning to identify appropriate speakers • Needs strong publicity

Technique	Description	Benefits	Tips for success
Workshops	An informal public meeting that may include presentations and exhibits but ends with interactive working groups	• Excellent for discussions on criteria or analysis of alternatives • Fosters small group or one-on-one communication • Ability to draw on other team members to answer difficult questions • Maximises feedback obtained from participants • Fosters public ownership in solving the problem	• Know before the workshop how you plan to use public input • Conduct training in advance with small group facilitators • Each facilitator should receive a list of instructions, especially where procedures involve weighting/ranking of factors or criteria
World cafés	A meeting process featuring a series of simultaneous conversations in response to pre-determined questions Participants change tables during the process and focus on identifying common ground in response to each question	• Participants feel a stronger connection to the full group because they have talked to people at different tables • Good questions help people move from raising concerns to learning new views and co-creating solutions	• Room set-up is important — should be conducive to a conversation • Allow for people to work in small groups without staff facilitators • Think through how to bring closure to the series of conversations

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Plan for doing

Planning for doing needs to follow on from planning to plan. The information you capture will be critical for your evaluation process. Below is a flowchart that outlines the steps in planning for doing. The resources required are provided in Part 2.

When it comes to building relationships and working with people, nothing works with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Remember that the people you are trying to engage with will require an approach that is relevant to them. Some of the best outcomes and insights to local stories will be through engaging the least heard community members.[10]

Level of engagement

Refer to the IAP2 public participation spectrum and tools and techniques.

Engagement tool/ technique selected

- Fact sheets
- World café
- Workshop
- Focus group
- etc

Resources required for this process

- Funding
- Helpers
- Room/hire
- Advertising
- Equipment
- Stationery
- etc

Action plan
Timelines
Deadlines
Individual responsibilities

- Invitations
- Communications
- Network links
- Bookings
- RSVPs
- Facilitator
- Attendance sheet
- Running sheet
- Allocate responsibilities
- Test run

10 *Inclusive community engagement toolkit — A practical guide*, Capire, 2012

Adapting your engagement strategy and activity to suit the people you are engaging is critical. A good option is to ensure that in any one activity you use two to three different techniques so that the most people possible find a way to **feel comfortable in participating**.

Be respectful of those ‘less heard’ who may not have the confidence or desire to share their thoughts publicly, or will struggle to be heard over the more dominant people in a process. There will always be representatives of the loud and the quiet in public participation activities. Your design of the processes for engagement will require careful planning to enable all to engage in the way that best works for them (not you).

Remember that, while planning, you might have expectations of people participating in one way and, based on many uncontrollable factors, it could turn out differently and sometimes better. While good planning and preparation is paramount, as with all human engagement activities, the processes or outcomes are not necessarily predictable. Focus on what can be gained from a change in direction without letting the flow of your activity take a different focus altogether.

The success of community engagement is based on your skill and capacity to be flexible, adaptable and connected to those present, so that every opportunity to make the best of their time and commitment is realised.

How

How to engage communities

Congratulations, you have now **planned to plan** and **planned to do**! Now it is time to put your plan into action and engage with your chosen group or audience.

You have worked with the *Better together* principles of engagement 1–4 for each stage so far and it is time to consider principle 5 which is to be genuine in what you do and say.

Be genuine

This is where we will consider facilitation and the 'how' that comes from within, rather than from a checklist or rule book. (The art of facilitation is considered in more detail in the next section.) The **process** of engagement should be authentic and genuine; this includes its facilitation.

Putting into action all that you have planned to do is a critical process. A lot of work has brought you here and there is now the chance to make it all count.

The requirement to be genuine, in terms of a process, is highlighted here because experience shows that there are many attempts to encourage community participation that amount to varying degrees of tokenism, where people are consulted or informed about a decision but where they really have little or no power to affect it.[11] It must be emphasised that community participation cannot be achieved quickly; it is a **slow**, **developmental process**.[12]

Consideration of the following will ensure an authentic and genuine, mutually beneficial outcome:

- People will participate if they feel the issue or activity is important.
- People must feel that their actions will make a difference.
- Different forms of participation must be acknowledged and valued.
- People must be enabled to participate and be supported in their participation.
- Structures and processes must not be alienating.[13]

11 *Community development: Community-based alternatives in an age of globalisation*, Ife J & Tesoriero F, 2006

12 ibid

13 ibid

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A commitment to genuine engagement, respect and efficient communication relies on determination and developing personal skills to a high standard. These are subtle skills and include:

- listening and learning
- the capacity to define common ground and make compromises
- allowing time for stakeholders to rethink and reposition themselves before you plan, push ahead, or ditch controversial developments.[14]

Below is a range of tips for engaging with different groups and individuals to ensure your approach is inclusive and appropriate.[15 16]

Some people you hope to connect with will have different levels of motivation, understanding and purposes for themselves participating. This means that you will need to apply the best approach and, in some instances, individualise the way you engage to ensure that each participant feels valued and appreciated for participating and sharing his or her views or input.

Consider some of these aspects where people might present with individual needs and require an approach to engagement that is more inclusive.

Engaging with particular groups of people

People may face barriers to participation for various reasons. The barriers depend on a range of different circumstances.

The following chart shows three types of barriers that may limit the capacity for people to engage or participate.[17]

Personal resources	Motivation and attitude	Cultural factors
Limited education and capacity	Limited knowledge of benefits of engagement	Minority groups
Limited money	Limited knowledge of engagement activities	Language and literacy
Physical and mental health issues	Limited interest in the subject	Values and beliefs
Limited mobility	Limited understanding of the subject	Community divisions
Geographic isolation	Consultation 'fatigue'	
Disability and sensory impairments	Unmet expectations	
Limited confidence		
Limited social networks		
Limited time		

On the right is the Capire *Inclusive community engagement matrix*[18], which is a useful tool for supporting your work with the more isolated groups or those with barriers.

Engaging children and young people

Given that the number of children and young people connected to the department run into the many hundreds of thousands, and children and young people form a substantial portion of our communities, it is no surprise that increasing and enhancing their voices and involvement in all aspects of our services is expected to be part of everyday business — for everybody.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[19] now provides a framework and rights-based mandate

14 *Engagement—But for what kind of marriage?: Community members and local planning authorities*, Anitra Nelson et al, 2008

15 Adapted from *Inclusive community engagement toolkit—A practical guide*, Capire Consulting Group, 2012.

16 Adapted from *100 Ideas to help engage hard to reach people*, Capire Consulting Group.

17 Adapted from *Inclusive community engagement toolkit—A practical guide*, Capire Consulting Group, 2012.

18 *South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework guide: A resource for developing quality teaching and learning in SA*. DECS, 2010.

19 http://www.unicef.org/crc/

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Inclusive community engagement matrix

	One-to-one	Small Group	Large Group	Drop-in	Surveys	Online	Arts	Community Education	Communication Materials
Personal Resources									
Limited education and capacity	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Limited money	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Physical and mental health issues	■	■					■	■	■
Limited mobility	■				■	■			■
Geographic isolation	■				■	■			■
Disability and sensory impairments	■	■			■	■			■
Limited confidence	■			■	■	■	■	■	■
Limited social networks	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Limited time	■			■	■	■			■
Motivation and Attitude									
Limited knowledge of benefits of engagement	■			■					■
Limited knowledge of engagement activities	■		■	■		■			■
Limited interest in the subject	■			■				■	■
Limited understanding of the subject	■	■	■	■				■	■
Consultation 'fatigue'	■			■			■	■	■
Unmet expectations	■	■		■				■	■
Culture									
Minority groups	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Language and literacy	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Values and beliefs	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Community divisions	■	■	■	■			■	■	■

As the main institution for fostering social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society, publicly funded schools must serve all children, not simply those with the loudest or most powerful advocates. This means addressing the cognitive and social needs of all children with an emphasis on including those who may not have been well served in the past.[20]

John Goodlad

20 *South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework guide: A resource for developing quality teaching and learning in SA*. DECS, 2010.

within decision making processes to ensure that children and young people are considered and involved in decisions that will affect them. Whole communities, including local governments, schools, preschools, health services and legal services, are embracing an approach that means children and young people are uppermost in the processes that will have an impact on them. These communities worldwide are becoming known as 'Child Friendly Cities'.[21]

While it is taken for granted to a large extent that our organisation engages with the voices of children and young people in many ways every day, it is incumbent upon all within the organisation to be explicit and intentional about a principled approach to this engagement. The *Children's voices* resource, available at http://everychild.sa.gov.au/publications.htm, offers practical and principled ways to engage children and young people as valued citizens and learners, along with the rationale for their engagement.

There are many activities, processes and events that already involve children and young people within your practice. You can embed processes within your regular connection with children and young people to ensure that you 'hear' them or you can be explicit and intentional about the value of their input and 'listen' to them. The growing expectation is that you 'listen' to them and create purposeful opportunities for engaging with them about specific things where their input can be influential. This includes their influence on their learning journey.

For deeper insights on achieving maximum engagement and connection with children and young people, consider the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) practices, applicable to all engagement activities both inside and outside the classroom, school or learning context:

- Create safe conditions for rigorous learning.
- Develop expert learners.
- Personalise and connect learning.

Refer also to 'Involve me—How to engage young people' within this guide and to the *South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework guide* and *Review tools handbook*, available at http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/teachingandlearning/pages/Leadersresource/44209/.

In the first instance, these pointers will be useful things to remember for a mindful approach to engaging children and young people and other particular groups.

Children

Children have their individual attention spans, learning preferences and capacities for engagement. Some of the following may help the planning process and your engagement with them:

- Always ensure you have parental permission before engaging with children in a process.
- Be as creative and engaging as possible. Make the activities fun and meaningful from a child's perspective.
- Role-playing and story-telling are great ways to involve children and impart information to them.
- By nature, children love 'doing' more than 'sitting and listening'. Be as active as possible and consider the 'walk and talk' approach to engagement.
- Never underestimate the capacity of a child to understand or be involved, but keep your language clear, concise and 'child friendly' so that your practice remains inclusive.

Young people

The phenomenon of 'youthfulness' brings with it many and varied considerations when it comes to a meaningful engagement process. The section 'Involve me — How to engage young people' has more detail but these are some of the basic points to bear in mind:

- Be engaging, positive and approachable to the extent that young people feel empowered rather than 'expected to participate'.

21 http://childfriendlycities.org/

- Don't underestimate the capacity of young people. Never presume what they can or can't do or what they don't know already or understand.
- Be clear about the expectations you have and the expectations that the young people can have as well, including timeframes and continuity.
- Integrate into your engagement the mediums that young people value, such as online tools and music, and don't forget creativity and 'doing' opportunities.
- Engage young people with an offering of a mutually beneficial outcome. Young people will engage meaningfully if their time and effort is valued and heading somewhere of importance to them. This is the 'What's in it for me?' (WIIFM) factor.
- Be respectful of the diversity of skills and understanding among a group of young people, as you would with a group of adults or a blend of the two.
- Ensure that you have the mechanisms to address any issues of power balance between individuals or groups within your audience.
- Respect fresh ideas and celebrate the adrenaline of youth.
- Be mindful of confidentiality and anonymity where applicable.

Refer also to *Children's voices — A principled framework for children and young people's participation as valued citizens*, available at http://everychild.sa.gov.au/publications.htm.

Parents

Parents and families care more than anyone about the decisions that may affect their children. They bring honest, well-intentioned and passionate ideas and opinions that are of immense value to forming sound partnerships for the health and educational journey of their children.

These are some considerations for your engagement with parents:

- Where appropriate, consider involving parents to participate **with** their children.
- Validate parents as the **first educators** of their children.
- Ensure a strengths-based approach to activating their involvement or input, both for the planned engagement and beyond.
- Adopt an holistic view of the child's development with parents when determining service provision or programming.
- All parents are different. Don't assume they are a homogenous group.
- Parents do their best; avoid language that implies judgement or deficit, and ensure your activity isn't thought of as a response to fix or change things about their parenting.

Resources to support parent engagement are provided in Part 2.

People who have a disability or special needs

In order to be inclusive **and** respectful of special needs, you could connect with someone who works more specifically in this discipline. This may help to ensure appropriate planning and that you take into account some of the following considerations:

- Often people who have a disability face other challenges that also marginalise them. Focusing solely on one aspect of their lives can further exclude them. Work with the 'whole person' and avoid assumptions about his or her level of ability.
- Be mindful that some people with a disability may need more time to voice their opinions or would value the opportunity to provide their input in other ways than publicly in a room full of people.
- Consider whether you will need microphone (sound field) technology or a signing person for people with a hearing impairment.

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- Arrange accessibility to any venue or activities within a venue that caters for people who use wheelchairs. Request space and seating information when making arrangements. Identify what some of these requirements may be within your chosen group. Universally asking if the person has any special requirements will be respectful at the point that your invitees RSVP.
- Be aware of differing communication capacities and a need to include activities or opportunities to engage with people depending on their needs or preferences.

If you are planning to engage with a group of people with disabilities or special needs, you will need to deepen your thought and planning processes about what is appropriate for your engagement strategy. If your engagement process extends beyond an initial engagement and into a more formal partnership or relationship, these primary considerations will become second nature.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Respect, dignity, control and power are qualities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have struggled to maintain since colonisation. In valuing their input, you aim to also respect the cultural nuances that will lead to a more successful and respectful engagement process. Consider the following:

- Work closely to the *Better together* principles around research and develop a deep understanding of their place, culture and expectations.
- Spend time building a relationship and rapport with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as a group or as individuals within a broader group.
- Be aware of some of the cultural sensitivities around topics for discussion and gender or age appropriateness of discussing these topics (eg men's business, women's business).
- Seek permission before photographing or filming any aspect of the activity.
- Identify an environment that is neutral and friendly to all participants. Consider a 'yarning place' for a yarning circle or regular meeting place, rather than a conference room or formal setting.
- Never assume that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same beliefs and opinions as one another.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) parents

It may not be easy for CALD parents to become involved in the life of the school or service. They will probably have had very different experiences of education and human services compared to the Australian system, including experiences of the relationships between teachers, students and parents. They may not be aware that education, child development and child protection in Australia are based on a partnership between services and families and that any concerns or suggestions that they have can be raised with teachers, principals or service providers. In addition, parents may not be able to express concerns or questions because they do not have sufficient familiarity with the system or because they are not comfortable expressing their concerns and ideas or participating in other ways to enrich the cultural context of the service or site.

It is likely that families have difficulties with the English language. Some parents may feel unable to support their children educationally or engage with services or sites because they do not yet have the skills or are preoccupied with other challenges such as their own trauma. Establishing a sense of trust on the first meeting between service or site staff and the children or young people and their parents is essential. Show families around the service or site remembering to:

- anticipate issues that might arise
- demonstrate active listening and a willingness to address concerns or questions

22 *South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework guide: A resource for developing quality teaching and learning in SA*. DECS, 2010.

- emphasise that parental involvement and connection is encouraged and valued by the site or service
- use sensitivity to establish if there is someone in the family or the wider group who understands written information
- use interpreters (access information at http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/literacy/pages/esl >Interpreting/Translating), Bilingual School Services Officers (BSSOs) (access information at http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/literacy/pages/esl >BSSO Program) or Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) (access information at http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/literacy/pages/esl >Community Liaison) as appropriate, but when you speak look at the people you are communicating with, not at the interpreter
- be sensitive and aware of cultural differences, such as body and eye contact or pointing to someone, which may have undesired connotations in different cultures.

Some parents readily take up the opportunity to be involved in special events such as Harmony Day or Multicultural Week where they can demonstrate their skills in music, cooking or dancing. It is, however, important not to make assumptions about parents' willingness to share their cultural practices.

If an interpreter is not used

- Ensure you are understood, recognising that 'yes' or a nod may not always be adequate indicators of comprehension.
- Use plain English in your explanations, avoiding jargon, idioms, irony and satire, which can be misunderstood by people from other cultures.
- When inviting families to functions, community events and information sessions, it may be necessary to phone parents beforehand to ensure invitations have been understood and to provide opportunities for parents to ask questions. Interpreters, BSSOs and CLOs may need to be used for this task. Some families may require assistance with transport, such as vouchers for taxis or bus fares. Child care may need to be provided and meetings scheduled at convenient times.
- Refreshments may need to be religiously and culturally appropriate. Check this with someone who has the relevant cultural knowledge.

Involving families with refugee experience in decision making

Although some families are keen to be involved in governing councils, there are a number of reasons why they might be reticent in volunteering for decision making committees or voicing their concerns. For example, parents:

- may not be used to being involved in the business of the school, which may be seen as the decision making domain of the principal and teachers only

If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from school … If educators view children as children, they are likely to see both the family and community as partners with the school in children's education and development.[22]

Joyce Epstein

- may see school governance as complicated and threatening or beyond their capacity
- may feel their English skills are insufficient to participate in meaningful discussion.

Interpreting support or other initiatives are usually required to support the involvement of families of children and young people with refugee experience. [23]

Regional and remote communities

Whether the input is for a 'big picture' statewide purpose or for a local approach or endeavour, the engagement of 'country' communities will require some specific considerations:

- If you are not local to the community, all the research you have done will never paint the full picture; trust the locals to be your very best resource and knowledge bank.
- Advise the community that you have undertaken some research but that their input will be the most critical input (to indicate you have not dismissed their uniqueness and that your communication with them is not just for show).
- Anticipate that the local experts will offer the majority of what you need, despite your research. Allow them to present this through the process, rather than declaring what you believe to be the case (this is often a fine balancing act).
- Be ever mindful that political and bureaucratic systems have led to regional and remote communities feeling removed from decision making or benefiting from metro-centric policy, or even feeling that they are the 'poor cousins'.
- Communities will always respond better to 'outsiders' coming and going once they have first developed a rapport and formed some basic relationships with local people.
- Recognise the power of 'place' and the value that holds for regional and remote community members, who will typically be protective of their 'place' as well as what occurs within and around it.

Online communities

Potentially applicable to all communities or members within communities is the ever-evolving 'digital community'. Online/digital community engagement has become the mechanism of choice across the world. For example, Facebook is one platform that most are familiar with. For online communities, blogs and interactive methods of connecting online, the link below is a great start to commencing your online community engagement. Technology changes daily and so, too, do the opportunities to connect with people in innovative and practical ways.

There are **six principles to online consultation** in this guide and many very user-friendly pointers to using this medium: http://engagementhq.com/online-consultation-guide-2/.

You must always consider the policies and protocols of using this medium for engaging with people, along with the most responsible way of encouraging the participation of children and young people through online access. You must ensure that all protective and ethical factors have been considered.

Many people still favour the 'up close and personal' approach to connecting with others so remain flexible to the range of suitable options.

Online community engagement offers some exceptional outcomes and data as well as real-time access to many voices from many backgrounds that are less reliant on the facilitation process but more critically reliant on ICT expertise. Where particular cohorts are concerned, this may be the very best way to engage with them. Online contact is a useful source of ongoing engagement with the community, and the relationships and networks established through 'virtual' means can bring a new facet to your work. Even if this isn't the initial means of engaging, it is a very practical way to remain engaged with new partners or to keep conversations alive beyond the initial engagement activity.

23 Count me in! www.decd.sa.gov.au/literacy/pages/esl

For me as a parent, a teacher, a school principal and one who remembers what it is like to be an Aboriginal student, I understand very well that just getting a child inside the school gate does not mean the problem is solved. My experience as an educator confirms that children and parents engage in school positively when respectful partnerships exist.[22]

Chris Sarra

Tell me and I will forget
Show me and I may understand
Involve me and I will learn

Chinese proverb

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Involve me

An introduction to effective youth participation

Involve me—
How to engage young people

Children and young people up to the age of 18 represent approximately 23 per cent of South Australia's population. As South Australian citizens, their time is not only spent at child-and young person-specific services or facilities but extends to the same public spaces, services and facilities that adults use. They are influenced by their surroundings and, likewise, shape the relationships, environments and communities we live in.

Too often, however, as a society, we overlook each child's and young person's individual identity as a South Australian citizen and, instead, define children and young people narrowly by their settings (such as a student); by their relationship to adults (such as someone's son or daughter); by their age (such as a 4 or 12 year old); as part of a specific group (such as a Year 12 student); or in terms of their future potential. This does not recognise the richness of their present individual contributions to the diversity and fabric of South Australian society.

Young people need opportunities to engage in meaningful activities, have a voice in decisions, take responsibility for their actions, and actively participate in the life of the community.

When young people are not engaged in meaningful activities or when their voice is not honoured, they are at risk of not feeling valued and of becoming disconnected from others. This is likely to lead to problems for both the young person and the community.

All social systems and agencies that affect children and young people should be based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory. Article 12 reflects the importance of respect for the views of the child and that young people have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.[24] This principle from the Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision making but not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognises that the level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity.

24 http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

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What does engagement with young people look like?

The process of engaging with young people will vary according to the context but, for the purposes of this section, it can be described as:

> *… the active involvement of children and young people, in being informed, expressing their views, having their views listened to and making decisions.*[25]

Sometimes, young people need to be heard and, at other times, the community, school or adults want to know how young people feel or think and what they — as young people — might do about an issue or situation.

It is important that young people feel connected to how the world around them is evolving and what role they play in that. They have a right to be heard and involved in their communities:

- Young people want to be **recognised** as persons in their own right and to have their views **respected**.
- Like all people, they have a right to **express their views** when decisions are being made that directly affect their lives.
- Young people are **experts in their own lives** and have a body of experience and knowledge that is unique to their situation. Adults may need to look at things differently with the input of youth.[26]

Engagement has many different expressions and may be adapted to a need, an opportunity or to the strengths of young people to be able to meaningfully participate. It is not exclusively about the young people who are the most articulate or offer the greatest leadership. Engagement must be tailored to enable all young people to be heard and involved in a meaningful way.

Some participatory rights for young people, adapted from the *Citizen me* guide to youth participation, will assist your foundational thinking.

Participatory rights for children and young people

Children and young people have the potential capacity to participate in decision making processes.

They have unique perspectives on their lives.

Children and young people have a right to:

- have a say about what is important to them
- be listened to
- be treated with respect
- be provided with information about how they will be involved in decision making
- be given information in a language they understand and a format that is appropriate to them
- participate in a way that suits them
- be given clear objectives and limits for decision making
- be prepared for what will happen in a decision making process and who will be there
- be given time and space so they can say what they mean
- have a support person with them in a decision making process, such as a relative or worker they trust
- be given feedback about what will happen with the information they provide
- provide their own feedback on the decision making process
- refuse to participate or withdraw from a process at any time
- benefit from their participation.

Adapted from the *Citizen me* resource[27]

25 Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People, WA, *Issues Paper 2*—August 2009.

26 *Citizen me*—available at http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me-/Citizen-me-.

27 http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me-/Citizen-me-

Why is engagement with young people important?

The importance of engaging young people is supported by goal 2 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*: 'All students become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens'.

Participation in making decisions and implementing them leads to enormous skill development and confidence building for the young people involved. These skills can have a positive impact on their school, work, social and home lives. Young people also develop greater independence and self-esteem, feeling better able to tackle new challenges.

Benefits to a young person include:

- a sense of purpose and belonging
- influence and power over their own lives and futures
- social connectedness and inclusion
- skill development in decision making, governance, process and collaboration
- a sense of value as a contributing citizen with valid experiences and ideas to share
- confidence, self-esteem and a drive for making a difference or having a say – self-determination.

Benefits to the organisation include:

- socially responsible, inclusive practices supporting a culture of democracy
- decision making that leads to sustained outcomes because of the input of diverse voices
- connection with rising generations likely to be employed within the organisation because of the inclusivity and respect developed by the organisation in taking all views into account in the daily business realm
- positive community perceptions because of the culture of inclusion and involvement of largest stakeholder/client group
- new and progressive concepts and ideas identified through wider contemporary input
- current themes and issues responded to with voices of current users and stakeholders.

Benefits to the community include:

- a rising generation of connected and self-determined young people
- young people serving their communities more and sooner (eg council, committees, leadership)
- a reduced gap of understanding between young people, adults and seniors leading to greater community coherence
- young people developing a natural will to be involved and heard
- voluntary social modelling of positive participation by young people for children.

Guiding principles

There is no magic recipe for engaging with young people's voices. The guiding principles outlined below provide a useful foundation. They come from the *Children's voices* guide[28] and will help you to gain the participation of young people in an authentic way. The important thing is to get the principles right, understand how they may be translated into meaningful action, and the rest will follow.

View young people as valued citizens and social actors

Viewing young people as experts on their own lives is a foundational belief for adult practitioners. They are your key informants and best sources of advice on matters affecting their lives.[29]

28 Harris P & Manatakis H (2013) *Children's voices: A principled framework for children and young people's participation as valued citizens and learners.* SA Government Publishing.

29 MacNaughton G, Smith K & Lawrence H (2003) *Hearing young children's voices*. ACT Children's Strategy: Consulting with children birth to eight years of age, Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria.

Appropriateness

Young people are wiser than many adults might think; they have the capacity to express their views powerfully and simply. Appropriateness includes engagement being pitched fittingly in terms of developmental age and stage, individuality and culture.

Respect

Engagement is founded on respect and reciprocal relationships with young people. Giving the floor to the young person does not diminish adult responsibilities.

It is important that adults ensure a safe and secure context in which the engagement activities occur, and demonstrate a genuine interest in what the young person is expressing.

Shared understanding

Shared understanding is essential to effective and respectful engagement.

This includes developing an understanding about why and how the young person is being invited to participate, what the purpose is, and how the young person might contribute to shaping the way activities occur. Shared understanding is not a one-off event — it needs to be monitored and honed as the engagement unfolds.

Hand over the agenda

Working with young people requires techniques such as projection; that is, asking questions that explicitly invite their views, such as ‘Tell me, what do you think about …?’, ‘How do you feel when …?’, ‘What do you like about …?’, ‘What makes you think that?’, ‘What makes you feel that way?’, and so on.

Asking leading questions is important, accompanied by concrete stimuli and hands-on experiences in which young people can explore and express their ideas, while others carefully observe and document. Clarifying what they are expressing and prompting them to elaborate on their ideas can help to further support and validate young people’s contributions.

Being mindful of power

Power is a key consideration when engaging with young people’s voices — after all, whose voices count? It is important to be mindful of power differences between young people and adults and not to put words into the mouths of those with whom you’re engaging.[30]

Power dynamics can also occur among young people. If working with young people in a group setting, it is important to be sensitive to such dynamics and hence the person who may dominate and the person who might not have an opportunity to contribute. Small social groups often work best.

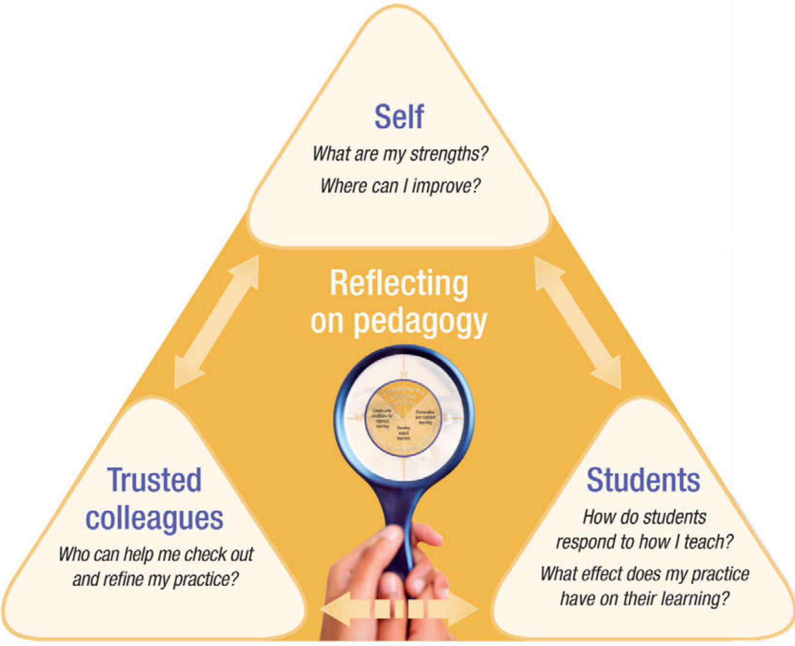
Ethical considerations

It is essential to respect and honour the ethical rights of young people and their parents and families.

Key ways of doing this include providing clear information about what a young person’s involvement might entail, and seeking informed consent from parents for their child’s participation, with an understanding that if the young person chooses not to participate there will be no negative consequences for that decision.

Voluntary participation is the key and even if young people agree to take part they should have the freedom to withdraw at any time without penalty. Young people also have the right for their privacy and confidentiality to be maintained. This includes the need to have their agreement to any material arising from consultations being published. Finally, young people have the right to be assured that their engagement will be worthwhile and enjoyable.

30 Mayall B (2000) ‘Conversations with children: Working with generational issues’, in Christensen P & James A (Eds) (2000) *Research with children: Perspectives and practices*. London and New York, Falmer Press.



From SA TfEL Review Tools handbook, available at http://www.learningtolearn.sa.edu.au/tfel/pages/tfeloverview/

Engagement processes/ models/frameworks

The Learner voice

The Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Framework[31] and its support resources strongly value the voices of learners in their learning journey along with the partnerships with communities to connect student learning within and beyond the school gate.

The TfEL Framework supports leaders and teachers with a language for focusing on and developing quality pedagogical approaches in three key areas: creating safe conditions for rigorous learning, developing expert learners, and personalising and connecting learning. The Framework promotes the valuing of student strengths, capacities and interests in their lives inside and outside school. It provides the mechanisms for supporting optimal learning with children and young people within learning relationships that are mutual and personalised.

The TfEL online Compass is a professional learning tool for teachers that enables the collection, triangulation and sharing of student and peer feedback, to strengthen classroom teaching and learning practices, as referenced against the TfEL Framework.

The use of this tool supports an empowerment process that builds student voice in the classroom and beyond. It can be accessed through 'Learnlink' for DECD personnel, or through emailing TfEL@sa.gov.au to register for use.

Student voice

The importance of speaking up — The 'student voice'[32], produced by the Victorian Government, highlights the following:

The active and authentic involvement of students has been identified as a key factor in creating safe and supportive schools. A significant body of national and international research suggests that student voice:

- *should involve young people's active participation in shared decision making;*

31 *South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework guide: A resource for developing quality teaching and learning in SA*. DECS, 2010.

32 *The importance of speaking up—The 'student voice',* Research article July 2009, available at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/raspeakingup.pdf.

- *is one avenue through which students can explore and construct their own learning and develop higher order skills;*
- *is a key to personalising learning;*
- *is a perspective of distributed leadership that is often overlooked;*
- *is not always 'authentic' in actual practice; and*
- *can be tokenistic — where young people appear to have a meaningful voice but in fact don't.* (p 1)

Theoretical models

A range of theoretical approaches have been developed that are able to contribute positively to an understanding of what engagement is.

Hart's Ladder of Participation

The most recognised model is Hart's Ladder of Participation. The ladder has eight rungs, each rung representing increasing degrees of participation and different forms of cooperation with adults.[33] Hart calls the three lowest steps on the ladder 'non-participation' as opposed to what he calls 'real participation'. At the highest end of the ladder, young people initiate ideas and share decisions with adults.

Degrees of participation

Hart's rungs on the Ladder of Participation are arranged from true participation at Rung 8 to non-participation at Rung 1:

Rung 8: Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults is when projects or programs are initiated by children and decision making is shared among children and adults. These projects empower children while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

Rung 7: Child-initiated and directed is when young people initiate and direct, with adults involved in a supportive role.

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children is when projects or activities are initiated by adults but the decision making is shared with young people.

Rung 5: Consulted and informed is when children give advice on programs or activities designed and run by adults.

Rung 4: Assigned but informed is where children are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are involved.

Rung 3: Tokenism is where young people appear to be given a voice but, in fact, have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

Rung 2: Decoration is where young people are used to help 'bolster'.

Rung 1: Manipulation is where adults use children to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by children.

It is reasonable to acknowledge that operating with young people at rung 8 of the ladder is neither possible nor practical at times. This model simply indicates that there are levels by which systems can function with the inclusion of young people's voices, and informs how these levels vary.

33 *Citizen me!: Engaging children and young people in your organisation*, available at http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me-/Citizen-me-.

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Rung 8:
Young people and adults share decision making

Rung 7:
Young people lead and initiate action

Rung 6:
Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Rung 5:
Young people consulted and informed

Rung 4:
Young people assigned and informed

Rung 3:
Young people tokenised*

Rung 2:
Young people are decoration*

Rung 1:
Young people are manipulated*

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation[34]

*Note: Hart explains that the first three rungs are *non-participation*

34 Adapted from Hart R (1992) *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. Florence, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

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Westhorpe's Continuum

Another way you can conceptualise engagement, in a similar fashion to the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum described earlier, is through Westhorpe's Continuum[35], shown on the right.

Consider this as a step-by-step view of how you might promote the development of participation by young people and what each stage might look like (not unlike climbing Hart's ladder). As with community engagement, you may consider engagement with young people something you do on a needs basis or as a guide to how you operate each and every day, at varying levels or stages on the ladder or continuum.

Pathways to Participation

Shier's Pathways to Participation (see p 60) is a comprehensive organisational 'check and balance' model that provides a clear pathway for taking the right steps towards genuine engagement of young people.[36]

With each identified level of participation, there is a corresponding question about whether your organisation, culture and processes are ready to commit to participation on that level, followed by whether you have an obligation or responsibility to do so according to policy.

Once there is a clear commitment (or obligation) within an organisation towards valuing participation by young people, the next step is to identify how, with whom and when you embed participation activities and processes into day-to-day business.

Putting it into practice

There will be a series of steps or a process that forms a cyclical approach to engaging young people, particularly if their involvement is built into your everyday business. Even for people who work with young people on a daily basis, running a process or changing an approach to embrace engagement with young people does not occur easily.

The processes undertaken and the planning necessary to involve young people in a genuine way will require patience and an investment in the value of a two-way relationship between young people and adults. Some open mindedness to 're-thinking' the regular 'balance of power' between young people and adults will be necessary if it is not a typical mode in your site or service.

Children's voices provides a comprehensive guide to implementation. Importantly, it includes key aspects for professional learning, such as planning, implementation and reflection through establishing a 'continuous cycle of learning'.

Engaging with young people is more than a one-off event – it involves sustained activity over time. What occurs before and after an engagement event is as important as the event itself.

The diagram on the right provides a helpful visual for facilitating the process of engagement. This practical process relies on the following key components within each stage:

- adequately resourcing activities in terms of material, time and people support; making them effective for all concerned stakeholders and appropriate for the young people with whom you're engaging
- providing professional development workshops to ensure that all who are facilitating the engagement are supported with principles and strategies for consulting with young people, and have the opportunity to tailor approaches to their particular contexts
- implementing the engagement, involving sustained activity over time and multiple means of expression
- documenting the engagement, including ongoing recording of activities as they occur and final documentation of young people's key messages
- analysing, synthesising and reporting young people's messages in ways that capture

35 http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me-/Citizen-me-

36 http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me-/Citizen-me-

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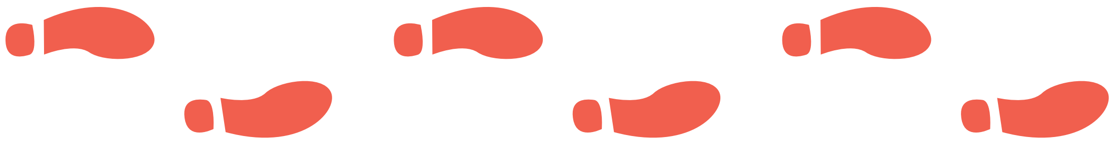


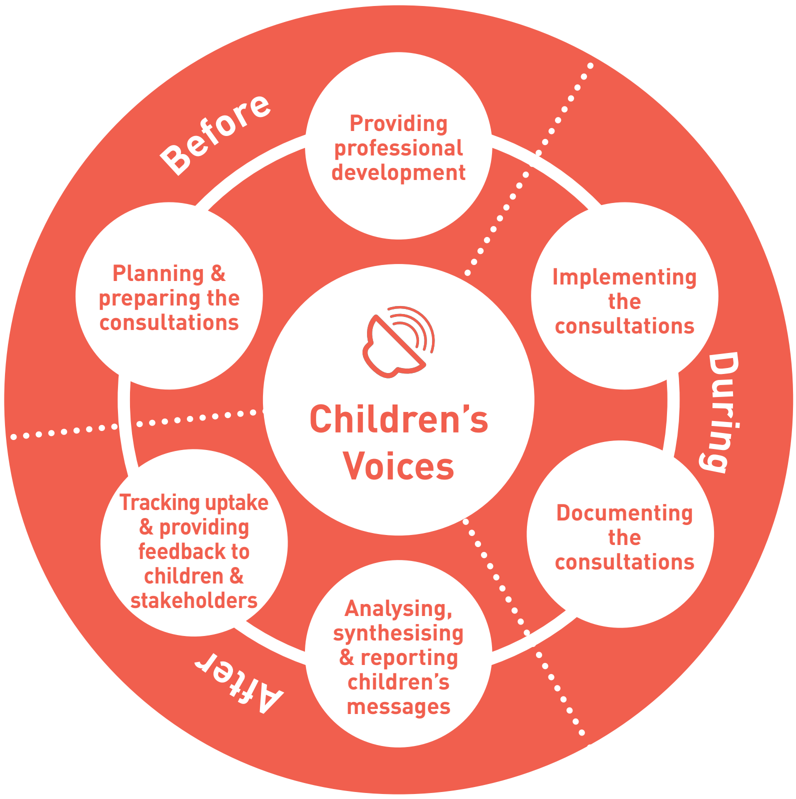
1 Ad hoc input	2 Structured consultation	3 Influence	4 Delegation	5 Negotiation	6 Control
An environment is established which supports young people to contribute their ideas or information about their needs.	A deliberate strategy is developed to seek young people's opinions about what they need or what problems they face. It is a two-way flow of information and ideas.	This involves some formal, structured input in order to ensure at least a minimal level of influence on the organisation.	Young people are provided with real responsibility for undertaking particular tasks within an organisation.	Young people and the organisation each contribute their ideas, information and perspectives. Decisions are reached by consensus and compromise.	Young people make all or many of the crucial decisions within the organisation, from policy and programming to financial management and hiring of staff.

Adapted from Westhorpe G (1987*) Planning for youth participation: A resource kit*.

the young people's meanings while speaking to an official audience

- tracking uptake and consequences of the messages and providing feedback to young people and other stakeholders of these follow-on effects over time.

Links to useful tools and techniques are provided in the 'Online and print resource guide' in Part 2 of this guide.



The process of engagement

Shier's Pathways to Participation

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
	Children are listened to	Children are supported in expressing their views	Children's views are taken into account	Children are involved in decision making processes	Children share power and responsibilities for decision making
Openings	Are you ready to start listening to children?	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Are you ready to let children join your decision making process?	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?
Opportunities	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Does your decision making process enable you to take children's views into account?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?
Obligations	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?	Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision making?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?

This is the point you must reach if you endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Facilitation and evaluation

The art of facilitation

The stakes are high. You have a room full of people (if this is the chosen method) and, if it is not, you are still required to connect with them on any number of levels, as that is what engagement is all about.

Engagement is relational, any way you look at it. It is about people. Your ability to connect with and relate to people, whichever technique you choose for engaging with them, is one of the critical success factors to getting the job done well and mobilising things to the next level.

The role of a facilitator

The job of a facilitator is to 'ease a process' – to plan, guide and manage a group event to ensure the group's objectives are met effectively, with clear thinking, good participation and full involvement from everyone who is present.[37]

Facilitating community engagement or public participation requires a particular skill set. It is crucial that you are fully aware of the skills required and the depth of the process that is required in order to plan for a successful engagement event. The benefits of facilitation being undertaken by **local** community engagement specialists include objective, frank and straightforward processes. The use of local people as facilitators means that, because they are not at 'arms-length' from the community, they will promote a sense of common ground and opportunities for ongoing and direct engagement beyond the process of participation and they can do this in a more organic and impromptu way.

The community engagement 'expert' or facilitator is not necessarily the expert of the discussion area, issue or goal. The ideal proposition is that an expert of the issue is present to **support** facilitation of a community engagement activity that is professionally facilitated by someone **skilled in facilitation** and not over-invested in the end result. This will always be one of many variables when considering the intent of the process, the audience and the techniques used to engage community voice.

Facilitators have to walk a fine line between advocacy and maintaining their credibility as technical experts and process facilitators.[38] The risk of the facilitator being over-invested in the area or topic of engagement can lead to conflicts of interest or the potential for him or her to impose personal values and opinions

37 www.mindtools.com

38 *Planning for sustainability: Creating liveable, equitable and ecological communities*, Wheeler SM, 2004.

Tip: Facilitation can take a lot of mental effort, meaning that it can be difficult to think about and contribute to content while facilitating. Neutrality is also important. So, if you have an interest in the outcome, or have skills, experience, information or authority that is important for a successful outcome, then consider bringing in an external facilitator.[40]

and, therefore, influence over what should remain a community voice.

The facilitator designs and plans the group process and selects the tools that best help the group progress towards the outcome.

The facilitator also guides and controls the group process to ensure that:

- there is effective participation
- participants have a mutual understanding
- their contributions are considered and included in the ideas, solutions or decisions, and the recommendations that emerge
- participants take shared responsibility for the outcome.

You should ensure that outcomes, actions and questions are properly **recorded and actioned** and dealt with appropriately afterwards.

For deeper guidance on the art of facilitation, the following two links can expand the above themes and are recommended:

- http://www.mindtools.com
- http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/240/filename/Advancing_Collaboration_Practice_-_Fact_Sheet_11_-_Consensus_building_and_facilitation.pdf.

If you are going to act as the facilitator, consider some of the following points to support some key aspects of successfully bringing people together.

Building rapport [40]

When you introduce yourself, you will:

- set the scene
- stimulate people's interest
- relax and/or engage the participants
- build your credibility
- clarify the purpose or objective or the activity/presentation.

Ways to build rapport include:

- showing a genuine interest in your participants
- gathering information about the group in advance
- interacting with your group before you formally take the floor
- using effective and relevant icebreakers.

Remember that many people who are participating may not know one another — your role is to support them becoming a cohesive group as early as possible, and to encourage them to participate while setting a scene that indicates their time with you will be informative, stimulating, interactive and fun.

39 www.mindtools.com

40 Adapted from Proteus Education and Training, *Impact leadership guide*, 2011.

How to be an effective facilitator [41]

- Use your best judgement at all times — trust yourself.
- Introduce yourself — establish rapport.
- Show respect, and be nice to people.
- Ask them — don't assume you know what they mean; clarify or ask individuals if they have a view on something.
- Facilitate, don't dominate.
- Empower and support, and be confident that 'they can do it'. They will believe you if you believe they can.
- 'Hand over the stick': give them the floor, the whiteboard marker, the licence to lead or respond. This is, after all, about them.
- Be sensitive.
- Share.
- Watch, listen and learn.
- Embrace error — learn from mistakes.
- Relax.
- Unlearn — abandon preconceptions.
- Be self-aware and self-critical.
- 'Triangulate', that is, seek multiple perspectives, cross-check, qualify and correct.
- Be honest.
- Improvise.
- Seek 'optimal ignorance'. Don't dig or delve too deeply or allow for more information than is necessary.
- Have fun, joke, enjoy.
- Innovate and invent. Try new things, be bold, and take risks.

41 Adapted from Chambers R (2002) *Participatory workshops—A sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities*—which was adapted from *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory & Learning Appraisal (PLA) Behaviours, Embracing participation in development: Wisdom from the field*, Meera Kaul Shah

Now that you have a sense of the skills and attributes that will ensure your genuine commitment to the process and its facilitation, you can focus on the final of the *Better together* engagement principles.

Be creative, relevant and engaging

In achieving this final principle, you need to consider keeping sight of your objective while you try to explore the most relevant and engaging approach to facilitating the engagement process.

Structure needs to remain throughout the activity and this will require a disciplined approach on the part of the facilitator, as it applies to time keeping, identifying when to move on or when to linger on a topic, and keeping the energy of the activity vibrant and engaging.

Making it fun and interactive

Be clear about the distinction between fun and funny! Not everybody does 'funny' well. Know your limits or your strengths so that you can keep your people engaged and not deflated with poorly conveyed humour.

Fun, on the other hand, is important and this, coupled with interactive activities, ensures a win–win for both the facilitator and participants.

Benefits of this style of engagement will be:

- enjoyment by participants, leading to deeper levels of involvement and participation
- participants valuing the exercise far more and being willing to engage in future community building activities, or further supporting the process as you continue to build partnerships
- keeping them stimulated and on task (retaining the concentration of each participant is hard at the best of times)
- keeping the mood high and connected — people feel positive when they are enjoying themselves, and people will be less inclined to 'whinge'.

Ways to keep your facilitation engaging include allowing the process to be '**all about them**'. Usually, people are seeking their moment to say something that is important to them and they have probably found their words but are just waiting to share them. While they are waiting to share, they are mulling them over and, while they are doing this, they aren't engaged with you and others. Get them back!

The key here is to allow for many two-way conversations and feedback opportunities so the 'What's in it for me?' factor is realised and people get a sense of purpose for their participation that reaches beyond your objective. Your clever facilitation will recognise the difference between those who continually monopolise the discussion and those who have a genuine need to contribute. Remaining tuned in to this is a critical role of the facilitator.

The fun, interactive and engaging aspects of your activity will be largely determined by the technique or tool you choose to access for the community engagement activity (see the previous planning sections and Part 2 for tools and techniques). That said, there are some **basic principles** that you should consider in setting the scene for the day and in the general process of facilitation that will keep it engaging and fun.

Using the tools of the trade

You will have considered these in the planning process and identified what you need alongside the techniques you are using. However, now is a good time to remember a few golden rules:

- Don't commit 'death by PowerPoint'. Slideshows should be used more as a guide for the format of the day, not the place most people have to look at, most of the time, while you repeat what is on the slide.
- Web-based movies, infomercials, online stimulants, and icebreakers are all great, and most people engage with these if they are short, punchy and the technology doesn't let you down. (So, **be prepared**, and have a test run.)
- Limit your handouts and paper waste. Cast your mind back to the last session you attended as a participant and how much paper was still sitting on a table when people left. Think trees.

Most people will **retain the visual and oral aspects** of your facilitation and presentation. However, remember the Chinese proverb:

> ***Tell me and I will forget***
> ***Show me and I may understand***
> ***Involve me and I will learn.***

Tips for keeping your audience engaged for the 'talking bits'

- Convey your message concisely and in simple terms.
- Follow your plan but try to appear spontaneous and 'human'.
- Don't be predictable and boring.
- Be guided by the audience and, if necessary, modify your style and plan to what works best with them.

The art of asking good questions [42]

Open questions

It can be helpful to cast a wide net and determine a sense of the audience's level of participation skills. Questions in this category are 'Tell me …', 'Describe for me …', and 'What is one thing …?'.

What if?

A hypothetical question is useful for when you feel the audience is having a mental block or is showing a resistance to sharing.

Fleshing out

These questions move the audience from vague or conceptual statements to specific

42 Adapted from Proteus Education and Training—*Impact leadership guide*, 2011

problems or issues. You might suggest a concept and then ask your audience to provide examples of this in their experience, or ask their opinion of a circumstance or option.

You can also use this technique to clarify or expand a general statement to provide context or wider audience depth of understanding. Remember that, even if you get it, it is still important that everyone else does too.

Commitment or closing questions

These are often helpful toward the end of a dialogue and may simply be 'Yes' or 'No' questions such as 'Are you going to do it?'. This technique ensures the ideas have been aired, questions answered and the challenge of what happens next emerges.

The next step—Piecing the stages together

Now that you have explored and mastered the *Better together* principles 5 and 6 of being **genuine**, **creative**, **relevant** and **engaging**, and you are clear on the importance of how to effectively **facilitate** this process, it is time to bring all of your planning, processes and goals together to identify the way in which you can adhere to the full six principles of engagement and to identify the tools and techniques you will use for final preparations.

The decisions you make from here should be quite straightforward when considered alongside the available budget, skills and capacity and, particularly, the level of engagement you are hoping to achieve.

You will have identified throughout the **planning to plan** and **planning to do** processes some of those aspects that will refine which processes and techniques you can employ in engaging your community and achieving your objectives and goals.

The final stage before you '**do**' is to link it all together by reflecting back on your plans and completing them. The flowchart below offers some guidance.

Facilitator processes and responsibilities should be identified alongside the chosen 'process' for engagement.

If there are multiple processes for engagement, consider your helpers on the day so that maximum participation is achieved and the facilitator is not trying to run three activities or conversations at once. Remaining flexible to the unknown is why you should have a logistics helper.

Level of engagement

Refer to the IAP2 spectrum

Identified technique/s
for your proposed activity

Choose the activity that:

- caters to your desired level of engagement
- will complement the number of participants and the cohort they represent
- fits within your budgetary and human resource capacity
- will ensure you can achieve your objectives for the engagement and its overall value in your planning/program/policy or goal/s

Checklist

Ensure your plan covers the 6 *Better together* principles of engagement

Action all plans

How did you go?

Reflection, review and evaluation

Congratulations! You have arrived at the next stage of your process.

It is easy to imagine that the planning, extensive research, planning again, and engagement with people, and all the time, energy and effort that these activities have consumed, have brought you to the end.

The reality is that you have arrived at the **beginning of a much bigger process** and at the point where the sleeves are rolled up to make your efforts so far really count. Some of the things that should have emerged through the significant planning and doing process to date may include:

- relationships, relationships, and more relationships
- information and data
- insight into the community, the people, the culture, the expectations, the dreams and the needs
- links to wider networks and the human and social capital in the community that exists to mobilise plans, projects or goals.

There are a few factors that you need to consider, knowing that what you thought was the end of something is the start of something else.

How did your community engagement endeavour go?

You started with a goal and objectives — have you achieved them?

What is the product of the community engagement exercise and how do you capture and present it?

Who do you present it to or what do you do with it now?

Was it a part of a small and local proposition, or part of a much bigger process such as the community partnership planning model, or to support a grant application, or the groundswell for something to occur with the whole community?

It is at this point that you might be realising why you focused on planning for the evaluation while you were planning to plan and planning to do.

When you have such a particular process with one chance to have an impact and engage with people with whom you might not be able to engage with ever again, starting with the end point in mind is critical.

Planning for evaluation shouldn't be confused with predicting the findings from these critical conversations with the community and inviting them to participate and support, or not support, the growth of an idea. It is to determine what 'product' you require at the end of the process to ensure that you have covered every angle during the precious time you had with them.

If you don't have a **solid basis for evaluation and review** of your engagement, then you have fallen into the trap of what might be considered a token gesture, which will make the community all the more reluctant to participate in engagement in the future or become partners on a more sustained basis.

The work you have done on the **plan for planning** and the **plan for doing** should guide the end product you intend to capture.

Beyond that, there will always be much more that emerges and is often unexpected, which is also critical to capture and can be surprisingly valuable. Remembering the earlier point, that communities are the experts, these 'little extras' give you insights that you might never have been able to plan to find out.

The evaluation process should include two clear steps: process evaluation and outcomes evaluation.

Process evaluation

Process evaluation links back to the plan for doing. This evaluation focuses specifically on how successful the community engagement activity was and whether the success of the activity then led to the achievement of the objectives.

On completion of the process evaluation, consider the following questions:

- What have you learned about your engagement activity through your process evaluation?
- What improvements to the engagement activity might you make next time?
- Did you remain on time and within budget?
- What actions, if any, do you now have to undertake (eg reporting, acquittals)?

Outcomes evaluation

Outcomes evaluation links back to the plan for planning and the evaluation plan. This evaluation will identify the product or outputs of the community engagement activity and what you learned, how you learned it, and if the objectives were achieved so that you can now take the next steps in achieving your goals.

On completion of the outcomes evaluation, consider the following actions:

- recording and presenting your findings
- making the findings and data count in a sustainable way
- identifying how the outputs can be relevant to (and therefore influence) other areas such as:
    - eDIAf
    - program development
    - curriculum development and learning design
    - site improvement plans
    - service outputs and key performance or accountability goals
    - wider engagement for developing partnerships or actioning recommendations
    - partnership plan.

Foundations for an effective evaluation

The basic information that will lay the foundations for your evaluation and any further actions will require that you have the name, contact details, organisation and role/function of each participant.

Once you have this information, you already have a number of data sets that validate the authenticity, connectivity and stakeholder group you have brought together.

This information will sit within your process evaluation and also link nicely into the outcomes evaluation and development of future partnerships or collaboration, should this be desired.

Consider this, and as much information as you can gather about the participants in the engagement process, as the building blocks of your subsequent actions.

Importantly, remembering the promises you have made to your community through the engagement process and the need to respond, you should communicate outcomes and collate and distribute information to participants. Not following through on this will make it difficult for you to engage these or other community members in the future.

The following link provides an excellent range of options, tools and techniques to help you with evaluation and evaluation planning. Take a few minutes to find what aligns best with capturing your outcomes for your activity: go to http://www.evaluationtoolbox.net.au/.

One easy way to access information is through a **survey**. The following is a list of ideas on how to develop a good survey — one of many ways to access the feedback and information that will assist in the review and evaluation of your process:

- Avoid loaded or leading questions.
- Keep the survey short and focused.
- Use a logical order.
- Keep rating scales consistent.
- Keep language simple.
- Include ‘not applicable’ or ‘don’t know’.
- Ask for personal feedback at the end of the survey. Respondents will have revealed some of their thoughts in the earlier part of the survey and may feel more comfortable by the end to give expanded and meaningful feedback.
- Pilot test your survey, perhaps with a community member.
- If you had people present for your engagement activity, ideally ask for the survey to be completed while people are present (follow-ups/online and after-the-fact surveys are nearly impossible to get returned).
- Consider ways to capture feedback during the process rather than at the end. (There are some very good electronic voting devices that support this type of data capture, such as *Zing Me*.)

Some aspects of your evaluation will be difficult to capture and convey in a numerical or ‘typical’ data format (ie quantitative).

This is where focus groups and qualitative information gathering, such as examples of conversations, anecdotes, stories or how people ‘feel’ about the process, are equally as important to record.

Consider capturing:

- the level/depth of participation by people
- whether good connections were made between participants
- whether processes were democratic and fair
- whether power balances were achieved between participants/groups.

Allowing for different perceptions and subjective perspectives people share, you are looking for the general trend which will lean towards **how most people found the experience** and this will offer you a point from which you can improve or share.

The **outcomes evaluation** is a more ongoing process that, ultimately, impacts a wider goal than that of engaging the community.

As you go through the evaluation process, you will be continually thankful that you planned for evaluation at the same time you planned for planning and planned for doing.

Finally, the emphasis, time and amount of money/resources allocated to evaluation is usually proportionate to the size, nature and potential impact of the activity in question.

The evaluation process can be undertaken in a thorough and simple way, or can involve many aspects of review and reflection that continue for extended periods. There is a great deal of helpful information available to support evaluation at many levels and for many purposes. Consideration can be given to external evaluation and internal evaluation of a project or activity, and pros and cons exist for both.

If the intent at the outset of your activity remains largely the same as what you evaluate and report on at the end of the process, then you have achieved success. This is not to say that additional learning doesn't occur on the way and value added outcomes aren't achieved. As with all people-related activities, there are always things you don't expect, just don't forget to capture them in your evaluation work.

The flowchart on the right will support your evaluation process. There are many more ideas on evaluation in the tools and techniques section.

GOAL
To undertake community engagement activity

PROCESS EVALUATION
- Attendance
- Engagement
- Timelines met
- Facilitation
- Costs/resources/ logistics

CAPTURED THROUGH
- Survey
- Observation
- Feedback
- Focus group/ debrief
- Action plan

To achieve

What have you learned about the process? Identify and record any actions (reporting, acquittals, etc).

OBJECTIVES
Identified in the planning process

OUTCOMES EVALUATION
- Data
- Stories shared
- Information gathered
- Relevance of info to objectives
- Relationships formed
- Actions identified

CAPTURED THROUGH
- Recordings, photos, film
- Interviews, yarning circles
- Focus group/ debrief
- Case studies
- Products as identified from engagement techniques
- Partnerships/ networks formed
- Action plan

How much did we do?

How well did we do it?

Is anyone better off?

RECORDING AND PRESENTING YOUR FINDINGS
- Identifying next steps
- Making the data and findings count in a sustainable way
- What else do the findings and the activities contribute to? (eg eDIAf, population plan, program development, wider engagement, reference group improvement plan)

In summary

This resource provides a range of practices and concepts that support growth and structure in the relationships between DECD and the wider community.

It is hoped that not only does the resource enable you to go about the business of community engagement but, also, highlights for you the reasons why community members are vital partners in the work we undertake within the department.

Just as we believe that children and young people are at the centre of all we do, we should broaden our thinking to include the wider world that children and young people belong in and harness the value of what can be added through engagement with their wider communities.

Please use this resource to build capacity among your teams and support the skills you have within your service, school, preschool, children's centre or office. Gradually, the greater inclusion of community engagement practices and approaches will permeate the work of the whole department and this will be evident in many ways, most importantly in the complete and whole service we can provide our communities in education and care.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about community engagement and how it will support your work.

Good luck in your future endeavours of making your community a part of your everyday business.

Part 2: Community engagement resources

Online and print resource guide

Note: All web addresses were accessed and correct as at November 2013.

Aboriginal engagement

http://8ways.wikispaces.com/

http://aboriginallearningcircle.com/

Two very recent documents on engaging with Indigenous communities.

http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-rs23.pdf

http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-ip5.pdf

Multicultural engagement

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (2005) *Considering consulting? A guide to meaningful consultation with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.* Available at: http://www.cmy.net.au/Assets/170/1/ConsideringConsulting.pdf

Department for Education and Children's Services (2007) *Count me in!: a resource to support ESL students with refugee experience in schools.* Adelaide Digital Printing Services. Available at http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/literacy/pages/esl

Youth engagement and participation

There are various ways any organisation might include the voices and participation of children and young people. This is a guide that offers extended insights and practical tools to engaging with children and young people.

http://www.evaluationtoolbox.net.au/

A number of useful evaluative processes and tools that can be easily adapted.

http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy-publications/yacvicother-publications-and-resources/48-youth-participation/437-taking-young-people-seriously-handbooks

http://www.capire.com.au/capire's-inclusive-community-engagement-toolkit

http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/files/Compressed_-_Active_Participation2.pdf

The following resource can act as a guide and reference to stay on track in your youth participation endeavours.

http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact03.pdf

The following points may also provide some considerations, as highlighted within the following resource.

http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy-publications/yacvicother-publications-and-resources/48-youth-participation/437-taking-young-people-seriously-handbooks

The *NSW Office for Communities and Office for Children's Guardianship* offer some outstanding resources to support the participation of children and young people in all aspects of civic life. Their Citizen me resource is exceptional.

http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me

http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Citizen-me-/Citizen-me-

http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/What-we-do-for-children/Promote-children-s-participation/Student-Voice

http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Participation-resources/Taking-PARTicipation-seriously/Taking-PARTicipation-seriously

http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/What-we-do-for-children/Promote-children-s-participation

http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Publications---resources/Other-resources

Some excellent resources and tools are available here.

http://www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/policy/vulnerable-youth-framework

http://www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/resources/toolkit

Australian Institute of Social Research—University of Adelaide has provided this for the SA Office for Youth (2009) and similar and more current versions with similar data can be uploaded periodically.

http://www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/4435/youth-report-sas-young-people.pdf

http://www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/resources/toolkit

The A–Z of encouraging youth participation is available here thanks to the Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association.

http://www.aicafmha.net.au/youth_participation/files/AIC37_Report_fact03.pdf

WA Office for Children and Young People and Office for Children and Youth 2007—Active Participation of Children in your Organisation.

http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/files/Compressed_-_Active_Participation2.pdf

The Youth Advisory Council of Victoria offers a selection of handbooks to support a range of engagement approaches involving young people.

http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy-publications/yacvicother-publications-and-resources/48-youth-participation/437-taking-young-people-seriously-handbooks

Engaging the disengaged

Capire offers some excellent insights into the most appropriate ways to engage particular population profiles.

http://capire.com.au/capire%E2%80%99s-inclusive-community-engagement-toolkit

http://www.mengage.org.au/Work-Effectively/Engaging-Men-In-Health/100-Ideas-To-Engage-Hard-To-Reach-Populations.aspx

Community engagement 101

A comprehensive guide to many facets of Community engagement—worth visiting.

http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/effective-engagement

An inspiring online community providing access to modern and inclusive approaches.

http://bangthetable.com/us/vision-and-values/

Community building

The following institute for community engagement offers some fresh insights.

http://tamarackcommunity.ca/about.html

http://tamarackcci.ca/

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth have many resources.

http://www.aracy.org.au/comment/fact-sheets-your-guide-to-building-collaborative-capacity

http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/117/filename/Pathways_to_community_participation.PDF

http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/118/filename/Positive_partnerships_with_parents_of_young_children.PDF

http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/78/filename/Building_a_solid_foundation_for_school_-_a_communities_approach.pdf

http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/237/filename/Advancing_Collaboration_Practice_-_Fact_Sheet_9_-_Collaborative_leadership.pdf

http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/137/filename/Sustainability.pdf

More ideas and resources.

http://www.bankofideas.com.au/index.html

http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/making-community-authentic-part-school-and-community-partnerships

Parent and family engagement

The Australian Institute for Family Studies site offers some rich and current research and data to support engagement with families and communities.

http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/research/currentresearch.html

The National Network of Partnership Schools—John Hopkins University offers some valuable resources.

Available at http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/nnps_model/school/sixtypes.htm *(from Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource)*

Practice guide for working with families from pre-birth to eight years: *Engaging in the early childhood development story.*

http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Early%20childhood%20education/DECD_PracticeGuide_FINAL.pdf

The *Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource* is a user-friendly guide to enhancing community family engagement.

http://smarterschools.gov.au/strengthening-family-and-community-engagement-student-learning-resource

Evaluation

If you don't find your evaluation answers here, they probably don't exist. This is an excellent one-stop-shop for all you need to undertake effective evaluation processes.

National Centre for Sustainability (2013), *Evaluation Toolbox*, (online) – Victorian Local Sustainability Accord – Swinburne University. Available at http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/

A guide to reflecting on and reviewing pedagogy.

SA TfEL Review Tools handbook. Available at http://www.learningtolearn.sa.edu.au/tfel/pages/tfeloverview/

Books

Born P (2012) *Community conversations—Mobilising the ideas, skills and passion of community organisations, governments, businesses and people.* BPS Books, Toronto & New York.

Born P (2008) *Taking it to the next level—Community development, focusing on the strengths of communities*. BPS Books, Toronto & New York.

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MindTools.com (2013) *The Full Toolkit*. Online. Available from http://www.mindtools.com/fulltoolkit.htm.

National Centre for Sustainability (2013) *Evaluation Toolbox*. Online. Victorian Local Sustainability Accord, Swinburne University. Available at http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/.

Nelson A, Babon A & Keath N (2008) 'Engagement but for what kind of marriage?: Community members and Local Planning Authorities'. *Community Development Journal*, Vol 43, Issue 1, pp 37–51, 2008. Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1152912 or http://dx.doi.org/bsl038.

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Office of Commissioner for Children and Young People WA (2009) *Issues Paper 2*. Available at http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/files/IssuesPapers/Issues%20Paper%20-%20Participation%20f.pdf.

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Engagement readiness criteria

The following criteria are designed to help evaluate how ready an organisation is to move to fully integrating good engagement across all activities. These criteria are meant to be a guide to help understand where an organisation's strengths and weaknesses lie in an engagement context.

The readiness criteria provide an insight into where best to expend energy and focus to help move an organisation towards a more integrated and successful engagement approach.

Engagement readiness matrix

Engagement Readiness Criteria	Description	**It's a Long Way Off** A lot of work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	**We're On Our Way** Some work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	**We're Ready** The key elements are in place. The organisation is ready to build an Engagement Framework	**We're There** The organisation is effectively engaging in an integrated and consistent manner
People are accessible	Key people are accessible to staff, volunteers and community. There are strong connections and it is therefore easy access to information and decisions.	Key people are very difficult to access and connections are weak.	Some key people are available some of the time.	Key people are genuinely prepared to be available or improve their availability.	Key people are highly accessible and connections are strong.
Decision making is transparent	It is clear how decisions are made and the rationale behind them is transparent.	Decision making is ad hoc and confusing.	Decision making processes are fairly consistent but the reasons behind decisions are not communicated.	The way decisions are made is generally clear and consistent and the rationale behind certain decisions is sometimes communicated. There is commitment to improve communication.	The way decisions are made is very clear and regularly communicated.
Engagement approaches are adaptable	The organisation adapts its approach to meet the needs of different groups eg demographic differences, different cultures; use of social media, online and face-to-face methods.	The organisation has one engagement approach to fit all.	The organisation makes some changes to cater for broad differences but this is not consistent.	The organisation generally adopts a limited range of engagement approaches and is prepared to be more adaptable.	The organisation makes a consistent effort to tailor engagement methods to suit different groups.
Decision making is devolved	The organisation is prepared to release control of action, messages (information) and decisions to others.	Messages, information and decisions are controlled centrally, no local input accepted.	Messages, information and decisions are controlled centrally, with some local input.	Messages, information and decisions are decided by some key central and local people, informed by local issues and priorities. Leadership is prepared to 'loosen the reins'.	Local people are empowered to tailor messages & information and make local decisions collaboratively.

Engagement Readiness Criteria	Description	**It's a Long Way Off** A lot of work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	**We're On Our Way** Some work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	**We're Ready** The key elements are in place. The organisation is ready to build an Engagement Framework	**We're There** The organisation is effectively engaging in an integrated and consistent manner
People value and excel at conversations	People understand that relationships mean better engagement, and that to build relationships you need shared conversations. Conversations are characterised by the intention of finding out information and learning from others (2-way)	People do not undertake productive internal or external conversations. The organisation knows what it wants to say and believes it has the answer. Broad belief that information is the key to building good relationships.	There is some good conversation but this is not consistent. There is some listening but many believe that the answer is held within what the organisation already knows. Broad belief that consultation is the key to building good relationships.	People undertake some internal conversations well but have not yet translated this to external. People understand that listening will lead to better, more widely accepted decisions. Broad belief that involvement is the key to building good relationships.	Undertake both internal and external conversations well. People know that they do not have all the answers and actively seek to share the dilemmas and learn from others. Broad belief that conversations are the key to building good relationships.
There is capacity and capability to engage effectively	The organisation • Has the skills, capability and commitment to learn and build capabilities in community engagement • Has the resources to bring to a community or issue when needs be • Has a platform of support that does not create a dependency	No committed resources in the engagement field, A disparate and dysfunctional community engagement support platform.	Some committed community engagement resources. Can mobilise some support. A support platform with little long term sustainability.	There is preparedness to commit adequate resources to ensure that community engagement capacity and capability are built and maintained. Adequate committed resources.	Support is easily provided to local people. There is a community engagement support platform that is sustainable through organisational change.
People are committed to seeing the engagement process through	The values of good engagement are committed to even when times are tough eg Budget or staff cuts, criticism etc.	People abandon good engagement practices when times get tough.	There is some stability to engagement within the organisation.	There is widespread preparedness to engage consistently and effectively, regardless of internal/external pressures.	There is a strong set of engagement values that rides out the tough times.
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Engagement Readiness Criteria	Description	It's a Long Way Off A lot of work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	We're On Our Way Some work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	We're Ready The key elements are in place. The organisation is ready to build an Engagement Framework	We're There The organisation is effectively engaging in an integrated and consistent manner
There is strong, committed leadership to good engagement principles	The senior leadership states clearly what is expected, leads by example and consistently recognises good engagement - and discourages empty efforts.	Poor engagement is accepted and/ or modeled by leaders.	Some engagement efforts are recognised. Leaders occasionally engage well internally.	There is consistent recognition of good engagement practice. Leaders strive to incorporate engagement practices across the board.	Leaders effectively incorporate engagement practices across the board.
There is clear and consistent messaging	The organisation has clear, strong messages about what the organisation stands for in community engagement and how it builds relationships.	Confused and/or mixed messages about how we do engagement.	Some clear messages and others mixed.	There is genuine desire for consistent, clear messaging around engagement.	Very strong clear messages about who/what we are and how we do engagement.
People keep their word	The organisation clearly states what it can and will do and follows through on this promise. If promises can't be kept a clear reason is provided and a follow-up commitment outlined.	Don't make or follow through on engagement promises.	Engagement promises are not always kept (depends on the person) and if changes occur these are not communicated clearly.	There is widespread commitment to keep engagement promises although in practice this does not always happen. Changes are sometimes communicated.	Engagement promises are kept consistently; when changes are required reasons are clearly stated.
Engagement is purposeful	People clearly know why engagement benefits their work. They actively and clearly describe this to the whole organisation and provide an inspiring vision to achieve it.	No direction, no vision, mixed messages about engagement.	Some communication about vision, direction and purpose but this is not always consistent.	The leadership agrees on the purpose, direction and vision (or at least is prepared to agree on these once developed).	There is a clear engagement purpose and strongly communicated vision.

Engagement Readiness Criteria	Description	**It's a Long Way Off** A lot of work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	**We're On Our Way** Some work is needed before the organisation is ready to engage consistently	**We're Ready** The key elements are in place. The organisation is ready to build an Engagement Framework	**We're There** The organisation is effectively engaging in an integrated and consistent manner
Engagement is embedded in strategies and operations	The organisation authentically incorporates engagement values and principles in their strategies, policies, procedures and practices and knows how this changes what they do as a result.	No mention of engagement within strategies and policies. No understanding of how this value changes what they do on the ground.	Strategies and policies mention engagement values and principles. No/limited understanding of how these values change what they do on the ground.	Broad recognition that authentic engagement is critical to development of strategies and effective operations.	Strategies and policies integrate engagement values. These values drive how work gets done on the ground.
People are willing to innovate and take a risk	The organisation is willing to try different engagement approaches, be creative, and focus on outcome not on output. People challenge themselves with realistic engagement goals.	No willingness to try new engagement approaches. Control of the approach is paramount.	Some willingness to try new engagement approaches. Some release of control.	Willingness to try new engagement approaches. Failure is considered part of learning.	Innovative engagement is encouraged.

Templates

Plan For Planning Template (flowchart on page 28 will support this process)	
Why is the organisation engaging with the community? (the purpose of engagement)	What is our promise to the people we engage? *(eg to inform them of outcomes, invite them back to be more involved)*
	What do we hope to achieve from the engagement? *(eg local perceptions, identify causes to local issues)*
	What influence will the outcomes of our engagement have within DECD? *(eg Site improvement plan, program development, partnership planning)*

Who is the organisation engaging? (community development officers, local government, youth sector, training orgs)	Who are we targeting? *(Families, Children, Cultural groups, services)*
	Why have we considered these cohorts/stakeholder groups? *(potential partners, shared focus, already work in similar focus area)*
	List local champions, networks, key contacts who can support this process.

What is already known about the community and the engagement topic to build from?	Identify available sources of information that can be obtained before engagement. *(data sets, local reports, other consultations)*
	What do we know from the information that can guide and target our process of engagement? *(eg data tells us % of students leave before year 12 - why?)*
	What are the ‘non-negotiables’ we need to consider? *(eg funding, timelines, policy, legislation)*

The above information will provide a baseline for your evaluation process.

Plan For Doing

(flowcharts on page 37 and 66 will support this process)

Level of engagement

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Tools or techniques (refer pg.34 - 37)

1...

2...

3...

4...

Resource required (as identified in technique chart)

❑funding	❑volunteers	❑ venue	❑ advertising	❑ stationery
❑easel	❑projector	❑facilitator	❑paper/post its	❑markers
❑whiteboard	❑flip chart	❑chairs	❑ interpreter	❑ microphone
❑ catering	❑	❑	❑	❑

Action plan

Action	Responsibility	Complete By (Date)	Update/Comments/ Completed
Communications/ Promotion			
Bookings (room, catering, transport)			
Facilitator			
Attendance/Sign in Sheet			
Agenda/Running Sheet for activity			
Consents/Permissions for children and young people			
Invitations			
RSVP contact person			
Coordinator			
Name tags			
Stationery			
Technology needs			
Volunteers/Helpers			
Scribe/Note taker			
Actions officer			
Set up and Pack up			
Photographs/Filming			
Team briefing			
Post event debrief			
Budget/Spending			
Evaluation			
Report on outcomes			
Compilation of outputs			
NOTES:			

The information you record in your Action Plan will assist your evaluation and reporting.

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Evaluation Process	
Process evaluation (refer to your Action plan)	Describe what you have achieved.
	How do you know this? What evidence do you have? *(survey, observation, feedback, completed Action plan, budget met)*
	What have you learned about the **process** to improve your next community engagement activity?

Outcome evaluation (refer to your Plan for planning)	What have you learned to **inform** or **influence** your work? (consider data, stories, local information)
	How have you captured the information/evidence? *(case studies, photos, films, interviews, partnerships)*

Recording and presenting your findings from your process and outcomes evaluations	How much did we do? *(document **process** evaluation)*
	How well did you do it? *(document the **outcomes** evaluation)*
	How will the entire process and access to new information inform your work? *(eg partnership plan, program development, eDIAf, relationship with community, parent engagement)*

This is a guide to the aspects you should evaluate and how you might condense them to become a valid reference to inform your work. There are many ways to evaluate and record the outcomes relating both to the activity and the deliverables from the activity.

However you capture and consolidate the information, it is critical you do. Your efforts and associated impacts will be validated and have influence when this final part of the process is thoroughly undertaken.

www.evaluationtoolbox.net.au offers a great deal to this process.

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Tools and Techniques

Community engagement **tools and techniques**

IAP2 Quick reference guide

Level of the Spectrum	Tool/Technique	Format	Cost	Time	Difficulty
Inform	Advertising	To share information	Medium	Medium	Low
Collaborate	Appreciative enquiry processes	To bring people together	Low	Low	Medium
Inform Consult	Briefings	To share information	Low	Medium	Low
Inform	Central information contacts	To share information	Low	High	Low
Involve Collaborate	Enquiry-by-design	To bring people together	High	High	High
Collaborate Empower	Citizen juries	To bring people together	High	High	High
Consult	Comment forms	To collect and compile input	Low	Medium	Low
Inform	Databases	To share information	Low	Medium	Low
Consult Involve Collaborate	Deliberative forum	To bring people together	High	High	Medium
Involve Collaborate Empower	Deliberative polling	To collect and compile input	Medium	Medium	Medium
Involve Collaborate	Dialogue	To bring people together	Low	Low	Low
Inform Consult	Fairs and events	To bring people together	High	High	High
Inform Consult	Site offices	To share information	High	High	Medium
Involve Collaborate	Focused conversation	To bring people together	Low	Low	Low
Consult	Focus groups	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	Medium
Involve Collaborate Empower	Future search conferences	To bring people together	High	High	High

Level of the Spectrum	Tool/Technique	Format	Cost	Time	Difficulty
Inform Consult	Telephone hotlines	To share information	Medium	Medium	Low
Inform Consult	Information kiosks	To share information	Medium	Medium	High
Inform Consult	Information repositories	To share information	Medium	Medium	Low
Inform Consult	Interviews	To collect and compile input	Low	Medium	High
Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Ongoing advisory groups	To bring people together	Medium	High	Low
Inform	Open house	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	Medium
Involve Collaborate	Open space	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	High
Inform	Printed public information materials	To share information	Medium	Medium	Low
Inform	Press releases	To share information	Low	Low	Low
Inform Consult	Public meeting	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	High
Inform Consult	Resident Feedback Register (RFR)	To collect and compile input	Medium	Medium	Low
Inform Consult	Responsiveness summaries	To collect and compile input	Low	Low	Low
Consult Involve Collaborate	Revolving conversation	To bring people together	Low	Low	Low
Consult Involve Collaborate	Study circles	To bring people together	Low	High	Medium
Inform Consult	Surveys	To collect and compile input	Low to Medium	Medium to High	Low
Inform Consult	Symposia	To bring people together	High	High	High
Consult Involve Collaborate	Tours and field trips	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	Medium
Involve Collaborate	Workshop	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	Medium
Involve Collaborate Empower	World café	To bring people together	Medium	Medium	High
Inform Consult	Internet tools	To share information	Medium to High	Medium	Medium
Inform Consult Involve	SMS surveys	To collect and compile input	Medium	Low	Medium

Level of the Spectrum	Tool/Technique	Format	Cost	Time	Difficulty
Inform Consult Involve	Blogs	To share information	Low	Medium	Medium
Inform Consult Involve	Wikis	To share information	Low	Low	Low
Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Social networking	To bring people together	Low	Medium	Medium
Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Yarning circle	To bring people together	Low	Medium	Low

Appreciative inquiry processes

A facilitated process to discover past and current best practices that inform and inspire participants as they co-create and implement their ideal future.

Description

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a cooperative search for the best in people, their organisations and the world around them. AI is a systematic process that uses the art and practice of asking questions and building upon narrative communications to surface imagination and innovation. AI is based upon these eight principles:

- The Constructionist Principle: Words create worlds
- The Simultaneity Principle: Inquiry creates change
- The Poetic Principle: We can choose what we study
- The Anticipatory Principle: Image inspires action
- The Positive Principle: Positive questions lead to positive change
- The Wholeness Principle: Wholeness brings out the best
- The Enactment Principle: Acting 'as if' is self-fulfilling
- The Free Choice Principle: Free choice liberates power.

Use to

- Solicit full participation of all stakeholders in mission/vision development, strategic planning, organisational/system redesign, civic/community development, coordinate multiple change initiatives in a system
- Garner commitment to change as an ongoing process, not a one-time event
- Promote heart-felt inquiry, discovery and renewal
- Foster positive, grass-roots revolution.

Participants:

- Designed to bring the 'whole system' together. At a community level, this means making sure that participants are a microcosm of the community
- Depending on the project, the 'whole system' may mean thinking of who interacts with the project or organisation that is not normally at the table. For a community, this may include shoppers, tourists, regulators, people employed in the community who live elsewhere.

Timing

- AI processes vary in length depending upon the purpose, organisation and process design. A full four-step process will generally take several months

- AI can expedite organisational change by convening an AI summit, a large-scale meeting of 5 to 1 000 or more that gets the whole ‘system’ in the room, lasting for one to six days. The summit provides the opportunity to conduct a four-step AI process in a few days.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if AI would contribute to achieving them
- Provide AI experience and training to project team members and decision makers; get agreement from all to follow the process and be open to outcomes
- Convene a coordinating committee to develop the event theme or question, participate in design of discovery protocol and help guide the process. The committee should be a microcosm of the public.
- Consider convening a communications team to create and/or review all descriptions of the process and event notices, including advertisements, announcements, invitations, handouts
- Advertise the process with the theme or question
- Plan a detailed schedule of events. For each event, plan for all logistics, including seating arrangements, materials, equipment and refreshments.

Implementation

- Implementation will vary according to how the AI process is planned. There are a few different processes for conducting AI, but the most common is the 4-D cycle: discovery, dream, design and destiny. Typical steps are as follows:
- Discovery: Craft appreciative interview questions, develop interview guide, create interview plan, communicate interview inquiry strategy, train interviewers, conduct interviews, disseminate stories and best practices, make meaning and map the positive core
- Dream: Reflect on a focal question, engage in a dream dialogue, clarify the collective dream, creatively enact the dream, determine common themes, create an organisational dream map and document the dream
- Design: Identify a meaningful social architecture, select relevant and strategic design elements, identify organisational design preferences, craft provocative propositions
- Destiny: Review, communicate and celebrate accomplishments; generate a list of potential actions; self-organise for inspired action projects and systemic application of AI.
- All four steps can be accomplished in an AI summit. AI summits require substantive pre-planning for designing the space, planning participant exercises that work for each of the four steps in the process, clearly introducing participant instructions and providing meaningful documentation.

Documentation

- From the discovery phase of AI, themes emerge that are posted in the room and included in the written summary of the event
- Possibility statements are generated in the dream phase of AI and are included in the written summary. Participants may also conduct creative enactments of the dreams using art or theatre
- During the Design and Destiny phases of AI, participants create reports on flip charts, worksheets or computer; these are distributed to participants and included in the written summary
- Sometimes digital photos are taken of products from the Dream Phase and included in the written summary. A graphic recorder may also capture the dreams or visions using graphic images.
- A written summary of the event can be included in the P2 plan, provided to stakeholders in regular scheduled

communications (newsletters, project updates) and posted on the project's website

- Copies of the written summary can be provided to the public.

Hints

- Avoid using AI when:
- decisions or outcomes are predetermined
- predictable, linear processes and outcomes are required
- problem identification and problem solving are the preferred methods for change
- there is lack of support for passionate dreaming and inspired self-initiative.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After an AI process, gather the project team together to determine:
- how well the process met the objectives
- how to follow up on action plans developed during the process
- major lessons learned
- need for future sessions.

Resources

Staffing

- Facilitator
- 6-10 logistics people, depending on total group size
- Computer input people (1 for each 25 participants).

Equipment

- One microphone (for large groups, generally more than 50 participants)
- Optional laptop computers, printers, digital camera and a copy machine
- Easels and flip charts (one for every six to eight participants)
- Overhead projector
- Optional TV and video recorder; optional boom box.

Space and room

- A registration table at or just outside the entrance
- Refreshment station on one side of the room
- Optional tables in a designated section of the room to accommodate computer equipment
- Free-standing chairs arranged initially in groups of six to eight, later in one large or multiple concentric circles.

Budget

- The largest expense is staff time, followed by facility and food costs.

Variations

- AI is a flexible process, adaptable to different applications. Sometimes, AI interviews are incorporated into other processes or meetings.

Additional Information

Note: Appreciative Inquiry was originated by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in 1987 with colleagues from Case Western University and Taos Institute.

- Cooperrider, David L., et al., Editors. Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organisation Toward a Positive Theory of Change. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 2000.
- Hammond, Sue Annis, and Cathy Royal. Lessons From the Field: Applying Appreciative Inquiry. Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing, 1998.
- Lord, James Gregory. Appreciative Inquiry and the Quest. Philanthropic Quest International, 2005. http://www.appreciativeinquiry.org

Deliberative forum

A deliberative forum focuses on finding common ground for action. Through deliberation, participants see the issues that affect them from different points of view and move from an individual perspective about making choices to weighing the consequences (benefits and costs) of their choices.

Description

Deliberation is a particular form of reasoning and talking together in which people weigh the costs and benefits of various options for action in the context of the views of others, to make choices together. Through dialogue, participants discover common ground and with deliberation are able to move toward choice in the context of the common ground.

Use to

- Address complex public issues that do not have a 'right' answer but have several possible approaches that require participants to act collectively
- Assist people in finding connections among their varied perspectives and a shared sense of direction on a difficult issue
- Mitigate polarization by providing a process where participants have an equal opportunity to be heard.

Participants

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if a survey will contribute to achieving them
- Participants in deliberative forums are typically recruited to bring diverse perspectives into the forum. Deliberative forums differ from Deliberative Polling in that the participants are not randomly selected.

Timing

- Deliberative forums usually last 2 hours. Successive forums may be necessary before participants find the common ground to take action together. In a community, multiple forums held over several weeks on the same issue with different participants helps to gain the 'public voice' on that issue.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if this technique will contribute to achieving them
- Secure a moderator trained to lead deliberative forums. (Optional: a recorder)
- Secure or prepare an 'issue' book or discussion guide that correctly identifies the problem. This should be framed ahead of time with three or more approaches for resolving the problem, to prevent polarization on the issue. Approaches are not mutually exclusive. In a well-designed issue book or discussion guide, there is tension between the approaches.
- Distribute the issue book to participants in advance to get the feel for the issue, approaches and key points.
- Work with the moderator to prepare questions for the different segments of the forum such as the personal stake, the deliberation, the reflections and the action steps
- Work out teamwork. Communicate with a co-moderator (if present) and recorder(s) so everyone has common expectations of roles, styles and techniques during the forum.

Implementation

- Deliberative forums can be used over time for an issue until the group has made some collective choices for action. The ideal forum size is 12 to 30 people so that everyone has a chance to participate and be heard. In convening the forum, be sure to include the diversity of stakeholders who affect or are affected by the issue

Forum process:

- Welcome. The convener or moderator introduces the program, acknowledges the host, explains the process and reviews the guidelines/ground rules
- Personal Stake. Participants tell personal experiences related to issue. This establishes that the issue is relevant, important and provides a starting point for the conversation
- Deliberation. Participants examine all of the approaches for addressing the issue. The moderator directs the flow of conversation so that everyone gets a chance to speak and all sides of the issue get a fair hearing. This prevents polarizing on the issue
- Reflection. Participants reflect on their own learning, then on what they learned about how

others think. Finally they construct statements that reflect the trade-offs they are willing or not willing to accept and the common ground of the group, going from my voice to our voice. This provides common ground for action.

Documentation

- Moderators and recorders can develop reports from forums that reflect the public's thinking on an issue. The report presents the 'public judgment' on the issue as input to policy makers

Hints

- The moderator needs to create a safe space for participants, stay neutral, manage the tension in the forum and use conflict constructively. The moderator asks deliberate questions to prevent people from polarizing on issues. People gain an 'ah-ha' of the consequences and trade-offs of their actions and their impacts on others
- Recording requires careful listening to cogently capture comments that advance the deliberative dialogue. The flip chart recordings need to be useful to the participants during the deliberation and in preparing an accurate record of the 'public judgment' following the forum

Evaluation/Debrief

- Pre and post-forum questionnaires may be used to assess whether participants have altered their views and to learn participants' views on how well the forum met the stated objectives. Ask participants:
  - How useful was the issue briefing booklet?
  - How satisfied were you with the quality of the information presented?
  - Did you have sufficient time to deliberate with your group?
  - What information was most influential in forming your view on this matter?
  - Did you find your thinking changing during the process and if so, how?
  - What would you change about the process if you were invited to participate in another deliberative forum?

Resources

Staffing

Forums have several key 'staff': a convener, moderator and recorder. The convener and moderator can be the same person but, if possible, attempts should be made to have a separate convener in case something arises during the forum that needs the convener's attention. Additionally, it is better that the moderator and recorder be separate people if there are sufficient people who know the process. All these roles should be held by people who have been trained in public deliberation. Depending on the issue, there may be two moderators and two recorders. In the United States and Canada, there is a network of public deliberation moderators and recorders.

Equipment/Supplies

- Chairs
- Flip Chart Stands
- Flip Chart (self-adhesive flip chart or non-adhesive)
- Markers
- Masking tape (for use with non-adhesive flip charts)
- Name tags (optional)
- Issue books or discussion guides that have framed the issue for public deliberation.

Space and room

- Open seating arranged in a U-shape
- Flip charts at the open end of the U where everyone can see them
- Registration table with discussion guides available.

Budget

- Primary cost may be in moderators and recorders if you have to pay an honorarium and/or travel reimbursement
- Supplies (flip chart paper, markers and tape)

- Purchasing National Issues Forum issue books or preparing an independent briefing book
- Duplicating
- Publicity (flyers, newspaper ads, etc.).

Variations

- A deliberative forum can be organised as a large meeting where there are breakouts of several 'small group' forums of 12-25 people. The full group would meet for an opening and closing plenary.

Additional Information

- The National Issues Forum network provides training for conveners, moderators and recorders for deliberative forums. Contact the National Issues Forums Institute (http://www.nifi.org) to identify a contact person in your state.

Note: This tip sheet was prepared by Sandra S. Hodge, hodges@missouri.edu

Deliberative polling

A structured means to foster meaningful deliberation on an issue and measure informed opinion.

Description

A highly structured process that enables a randomly recruited group of people to explore a specific issue or topic and then present their opinion after considering the pros and cons.

Use to

- Gain advice on a complex project or policy matter by drawing on the collective wisdom of a broader public
- Engage participation from the wider, often silent, public
- Complement more traditional forms of consultation
- Demonstrate how the public might think if they had an opportunity to become informed about the issue at hand
- Demonstrate the value of a participation process as part of a decision process for a project or initiative
- Expose a project or initiative to diverse people to understand their potential views.

Participants

- Randomly selected group of citizens representing a statistical sample of the population
- Size typically varies between 80 and 350 but will vary according to the size of the population and sampling parameters.

Timing

- Several months are usually required to plan and run a deliberative poll
- Often used before the formal start of a project or initiative
- Usually requires a two or three day meeting to provide the background information to participants and to seek their views; can be shorter or longer, depending on the complexity of the issue being examined.

Preparation

- Determine if Deliberative Polling® would help you achieve your participation objective
- Establish an actual issue or matter to be voted on
- Determine how you will gain stakeholder support for how the issue is to be described
- Decide upon a statistically valid sample group for the poll (usually 80-350 people)
- Use a credible research company to recruit a representative group of participants
- Plan a balanced range of speakers, experts and stakeholders to provide information to the participants
- Provide balanced and factual information to be distributed as pre-event reading
- Develop policies addressing media coverage, observers and privacy of participants

- Secure use of a large venue with excellent acoustics and breakout rooms that can comfortably hold about 15 people each.
- Determine the need for sound and video recording equipment
- Plan for a moderator for the large-group proceedings and facilitators for each small group of 15 participants.

Implementation

- Gain clarity from decision makers about the extent to which the Deliberative Poll® can influence the actual decision to be made
- Form a project committee to manage and organise the process
- Form an advisory committee made up of key stakeholders. You will need them actively involved and supportive of the fairness of the process. They will also review and sign off on pre-reading materials, the process used to recruit participants, the way the issue or question under consideration is framed and the selection of a balanced range of presenters
- Engage a social research firm to recruit randomly selected participants that meet your criteria (eg age, ethnicity, geography)
- Invite participants to take part in the Deliberative Poll®. Often they are compensated for their time (usually about $150 per day)
- Plan for backups in case people change their minds. Many will decline
- Prepare pre-reading material and distribute it to participants after it has been reviewed and approved by your advisory group
- Ensure you have a communications strategy to inform media and elected representatives about the structure and purpose of the poll
- Gather participants together before the proceedings to thank them, explain their role, go over the process and introduce organisers and facilitators
- Arrange the event so sessions are built around key themes. After hearing from speakers offering different perspectives, participants break into their groups to discuss the theme. A report and some questions are prepared. These are brought back into the main area of the venue. Presenters are asked questions from the group before the next theme is addressed
- After all the themes are presented and the groups have discussed them, each group retires to discuss the overall issue. Each group prepares a simple report on areas of agreement and disagreement or has the chance to make specific comments
- Each person votes on the issue and this is tallied before the final session. At the final session, the outcome of the Polis announced. Proceedings usually finish with a vote of thanks and a statement by the commissioning body concerning the Poland what happens next
- The process outcome is announced through the media and other channels.

Documentation

- Each group presents a report — usually on a flip chart — that is typed up later as part of the proceedings
- Presentations to the whole group are recorded by tape or video camera
- Media viewing of the proceedings can be helpful for transparency, but participant privacy needs to be ensured
- A survey completed by completed by participants, observers and experts is another way of gaining data on the process itself.

Hints

- Stakeholders, including elected officials and the commissioning body, can become very nervous. The hardest work is gaining the confidence of the diverse range of stakeholders in the process itself
- A pre-poll is useful to provide a comparison between what most people in the public are likely to think without the chance to deliberate. Alternatively, a tele-vote run in parallel can also offer this perspective

- It is important to be clear about how this process fits in with decision making. Can complement other or earlier forms of consultation
- It helps participants if presenters/experts provide a one-page handout of their main points. This helps to avoid information overload and to recall key points made along the way
- Facilitators are there to serve the group rather than to drive the group. If the group wants to run its own session, that is fine. In this case, the facilitator may merely record the outcome of group dialogue.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Ask participants:
  - How useful was the written information that was provided?
  - How satisfied were you with the quality and balance of speakers/ experts?
  - Did you have sufficient time to discuss/ explore issues with the groups?
  - What information was most influential in forming your view on this matter?
  - What would you change about the process if you were invited to participate again in a Deliberative Poll®?
  - How confident are you that the Deliberative Poll® result will influence decision makers?

Resources

Staffing

- A project manager with support staff to keep it all on track
- Funds for recruiting participants and to take a tele-vote before the process starts
- An independent moderator
- A facilitator for each group of 15 participants
- Staff to record or at least organise the recording of proceedings
- Someone senior in the commissioning body to open the proceedings and provide advice concerning the next steps in the process.

Equipment

- Static information displays about the project
- Audio-visual equipment for use by the presenters
- Lots of flip charts and index cards for the groups
- Refreshments.

Space and room

- A large venue with plenty of breakout rooms
- Consider providing an area for media to observe the event
- Arrange the large group seating in a semi-circle, if possible, or seat participants around round tables.

Budget

- Because of the intense staff requirements and polling techniques, this can be an expensive investment
- A considerable amount of outsourcing is usually required to ensure process neutrality.

Variations

- If this technique is outside of your available budget, you might want to consider a citizens jury
- Some have tried holding sessions over a number of weeks (eg one or two sessions each week). The disadvantage is that group cohesion can break down and caucusing can occur

Additional Information

- Deliberative Polling was developed by James Fishkin, Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy in 1988. For more information, go to http://cdd.stanford.edu/
- Additional information is available from the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation at www.thataway.org.

Dialogue

An innovative form of communication that supports the creation of shared meaning.

Through the intentional suspension of judgment and the exploration of assumptions, participants are asked to both reflectively listen and speak their truth, engaging both heart and head (feeling and thinking.)

Description

Dialogue is not merely a technique for improving organisations, enhancing communications, building consensus or solving problems. It is based on the principle that conception and Implementation are intimately linked, with a core of common meaning. During the dialogue process, people learn how to think together.

Use to

- Create shared meaning among participants with diverse perceptions and opinions in lieu of or prior to other means of communication such as discussion, debate or problem solving
- Explore thoughts and feelings about a paradoxical situation or circumstance as opposed to a problem that can be solved
- Establish a 'level playing field or platform and a basis for creatively moving into problem solving, decision making or action

Participants

- The group should be ten or more participants because a group of 5-9 people can usually 'adjust' to each other too easily. Diversity is important and the group should include sufficient representatives of various sub-groups to create a 'micro-culture'.

Timing

- Circles of dialogue can be anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the complexity and size of the group, the questions being explored and scheduling. It is best if a series of sessions can be sustained regularly to surface assumptions and opinions safely.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine whether this technique will contribute to achieving them
- It is important to craft a question that represents the concerns or context that is to be addressed. The question may be prepared ahead of time with input and agreement among the group or it can be created with the group at the beginning of the dialogue session
- It is possible to prepare the question in such a way that it considers the paradox of a particular situation or context. Example: How might we create sustainable environments in the face of the great demand for economic growth, short-term profit margins and reporting cycles?
- The key to dialogue is the ability to suspend judgment and to reflect on what is being said in the group as well as what is being thought or felt internally by each participant
- Encourage a spirit of exploration and discovery. Create the understanding that if a group can create shared meaning, it can provide a platform for creative thinking and problem solving.

Implementation

- Dialogue can be used on a continuing basis until a group feels that it has examined enough assumptions, perceptions and opinions to create shared meaning.

Documentation

- Major thoughts and ideas can be recorded after the dialogue sessions or at intervals between rounds of participant sharing.

Hints

- Encourage participants to slow down and speak deliberately. Participants can speak in the sequence of the circle if there is a concern that a few individuals might dominate the discussion.

Evaluation/Debrief

Ask the group:

- What are the key learning points that emerged in dialogue?
- What assumptions were challenged?
- Where did judgment occur in your own

mind and what did you notice that impaired your ability to listen effectively?

- Did anyone shift their own opinion or perception based on what was shared by others?

Resources

Staffing

- One person to facilitate (as opposed to lead) the group. After a group feels comfortable with dialogue, a facilitator may be unnecessary.

Equipment

- Chairs and a flip chart.

Space and Room

- Set up chairs in a circle
- Choose a room that is small enough to create a contained feeling of safety and closeness and that will be free from interruptions or noise.

Budget

- Cost of facilitator and the time invested by participants.

Variations

- Dialogue may be used in many different techniques, such as study circles and deliberative forums.

Additional Information

- Note: Most of this Tipsheet was prepared by Gloria Sandvik (gsandvik@infinet-is.com).
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- Senge, Peter. The Fifth Discipline. New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- Senge, Peter, et al. The Fifth Discipline Field Book. New York, Doubleday: 1994.
- Yankelovich, Daniel. The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.
- See also the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation at www.thataway.org.

Fairs and events

A central event with multiple activities that provide information and raise awareness of a project, issue or initiative.

Description

Fairs typically involve different displays or booths designed to provide information and encourage people to learn more about a particular issue. Booths are often designed to be engaging, with an activity or give-away to draw attention to the material.

Use to

- Focus public attention on one element
- Attract media
- Raise awareness on multiple levels.

Participants

- Usually designed to reach the general public; may include activities for children to attract families. Often designed with a variety of appeals to multiple types of attendees.

Timing

- Select a block of time convenient for a wide variety of attendees, including families with children, seniors and working adults
- Usually 3-4 hours, depending on the content and format
- Attendees may arrive at any time and stay as long as they like
- Connect the event to a time or complementary activity that may add to the draw (eg an event on storm water at a gardening event in the spring).

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if this technique will contribute to achieving them

- Reserve a familiar local space, such as a school, community hall or the concourse at a local shopping mall
- Consider holding events at more than one location and on more than one date for large geographical areas or large audiences
- Review objectives in the P2 plan to determine whether this technique will contribute to achieving them
- Determine event objectives
- Identify topics and messages to be covered in the event; identify key resource people
- Consider inviting related agencies, youth groups and public interest organisations to set up booths, stations or exhibits and demonstrations related to the event topic
- Identify ways to creatively get your message out; create a sense of fun
- Draft brief descriptions of displays, graphics and messages; produce displays, signs, etc.
- Before finalizing all materials, review them with project team
- Confirm attendance of project team members and key resource people
- Plan all event announcements, notifications and advertisements; send invitations, if needed
- Prepare project team and resource people as for an open house.

Implementation

- Set-up team arrives early to arrange booths, exhibits and stations
- If complementary resource groups are attending, they should arrive at least 90 minutes before start time
- Set-up should be completed 45 minutes before scheduled start time
- Resource team arrives no later than 45 minutes before start time for briefing and walk-through of displays and stations
- Spend a few minutes reviewing key messages
- Identify the 'floaters' to whom attendees may be referred to for assistance
- Attendees are greeted as they arrive, asked to sign in and are briefly oriented to the event set-up; a station map handout may be provided along with other project information
- People flow freely, moving from station to station at their own pace, visiting one-on-one or in small groups with resource people and project team members
- Position a comment station at the main exit area, where attendees may sit down, complete comment forms and enjoy refreshments; comment forms may also be available at each station or booth.

Documentation

- Comment cards that can be completed at the event or mailed back by a specific date (postage paid)
- People can record/post their comments on a 'paper comment wall,' sticky notes or on flip chart paper at each station
- Attendee sign-in sheets or cards
- Roving 'interviewers' can query attendees on pre-determined survey questions as well as take comments
- Complementary groups complete an event review
- A written summary of the event can be included in the P2 plan, provided to stakeholders in regular scheduled communications (newsletters, project updates) and posted on the project's website.

Hints

- Inviting complementary groups to attend expands the number and variety of attendees
- Include booths that will interest children and families
- Be ready for early arrivals
- Choose a venue and room size based on the number of attendees expected

- Adjust hours to accommodate large numbers, if needed
- Ensure exhibits and displays are informative and not persuasive, and simple, clear and easy to read from a distance. Minimize technical language
- Aerial photographs can be used to help attendees orient themselves to the project location and footprint
- Add fun: balloons, give-aways, door prizes, helpful hint publications, games, etc.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After attendees have departed, gather the team together to debrief. Ask:
  - What went well?
  - What could be improved?
  - Was anything confusing?
  - What are the major things we learned?
  - What action is needed for requests and/or questions asked by attendees?
  - How well did the event meet the objectives outlined in the P2 plan?

Resources

Staffing

- A fair manager to coordinate the event and 'float' during it is essential
- Have sufficient staff to talk with attendees at every station and booth. Too many staff, however, will deter attendees from approaching
- Include one to three 'floaters', usually senior staff who can talk about most of the subject areas and fill in as needed
- Use greeters at the entrance to welcome, manage sign in and orient attendees to the event lay-out. If a citizen's committee exists, ask members to attend. Explain their role and the P2 process to attendees
- Provide name-tags that include areas of expertise for all staff.

Equipment

- Plenty of easels
- Comment boxes
- VCR unit or projector, if needed (must be able to run automatically)
- Signs identifying stations, refreshments, comment boxes, etc.

Space and room

- No fixed seating; instead, use an open space that can be freely arranged
- A display and handout table per booth; a banner above each booth
- Tables and chairs near the refreshment and comment area
- Arrange booths clockwise from the entrance; if complementary groups attend, arrange their booths on either side of yours.

Budget

- The primary cost is in staff
- Inviting complementary groups can increase the free publications and give-aways for attendees, without cost to the project
- Exhibits and displays range in cost as to complexity, use of colour, etc. bright, colourful, entertaining displays add to the festive quality of the fair
- Paid display advertising in local media will attract attendees.

Variations

- Incorporate your booth(s) at a pre-existing event, such as county fairs, Scout demonstration days, garden club plant sales, home remodeling shows, car shows, etc.
- Create a virtual open house by placing copies of the exhibits on a Web site
- Invite youth or civic groups to have a food stand as a fund-raiser; the project can provide beverages.

Focused conversation

A structured process that helps one plan and facilitate a meaningful exchange of ideas.

Description

Focused conversation is a step-by-step method of leading people through certain phases of reflection, enabling them to process their experience as a group. The conversation is led by a facilitator who asks a series of questions to elicit responses that take a group from the surface of a topic to its depth.

Use to

- Guide a group through of process of discovery. The Focused Conversation surfaces diverse opinions and insights regarding any topic or issue
- Enable a conversation to flow from surface to depth
- Orchestrate conversations for consensus-building in small groups, for problem solving, for trouble-shooting, coaching, research, and interpretation of all kinds of data
- Broaden a group's perspectives, to elicit clear ideas and conclusions and to allow the entire group to participate.
- Enable a group to solicit the wisdom of the collective intelligence of the whole group
- Provide for meaningful dialogue, to discuss tough issues and to reflect constantly on their experience and learn from it in team and small group settings
- Honour and give voice to feelings or emotional dimensions but help move beyond these to a decision
- Provide an opportunity to focus multiple interests on a particular topic or issue
- Explore levels of consensus that may already exist within the group.

Timing

- This process can be used in situations where there is controversy, where there is limited information or where information is misunderstood
- It is important to include a diverse group of participants, ensuring a wide representation of views
- The process can be done with small groups or with larger groups by dividing them into smaller circles and sharing results of the small conversations with the whole group
- The time required varies according to the needs of the group. It may be as short as 20 minutes or as long two hours. This process is often used in conjunction with other methods to complete a planning event.

Preparation

After deciding the topic of the conversation, the first step of the process is to write out both the rational and experiential aim to determine the focus, purpose and mood of the conversation. The Rational Aim is the intent or practical goal of the conversation. It guides the collective thinking process and determines the direction of the conversation. It answers the question, what do you want the group to know, learn, discover, explore or decide? The Experiential Aim is the inner impact of the conversation. It affects the mood of the group and sets the tone of the communication between the participants. It answers the question, what do you want to have happen to the participants in responding to this topic?

A facilitator then leads the conversation through a series of questions at four levels:

- Objective questions related to data, facts, external reality, for example 'What did you actually see, hear, or read?'
- Reflective questions that evoke immediate personal reactions, internal responses, sometimes emotions or feelings, hidden images and associations with the facts, for example 'What was your gut level reaction?' Whenever we encounter an external reality (objective data) we experience an internal response.
- Interpretive questions that draw out the meaning, values, significance,

implications, for example 'What new insight did you get from this?'

- Decisional questions that bring the conversation to a close, eliciting resolution and enabling the group to make a decision about the future, for example 'What do you think we should do?'

The facilitator has prepared the questions in advance and remains neutral throughout the process. He or she does not offer judgment or allow the group to disregard or veto ideas as they are brought forth.

Hints

- Begin the conversation by asking the first question or the objective level questions around the whole group making sure everyone has a chance to answer
- The leader has nothing to teach. There are no right or wrong answers
- All questions are open-ended and cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.
- To ask questions, you have to trust that the group has wisdom. The best conversations confront the group seriously with a topic, but do not reach a pat conclusion
- Specific questions get better results. For example, 'What points did Jim make?' rather than 'What do you remember about Jim's speech?'
- Ask for specific illustrations and examples when people answer
- To prepare a conversation, decide the intent; then brainstorm questions and put them in the objective/reflective/interpretive/decisional order. When the draft is finished, rehearse it through your head, imaging some answers you might get. This may suggest better ways to ask the questions.

Documentation

- Recorders may be used to summarize key points made by each speaker or you may wish to document all the responses to some of the questions
- The responses to questions in the interpretive or decisional level may be most helpful.

Implementation

- Ensure the room is set up so that everyone can hear and see all the other participants
- Use quotes and posters on the wall as appropriate for the event. You may also add table décor of three-dimensional objects arranged on a background cloth or coloured paper. All of these are used to focus attention, intrigue the imagination, to delight the eye, and to intentionally claim empty space.

Variations

There are many variations in the use of the Focused Conversation Method. The number of people in the group may range from a one-on¬one conversation to a very large group. When using this method with a large group, it is helpful to divide the group into smaller groups so that all the participants can hear one another and have ample opportunity to participate by expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Resources

Staffing

The staff need to be trained in the role as facilitator of the Focused Conversation. It is important that they play a neutral role to ensure maximum participation.

Equipment

Flip charts may be used to record ideas.

Space and room

To enable participation, it is helpful to have the room set up with chairs in a circle or chairs and tables arranged in a semi circular design.

Budget

The expense is staff time to prepare the questions and facilitate the conversation. Focused conversation is a part of the Technology of Participation® which is a registered trademark of the Institute of Cultural Affairs. http://www.ica-usa.org

Additional Information

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- Spencer, Laura J. Winning Through Participation. Iowa Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1999.
- Stanfield, R. Brian. The Art of Focused Conversation, 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace, Canada New Society Publishers, 2000.
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Focus groups

A special type of group interview designed to listen to and gather information from a predefined group on a particular issue, product or service for a clearly defined purpose.

Description

Focus groups are group interviews. A facilitator uses a script to ask a set of pre-determined questions. The term 'focus groups' is often used to mean different things depending on the purpose and composition of the group. At their heart, focus groups are a one-time, highly facilitated meeting with a small group of people to focus on and discuss one topic. Participants in a focus group are generally invited to participate. Focus groups originated as a qualitative market or social research tool. Some researchers believe that a focus group must contain members of a group with a common interest or perspective such as students, farmers, residents of an area or staff within an organisation. Others seek a group that is 'representative' of a population. Social researchers use focus groups to establish current social trends or changes in attitude. Market researchers use focus group results to establish a range of attitudes or needs within a target group and then undertake quantitative research to establish how many within that group hold those attitudes or have those needs. Often social and market researchers pay participants for participating in the focus groups.

Use to

- Interview several people simultaneously
- Generate dialogue about an issue in a small forum
- Establish different values or perspectives within a community on an issue
- Provide information and an opportunity to ask questions to key stakeholders.

Participants

- A small group of individuals selected to represent either a stakeholder perspective or the diversity within a given population. Participants may be selected randomly.

Timing

- Consider the needs of the group members who will attend the focus group
- Daytime may be good for mothers with children at school
- Evenings may be good for working people
- Several focus groups can be held in 1 day
- Focus groups usually last between 1 and 2 hours
- Typically, any given focus group meets only once.

Preparation

- Review the P2 objectives to determine whether focus groups will help you meet them
- Consider what participants will need to know to participate in a discussion
- Consider what you want your target participants to contribute
- Consider how you can best recruit appropriate participants
- Consider timing, venues, invitations
- Consider how you will capture the information provided by participants.

Implementation

- Set a clear objective for the information you wish to gather
- Prepare the necessary information for participants
- Create a database of people who fit your criteria for participation
- Inspect and book venues
- Arrange for a skilled facilitator and brief him/her
- Send out invitations
- Coordinate responses and finalize lists of participants
- Send out material for pre-reading if appropriate
- Finalize agenda
- Facilitate focus groups and record data gathered
- Transcribe notes and summarize / analyze data gathered
- Write report.

Documentation

- Consider what information you wish to collect and how you will structure your focus group
- It is easier to analyze information that has been gathered methodically with some structure
- Consider how you will collect data. Possibilities include:
  - tape recorder
  - video tape
  - scribe(s) or note taker
  - observer(s)
  - flip charts
  - transcribe notes as quickly as possible after the focus group to ensure adequate recollection.
  - undertake content analysis if required
  - provide a report on method, findings and analysis of information.

Hints

- Using informal venues creates a relaxed atmosphere that facilitates discussion
- Providing food and drink (not alcohol) also assists discussion
- Getting participants can be the biggest challenge
- Paying participants can provide an incentive, but researchers are concerned that paying participants can affect their input (they may tell you what you want to hear)
- Providing transportation for participants to and from the group can be an incentive also.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Check outcomes against objectives:
  - Were the participants sufficiently well informed to participate?
  - Was the group well facilitated?
  - How was the information collected, analyzed and used?
  - Did the information gathered help decision makers?

Resources

Staffing

- Staff are needed to recruit, facilitate, record, analyze and report.

Equipment

- You may need a tape recorder, video recorder and flip charts as well as information material.

Space and room

- Neutral, comfortable space is best. Have coffee, tea, juice and snacks available. For market research, a focus group facility may be used with a one-way mirror that allows project team members to observe the process without being viewed by the participants.

Budget

- Expense items are in recruitment, incentives, room hire, catering, equipment, facilitation and recording and transcribing the conversation.

Variations

- A focus group is an in-depth interview. Since the term has come to mean different things in business, social science research and P2, it is important to be clear about the purpose of focus groups in a public process.

Additional Information

- Stewart, David, and Prem Shamdansi. Focus Groups: Theory and Practice. Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 20. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.
- Krueger, Richard, and Mary Anne Casey. Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, 3rd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000.
- Morgan, David L., and Richard A. Krueger. The Focus Group Kit. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998.

Telephone hot lines

A widely advertised telephone number that provides information and directs callers to a person who can answer their questions or to a machine to record their comments.

Description

A single telephone number that the public can call to ask questions, make comments or learn about specific events.

Use to

- Offer updated information on a project and general news about a special program or event
- Take specific inquiries from callers
- Answer questions from the public
- Take comments.

Participants

- Most hot line numbers are set up to be publicised widely for use by the general public.

Timing

- Establish the telephone number at the start of the project. It may be a dedicated number or the number of a person dedicated to responding to the caller.

Preparation

- Determine the features of the hot line: Toll free? Open 24 hours/7 days? Business hours only? Answering machine? Staff-answered? Menu-driven?
- Develop a policy for how calls should be handled.

Implementation

- Hot lines are easy to set up. Most long-distance companies are able to assist you in organising an answering system
- Special equipment may be needed if multiple answering mechanisms are to be used
- Designate the person to answer the phone or to collect the messages. Messages must be checked every day and responded to promptly
- To be effective, hot lines must be well publicised.

Documentation

- Keep a log of all calls, caller's name, time, date and nature of inquiry or comment. Be sure to include the follow-up that occurred
- Prepare a record of the conversation if the call is taken personally. Include all caller-related information, a summary of the conversation and the follow-up actions. Forward it to others as appropriate
- Information received from a hotline should be reviewed for specific or recurring issues or questions. You may want to adjust your P2 program to improve the general understanding of those issues
- Establish a database of comments that can be referred to by subject or geographic area.

Hints

- Callers may be frustrated by a recorded message. Depending on the nature of the project, you may want to have a staff person answer during peak business hours, or you can offer the option of reaching a person

- TDD (telecommunications device for the deaf) services make hot lines accessible to people with hearing or speech impairments
- To be effective, hot lines must be well publicised.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Look at how well the hot line is being used. Are people aware of the number and are responses prompt and on target? How are comments from the hotline being communicated and addressed in the P2 process?

Resources

Staffing

- No special background is needed to set up and operate a hot line. The actual set up is coordinated with a telephone company
- The person who answers the call should be well-versed in the specifics of the project and able to answer questions
- If the hot line is simply an answering machine, messages must be retrieved daily. The greeting and information on the message should change frequently, so callers feel that it is alive.

Equipment

- Work with your telephone company to design the best system for your needs
- Fax-on-demand services can be provided by a hot line.

Budget

- Costs vary depending on the complexities of the system, use of a standard or toll-free number and the staffing plan.

Variations

- Integrate hot lines with other techniques to publicise public meetings and events
- Use it as a way to gather reservations for an event
- Use the hotline to build your mailing list
- Change the message to meet specific needs. Frequent changes assure the timeliness of information.

Interviews

A structured conversation designed to elicit specific information about a particular project, issue or initiative.

Description

A one-on-one conversation about a specific topic or issue. Usually conducted in person, but may be done over the phone in specific situations.

Use to

- Provide an opportunity to gather information from people in a comfortable setting
- Surface information that might not otherwise be revealed in a larger forum
- Build rapport between the interviewer and interviewees
- Provide information on the range of perspectives
- Surface issues that would not be revealed through other techniques
- Help identify possible issues and concerns about a project, issue or initiative
- Help identify stakeholders who are likely to be interested in your project, issue or initiative
- Help identify how stakeholders want to be consulted in any process
- Help identify stakeholders' current level of knowledge and understanding about a particular project, issue or initiative
- May be used at different steps in the decision process to accomplish different objectives:
    - At project start, to: Gain information to feed into the design of the public process, Evaluate candidates for a committee process, Understand the range of ideas, issues, concerns and people's values and interests
- Throughout a process, to: Touch base with different interests, Reach people who are traditionally under-represented ,Toward the end of a process, to assess support/concerns with proposals coming out of the process.

Participants

- It is important to understand what perspectives are needed to identify potential interviewees. Typically, a list of perspectives (eg geography, affiliation, demographics) is generated and then project team members fill in names of individuals who might represent those perspectives. As interviews are conducted, interviewees are asked to add additional names of individuals who may be interested in participating.

Timing

- Interviews are often conducted early in a project to help set the direction for the P2 efforts
- Interviews are generally done one-on-one and can be time and resource intensive
- Interviews generally result in rich data that must be organised so it is useful.

Preparation

- Determine whether interviews would help you achieve P2 objectives
- Clarify objectives and interview process
- Identify interviewer and interview subjects
- Develop interview guide
- Determine location and schedule for interviews. Allow two weeks to contact and schedule up to 20 interviews. Generally, 4-6 interviews can be conducted in one day, depending on distance between interview locations. Allow extra time to interview people who are cited by more than one interview subject.

Implementation

- Schedule interviews with subjects
- Conduct and document interviews
- Follow up with interviewee and other key people they suggest be contacted for interviews
- Prepare interview summaries.

Documentation

- The interviewer's structured outline needs to be captured as well as a summary of the comments received
- To be useful, comments need to be organised so they can be analyzed and addressed
- Must capture the interview subject's exact words in documenting the results of the interview
- A comparison chart listing issues and degree of concern might be useful to the decision maker
- All participants should receive a letter thanking them for their time, a copy of the interview summary and a clear explanation of how the interview results will be used in the decision process.

Hints

- Be clear about the objectives for conducting interviews
- Define the interview guide up front. Some guides may be very focused on addressing specific questions. Others may be more free form, encouraging subjects to share impressions or react to project information
- Select a location for the interview that will be quiet and comfortable, and convenient for the interviewee
- Telephone interviews may be substituted for in-person sessions, especially where rapport is already established and you desire prompt input
- Note that interviewees may not represent the range of views desired and those not selected for an interview may be alienated
- Participants may want information to remain confidential
- Some projects may have local and regional/national publics requiring interviews of people in various geographic locations.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Have a third party contact interviewees to ask how well the interviewer listened, established a positive rapport with the interviewee, responded to any requests for information and thanked the interviewee for their time

- Review interview data and document how it has influenced project decisions
- Provide appropriate background to the interview subject
- Plan ahead to allow for time and resources for additional interviews where appropriate
- Pre-test interview questions with a small number of subjects to ensure they are on target and will result in the needed data
- Communicate to interview subjects in advance how the interviews will be used and documented. It's common to produce an overall summary of what was learned without revealing who said what. This addresses confidentiality concerns of potential subjects
- Some people may not want to be interviewed at their homes or places of business. Be ready to suggest a nearby restaurant, coffee shop or library as a convenient and comfortable setting
- If you use such a public setting, schedule interviews during non-meal hours. The background noise will be less distracting and wait staff won't be as likely to want to hurry you along. Visit the setting in advance and work with the host or manager to arrange seating in an out-of the-way area. Tip generously but not ostentatiously.

Resources

Staffing

- Interviewing can be time-consuming. Generally allow for an hour or more for each interview, plus twice that amount of time to document the conversation and organise it for subsequent analysis
- Interviews can be conducted by one person but the duties are typically shared by two people with process design, facilitation and listening skills and the appropriate amount of project content knowledge. One person with strong communication and organisational skills typically schedules the interviews.

Equipment

- Generally the only equipment needed is note-taking equipment and a means to get to the interview subject's location.

Space and room

- Interviews are generally best conducted in the interviewee's surroundings (eg homes, offices, local libraries).

Budget

- A small number of interviews (10-20) can be done competently by project team staff, but projects requiring interviews from a greater number of stakeholders require additional staff to conduct, document and analyze the data from the interviews
- If interviewees are in different geographic locations, costs may include travel or telephone expenses.

Debrief

- Consider whether the interviews reached the target audience and generated the information desired. Were the interviews conducted in a neutral, objective manner? Were requests for information honoured promptly?

Variations

- Group interviews can be done. They generally have the look and feel of a focus group and should only be undertaken by a facilitator who is skilled in this technique and can keep the group on track without stifling the free exchange of ideas among group members.

Ongoing advisory groups

A body of a fixed number of citizens convened to provide advice to a decision maker. They meet regularly over time until their task is complete.

Description

A group of citizens convened for a specific purpose. They may provide advice to a decision maker, develop a report or product, implement or supervise the Implementation of a plan or action and serve as an important link to the community.

Membership should be carefully selected and roles and responsibilities clarified at the outset.

Use to

- Ensure that the decision maker is informed of key community interests
- Help the various participants understand the range of perspectives and viewpoints
- Work through a decision process, with several iterations of discussing relevant information and obtaining group input or agreement
- Provide a forum for dialogue in a constructive and informed manner.

Participants

- Varies but typically involves a small group of representatives of different interests or perspectives within a population.

Timing

- Planning may need to start several months before the initial meeting
- The decision maker should clarify the advisory group's role in any decision making process and how effectiveness will be measured
- Meetings must be planned and announced in advance
- Materials may need to be distributed in advance of each meeting.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if an advisory group will contribute to achieving them
- Generally, a charter should be in place before the group begins its work The charter should address:
- The purpose of the group and its relationship to the decision maker
- Composition and size of the group
- Leadership, term limitations, turnover, recruitment and selection
- Decision making processes
- Meeting frequency and duration
- Roles and responsibilities of members, including ex officio members
- Relationship to the broader public
- Some groups are designed to include representatives of specific organisations; others include representatives of desired perspectives
- Individuals may or may not be plenipotentiary (selected by a specific body to represent it). In that case, members may need to report back to those bodies on a periodic basis and may need to get permission before participating in decision making or endorsing products.

Implementation

- Citizen advisory groups generally rely on a trained group process facilitator to help it conduct its business
- The facilitator may use numerous facilitation techniques to support the group's processes, including brainstorming, nominal group process, dot polling, straw polling, negative voting, etc
- Advisory groups typically meet face-to-face on a periodic basis. They may also have subcommittees that pursue specific issues, develop draft advice, etc
- Advisory groups typically choose their own leadership (ie a chairperson) or leadership may be appointed by the decision maker
- Because of their long-term relationship to the decision maker, participants must understand how their input will be used for each topic
- Maintaining autonomy is critical to a citizen advisory group's credibility
- If a citizen advisory group is not able to produce the desired product, they may not be seen as useful to the decision maker
- If brought in early in a decision making process, citizen advisory groups can facilitate early input by members of the public.

Documentation

- Minutes are necessary to document all activities

- Formal advice or recommendations should be formally transmitted
- The decision maker may also decide to document responses to advice or recommendations

Hints

- A well-functioning group may be able to provide a sense of how the public-at-large might resolve trade-offs between value systems
- Because a group spends so much time together, it can provide 'outside-the-box' thinking that is well informed and useful to the decision maker. They can, for example, identify new alternatives (hybrid approaches) that had not been previously identified
- Citizen advisory groups can be helpful on controversial issues because they allow participants a safe environment for building an understanding of the various perspectives that the decision maker is attempting to accommodate. They can then work to resolve differences in a way that is acceptable to all parties
- A citizen advisory group cannot substitute for broader public involvement. In addition, if a group does not appear to be representative of a broad range of perspectives, the public may object to an agency's reliance on its advice.
- There may be tensions around how a group is designed to represent the broader public, including characteristics of membership like geography, demography and relevant perspectives
- Some advisory groups have responsibilities for public outreach and involvement
- The effectiveness of a citizen advisory group is often defined in terms of how useful its advice is to the decision maker. The group's true purpose is to reflect the publics' perspectives, however, not provide advice that is easy to use
- In the United States, a group convened on a federally funded project may be subject to the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Evaluation/Debrief

- All correspondence with and presentations to a citizen advisory group should be documented
- Conduct periodic assessments of how well the group's work is aligned with its mission, ground rules and planned process. Refine as needed.

Resources

Staffing

- Citizen advisory groups generally need a facilitator skilled in the use of group process techniques, especially if the group develops its advice or products through consensus
- It is the facilitator's job to work with participants, establish a clear context for all deliberations, create an environment where all parties are comfortable, listen actively, evoke the creativity of the group, ask appropriate questions, assess progress and think quickly
- Citizen advisory groups also require extensive administrative support.

Equipment

- Defined by the needs of the group.

Space and room

- Defined by the needs of the group.

Budget

- Primary cost is personnel support
- Additional costs may include travel expenses for members to attend meetings.

Variations

- Citizen advisory groups go by many different names. For example, pick one term from each of the following:
  - stakeholder/community/citizen/public/residents
  - reference/advisory/working/steering/consultative
  - committee/board/task force/action team/council/board.
- Example: Community Working Group or a Citizen Steering Committee

- There are many other names for this technique, including multi-stakeholder groups, synergy groups, coordination teams, etc.
- Some citizen advisory groups are convened to provide advice over time, irrespective of a specific decision process, while others are convened to support only one decision. In either case, a citizen advisory group can be used at any step in the decision making process or throughout the entire process.

Additional Information

- Kaner, Sam. Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision making. Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 1996
- Schwartz, Roger. The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994

Open house

An informal setting with multiple displays where participants view information on set topics at each display or station and discuss the topic with project representatives.

Description

An Open House is self-directed to a large degree. Participants stop in when it is convenient for them and visit the information stations of greatest interest to them. They have the opportunity to talk to project staff members and share with project staff their individual questions and comments

Use to

- Improve public understanding about a project
- Receive public input
- Explain a complex point.

Participants

- Open houses are typically open to the general public. By providing an extended time period during which people can stop in, open houses can be attractive to a diverse audience.

Timing

- Select a block of time that is convenient for attendees
- Consider the needs of special audiences, such as senior citizens who don't go out after dark or shift workers who may not be available during traditional times
- Length may be two or more hours, depending on audience needs
- Attendees may arrive at any time during the open house
- Consider how much time participants need to review the materials.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if this technique will contribute to achieving them
- Reserve a familiar local space, such as a church, library or school cafeteria
- Consider using more than one location and date for large geographical areas or large audiences
- Determine event objectives
- Identify topics and messages to be covered in the event; identify key resource people
- Draft brief descriptions of displays, graphics and messages; produce displays, signs, etc.
- Before finalizing all materials, review them with project team
- Confirm attendance of project team members and key resource people
- Plan and prepare all event announcements, notifications and advertisements; send invitations, if needed
- Plan for equipment and refreshments
- Review key messages and potential questions with project team and resource people; draft responses
- Dress appropriately for the audience; a business suit may be too formal in some communities.

Implementation

- Set-up team arrives early to arrange room and stations
- Set-up should be complete 45 minutes before scheduled start time
- Resource team arrives at least 45 minutes before the start for a briefing and walk-through of displays and stations
- Review station assignments with project team members and resource people
- Spend a few minutes reviewing key messages and providing tips for active listening
- Attendees are greeted as they arrive, asked to sign in and are briefly oriented to the event set up; a station map handout may be provided along with other project information
- People move at their own pace, visiting one-on-one or in small groups with resource people and project team members
- Attendees conclude at the comment station, where they may sit down, complete comment forms and enjoy refreshments; comment forms may also be available at each station.

Documentation

- Comment forms that can be completed at the event or mailed back by a specific date (postage paid). Help participants provide useful comments by soliciting their input on specific topics
- People can record/post comments on a 'paper comment wall,' sticky notes or on flip chart paper at each station
- Attendee sign-in sheets provide a basis for building a mailing list
- A written summary of the event can be included in the P2 plan, provided to stakeholders in regularly scheduled communications (newsletters, project updates) and posted on the project's website.

Hints

- Be ready for early arrivals
- Choose a venue and room size based on the number of attendees expected; consider acoustics with several people talking at once at different stations
- Have a contingency plan to accommodate large numbers, if needed
- Explore the benefits of hosting more than one open house on different dates and/or different locations
- Ensure exhibits and displays are informative and not persuasive, and are simple, clear and easy to read from a distance. Minimize technical language
- Aerial photographs can be used to help attendees orient to the project location and footprint
- Identify appropriate graphics and artist's conceptions explicitly as 'draft', 'proposed', 'ideas,' etc.
- Provide relevant handouts such as project area maps, project descriptions, etc.
- Have a plan for talking to the media.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After attendees have departed, gather the team together to debrief. Ask:
  - What went well?
  - What could be improved?
  - Was anything confusing?
  - What are the major things we learned?
  - What action is needed for attendees' requests and/or questions?
  - How well did the event meet the objectives outlined in the P2 plan?

Resources

Staffing

- A fine balance exists between too many and not enough staff. Each station needs at least one staff person. Add staff to stations that are likely to raise controversies or are of special interest

- Include one to three ‘floaters’, usually senior staff who can talk about most of the subject areas
- Assign someone to greet people at the entrance, manage sign in and orient attendees to the event lay out. If a citizen’s committee exists, ask members to attend. Explain their role and the P2 process to attendees
- Provide name tags for all staff and committee members that include their areas of expertise
- Typically, fewer staff are needed for weekday, daytime events than those held on weekday evenings or on the weekend.

Equipment

- Plenty of easels
- Comment boxes
- VCR unit or projector, if needed (must be able to run automatically)
- Signs identifying stations, refreshments, comment boxes, etc.

Space and room

- No fixed seating — an open space that can be freely arranged
- A display and handout table per station; a banner above each station
- Tables and chairs near the refreshment and comment area
- Arrange stations clockwise from the entrance.

Budget

- The primary cost is in staff; usually requires more staff than needed for a public meeting
- Exhibits and displays range in cost as to complexity, use of colour, etc. High-end finishes may give the impression that decisions have already been made. Informal displays that can be written and drawn on may be useful in depicting topics that are ’in process’.

Variations

- Create a virtual open house by placing the exhibits on a website
- Hold the open house for a period of time, then make a presentation at a specified time followed by a workshop activity
- If public testimony or formal comments are required, use a separate room or area for a court stenographer to record comments ‘on the record’
- There are several ways to increase the value of open houses in gathering input or feedback. People can post sticky notes with comments on displays or flip chart stands with focus questions can be posted around the room. Participants can be asked to fill in questions on a comment form related to each display. ‘Listeners’ can be available at the stations to take notes about what they hear

Open space

A self-directed meeting format that enables an unlimited number of participants to create and design their own work or discussion groups related to a central theme.

Description

Meeting participants start together in a plenary session. There, an open space convener helps participants create an agenda, identify people to lead sessions on desired topics and assign topics to meeting places and times on a large matrix or grid. People attend sessions according to their own interests and motivations. Recorders document each session. At the end of the Open Space, people reconvene for a closing session.

Use to

- Address an urgent issue needing quick action
- Address the issues and concerns of a large and diverse group
- Address complex issues with many aspects and parts
- Energize and engage a group
- Surface new ideas and commitment to action
- Give participants control of their own agenda and topics needing discussion.

Participants

Voluntary self-selection is essential to Open Space. The process works on the theory that the people who show up are the right people. Open Space has been conducted for groups that range from a handful of folks to several thousand people.

Timing

- Open Space events typically last 1-3 days, although they can be held in as short as a half day. With multiple-day events, the group may want to come together at the start and close of each day to reinforce the whole community.

Preparation

- Determine if an Open Space event would help meet your P2 objectives and needs
- Open Space is extremely flexible and needs minimal organisation. Although it can cater to almost any number of people, a facility is needed that has a large room for the plenary sessions and sufficient breakout spaces for the other sessions.
- Key preparatory steps are:
  - Define the event's central theme
  - Plan how the sessions will be documented. This might require participant access to a bank of computers or flip charts
  - Identify available meeting spaces and times. Prepare a matrix listing times and places. This essentially becomes the shell of the meeting agenda. Concurrent session topics are added during the opening plenary
  - Invite people to the event and promote it
  - Participants need to have information about the event in advance so they come either prepared to convene a session or participate in sessions convened by others

Implementation

- Open Space runs on passion bounded by responsibility. People who really care about the topic come together, take responsibility for their session and create action. Groups naturally form and frequently wish to continue working together after the Open Space event. A specific action planning process can follow
- Everyone starts in one room, with seats arranged in a circle. On the wall is a blank matrix with available meeting places listed along one axis and available meeting times listed along the other
- An open space convener announces the central theme of the meeting and describes the open space process. The convener introduces the four fundamental principles and one Open Space law:
  - Whoever comes are the right people (participation is voluntary)
  - Whenever it starts is the right time (be relaxed about time)
  - When it's over, it's over (if there is no more to say, move on. If you need more time, take it)
  - Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen (let go of expectations)
- The Law of Two Feet: If you are in a situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, it is your right and responsibility to go elsewhere
- Everyone is invited to come forward to identify issues or topics about which they are passionate and willing to take responsibility. Those people so motivated then introduce themselves and the topic or issue on which they wish to convene a session. They post their topic and names on the matrix, indicating a specific time and place for that session. This continues until all topics have been introduced and posted.
- All participants then gather at the wall and sign up for sessions that interest them. Sessions take place according to the resulting matrix. Session leaders and participants document their work and progress. A final compilation of session documentation may be produced and distributed to participants
- A final plenary closes the event.

Documentation

- Open Space is most satisfying if participants receive a summary of the sessions before they leave. This usually requires access to computers so each group can enter a summary of its session. Meeting organisers then provide copies by the end of the final plenary session

Hints

- Choose the venue based on the number of people you anticipate attending. Have a contingency plan to handle fewer or more people than expected
- Provide an overview of the technique to participants in advance of the event so they are not surprised that they are expected to create the agenda at the beginning of the event.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Participants typically share highlights at the closing plenary
- After participants have left, gather the project team together to debrief. Questions to consider include:
    - Was the process clear to participants?
    - How well did the process meet stated objectives?
    - Did the method of documentation fit the meeting purpose?
    - Are there logical next steps, such as action planning?

Resources

Staffing

- Open Space is not staff-intensive unless staff are required to required to record sessions or write up and produce session summaries
- The convener should be someone with Open Space experience.

Equipment

- Flip charts to record the findings of all sessions
- Documentation and reproduction equipment: Some groups station a bank of computers for session leaders to use to enter summaries of their group's work. All session summaries are then compiled and copied for distribution to participants.
- Matrix of available session spaces and times
- Microphone and amplifier for the plenary session if the expected group is more than 30 to 50 people.

Space and room

- Plan a space large enough for the plenary session with seating in a circle. The plenary space also needs a large wall space to post the session matrix
- Select a venue with enough break-out rooms and small group settings for the number of concurrent sessions you expect.

Budget

- While not an overly expensive technique, you may need:
    - A facility for the Open Space
    - A trained facilitator or convener
    - Computer equipment and/or flip charts to document sessions
    - Food and beverages, especially for all-day or multiple-day sessions.

Variations

- An action planning session can be scheduled as a next step to capitalize on the ideas and commitment generated in the Open Space.

Additional Information

- Owen, Harrison. Open Space Technology: A User's Guide. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1997. Note: All you ever wanted to know about facilitating an Open Space event. Included are the specifics about time, place, logistics, invitations and follow-up. Special attention is devoted to the convener's preparation and when not to use Open Space. New material on the computer connection and how to bring an Open Space event to the critical point of concrete action

- Owen, Harrison. Tales from Open Space. Available on-line at http://www.openspaceworld.com/Tales.pdf Note: In this on-line book, journalists, practitioners and just plain folks share their experiences with Open Space technology and reflect upon the outcomes. Comes complete with case studies
- Holman, Peggy and Tom Devane, Editors. The Change Handbook: Group Methods for Shaping the Future. San Francisco: Berrett-Koeher, 1999. http://www.openspaceworld.org

Public meeting

An organised meeting format involving a presentation and an opportunity for public questions and comments.

Description

A public meeting is a meeting format that starts with a presentation followed by questions and comments. Participants are typically seated in rows facing the facilitator and presenter. The meeting typically begins with a presentation where speakers use visuals and provide relevant background information. The facilitator then opens the meeting to questions and comments from the public. Questions and comments are often recorded on a flip chart at the front of the room.

Use to

- Improve public understanding about a project
- Receive public input
- Explain a complex project
- Allow participants to hear everyone's comments and questions.

Participants

- Public meetings are open to the general public. They may be designed to accommodate anywhere from a handful of people to thousands.

Timing

- Public meetings are usually set for a specific amount of time, generally 2-3 hours
- Keep presentation time to a minimum so that most of the meeting time can be spent hearing from participants.

Preparation

- Determine the purpose of the meeting. Decide if a public meeting will help meet your P2 objectives
- Build relationships with the participants before the meeting. Talk with some of the participants to understand what they want from the meeting. Find out the topics and issues they want to hear about or discuss, so you can arrange for people with appropriate expertise to attend and answer questions.
- Reserve a familiar and convenient local space, such as a church, library or school cafeteria. Aim for a space that has flexible room arrangement capabilities. Do a site visit before the meeting to check out seating, lighting, amplification, presentation logistics, rules about posting materials on the walls and ability to serve refreshments.
- Create a meeting agenda tailored to your meeting purpose and participants' desires.
- Determine whether to bring in a neutral facilitator. If the meeting has the potential to be contentious, a neutral facilitator may be important. Arrange a meeting between the facilitator and project team to review agenda, logistics and other details
- Review all materials with the project team. Make sure presentation materials are legible, visible, understandable and clear. Agree on time limits for each presentation, their order and whether questions will be taken after each one or held until presentations are finished
- Confirm that pertinent resource people understand their roles and will come prepared. Brief recorders to ensure they understand their role in capturing the group memory
- Think through who should be notified and how. Complete and place all notifications at least two weeks before the meeting

- If possible, conduct a dry run with all presenters. Practice the presentation as well as answering potential questions
- Dress to fit the people who will attend the meeting.

Implementation

- Set-up team arrives at least 90 minutes early to prepare room
- Set up should be completed at least 30 minutes before scheduled meeting start time
- Resource team arrives at least 30 minutes before start for their briefing
- Have greeters at sign-in table with meeting handouts 30 minutes before start time so you're ready for early arrivals
- If lights are to be dimmed during presentation, have someone turn them up for Q&A session
- Have facilitator introduce the meeting, its purpose and meeting guidelines. Be sure participants understand and agree to this format. Facilitator runs the meeting, introducing speakers, taking questions, etc. At the agreed-upon end time or when there are no more questions or comments, the facilitator concludes the meeting with a brief summary, a review of the next steps including any meeting follow up and a thank you to all who came and took part
- Follow up on post-meeting commitments such as meeting notes or comment summaries.

Documentation

- Comment forms provide participants with the opportunity to submit their thoughts in writing. Include contact information for submitting comments by mail, fax and e-mail as well as any relevant deadlines
- A recorder keeps the group memory on a flip chart. These notes are distributed to meeting participants with a summary of how their comments will be used.
- A meeting summary document includes information on presentations and the central themes of public comments and questions.

Hints

- Choose the venue and room size based on the number of participants you expect. Have a contingency plan to handle fewer or more people than expected
- Provide appropriate handouts. Be prepared to respond to requests for more information
- Establish clear guidelines and the meeting purpose at the beginning
- If you expect the meeting to attract a large number of people or to be hostile or contentions, use a facilitator who is experienced in handling such situations.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Ask participants for their review of the meeting either in writing or verbally. For a small group, it may be appropriate to do a quick evaluation at the end of the meeting by asking participants what worked and what could be improved. Record these comments on a flip chart and include them in the meeting record. For larger groups, list a few open-or close-ended questions on a comment form to help participants address how the meeting worked and how well it met the stated goals
- After participants have left, gather the project team together to debrief. Consider:
  - What went well?
  - What needs improvement?
  - Was anything confusing?
  - What major things were learned?
  - What actions are needed on requests or questions from participants?
  - What are the next steps?

Resources

Staffing

- A public meeting typically requires fewer staff members than a workshop or open house
- Assign someone the responsibility of greeting people, managing sign-ins and orienting people

- Make sure you have appropriate experts on hand.

Equipment

- Flip charts
- Presentation stands, projectors, etc
- Markers, tape, name tags, sign-in sheets
- Refreshments
- Microphones.

Space and room

- Typically, auditorium-style seating with presenters/facilitator up front but not on a stage or platform. If possible, arrange chairs in a chevron or semi-circle to add more of a community feeling to the meeting
- Eliminate or reduce barriers like tables, podiums and risers that might separate presenters and participants. Consider having presenters and experts sit in the first few rows so they are part of the community — not separated from it
- Locate sign-in and handout materials at a table at the room entrance.

Budget

- Plan for a facilitator and appropriate experts
- Mailing notices, preparing news releases and paid advertising to inform participants of the meeting are typical costs related to publicising the meeting
- Plan for enough handouts for the expected turn out.

Variations

- An open house or breakout space can be added at the meeting start or end to allow for more focused conversations and rapport building

Additional Information

- APA Education and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Mastering Meeting Management, CD. APA Education, 2002. Note: Panelists discuss insights on how to run productive public meetings
- Cogan, Elaine. Successful Public Meetings: A Practical Guide. Chicago: APA Planners Press, 2000

Resident Feedback Register (RFR)

The register is a randomly selected database of residents that is created to give feedback to a local government authority about their services, priorities or contentious issues.

Description

Although sometimes referred to as a ‘panel’ this group of residents may not ever gather together physically — it is a not a committee. Rather it is a register of thoughtful and willing citizens selected randomly who can be used to provide input as required to complement a community participation program.

Use to

- Complement self-selected community participation with randomly selected participants (in other words, to involve the silent majority of people in thinking about an issue and not merely responding to the views expressed by the well organised and articulate)
- To gain feedback from the community over a variety of issues over a period of time
- To consult the community in an ongoing way – views from the register can be made public and responded to publicly
- To enable the broader community to identify some priorities for the local government to consider in developing their plans.

Participants

- A randomly recruited group of residents

Timing

- A RFR can be established fairly quickly with the assistance of a social research company or staff
- Gaining support for the RFR is important. Using an independent company will help

allay any cynical concerns that the members of the Register are 'handpicked' to provide the answer the decision makers want

- RFR's may be ongoing – the involvement of an individual resident might be capped at two years. In the UK, some similar groups have two year terms, with half retiring each year to allow for some continuity.

Preparation

- Ensure that a community participation objective has been established and that the register will help you to achieve it
- The project team should identify clear objectives for using a Register. For example Brisbane City Council used a large register to find out the level of support for different strategies to address traffic problems (eg public transport options as opposed to building bigger and better motorways or car parks)
- Determine the method for recruiting the participants. Either a random selection or a self-selection process can work. Random selection will be more expensive, especially if using a social research company to recruit, but it may be more useful and credible
- The sample should be demographically representative. Record participant details such as name, address, gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, rural/urban and special needs
- Identifier codes are used for collection and analysis of information to maintain the anonymity of participants
- Inform the broader public about the creation of the Register and how decision makers intend to use it. The register may be used for a specific project or for feedback on a wide range of projects or issues.

Implementation

- Once the register is recruited the sponsoring organisation can:
  - issue surveys on various topics to the Register. Depending on the nature of the questions, the survey may be issued to a particular section of the Register, such as people ages 18 to 30
  - enter register member responses and then analyze results. A report should be prepared and made available to the broader community and forwarded to the decision makers for a response. Alternately the report can be incorporated into the data collection/analysis stage of a community participation process.

Documentation

- A record should be kept of:
  - how recruitment was undertaken
  - key characteristics of each member on the register
  - surveys administered to the Register
  - responses (which are entered into a database)
  - analysis of surveys (including reports)
  - action taken as a result.

Hints

- Surveying the register before and after providing more information can be useful to test whether people are inclined to change their minds about issues when they are sufficiently educated about them
- Make sure stakeholders support the ways questions are put to the Register; biased questioning will dramatically and adversely affect the credibility of the survey
- Involve the broader public by publicising the register's role and using the media to cover the way the register added value to decision making.

Evaluation/Debrief

- A survey of the register participants about their experience could generate useful information for decision makers
- Feedback from decision makers and project managers could also help to identify how the register adds value to decisions.

Resources

Staffing

- One or two staff members to manage the register
- Recruiting of participants could be done in house or through a social research company.

Equipment

- A computer with the database and software to analyze data.

Budget

- Registers are fairly inexpensive to establish and maintain
- The cost of posting surveys can be reduced by using email surveys (at least for a reasonable sample of the register).

Variations

- Drawing a sample from the register to form focus groups, a Citizens Jury or to conduct a Deliberative Poll.

Additional Information

- Carson, Lyn, ed. Consult your Community: A Handbook. A guide to using the resident feedback registers. Sydney, NSW: PlanningNSW, 2003. Note: This guide is part of a series of Consult your Community handbooks prepared for PlanningNSW in Sydney, Australia.

Revolving conversation, A.K.A. Samoan circle

A leaderless form of meeting that stimulates active participation.

Description

The revolving conversation, also known as a Samoan Circle, is a self-facilitated conversation among four people where the four people at the table change during the course of the meeting.

Use to

- Give voice to diverse opinions on exceptionally controversial subjects, especially where no one is perceived to be neutral enough to moderate a meeting.

Timing

- Because lack of trust is often a central issue, make an extra effort to include a diverse group of potential participants, ensuring a wide representation of views
- Carefully consider time and location to ensure the event is accessible to all potential participants
- It may be useful to poll potential participants in advance to identify time and/or location barriers
- The location must be available for as long as needed; a Revolving Conversation/Samoan Circle is over when everyone who wants to speak has had an opportunity to do so.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if a revolving conversation/Samoan circle would contribute to achieving them
- Review the revolving conversation/ Samoan circle process with project team members and decision makers; get agreement from all to follow the process
- Have non-involved people review all descriptions of the process and event notices, including advertisements, announcements, invitations, handouts and a prepared opening statement
- Advertise the event with a clear explanation of the process and objectives
- Prepare a handout for all participants that provides a simple explanation of the revolving conversation/Samoan circle process. Include a diagram of the seating circles and locations of the microphones
- Plan for equipment and refreshments
- Ensure project team members take random seats throughout the circles; review nonverbal language cues and appropriate body language with team members.

Implementation

- Ensure room set-up is complete at least 45 minutes before scheduled start time; test microphones

- Remind project team of meeting objectives and their roles. They do not control the meeting so they should relax and be attentive
- Assign someone to greet participants as they arrive and provide a revolving conversation/ Samoan circle handout; point the way to the refreshment table; ensure greeter remains available to greet and orient latecomers
- At the meeting start time, ask participants to take seats in the concentric circles of chairs
- The meeting convenor then briefly explains the revolving conversation/ Samoan circle process and rules
- One speaker at a time. Speakers must be seated in centre circle/at table and be in possession of a microphone
- Speaker chairs may be occupied only temporarily by anyone wanting to present a point of view. When finished, speakers return to the outer circle
- Those wanting to speak signal their intent by standing silently behind one of the people in the speaker's circle
- Speakers may return to the speaker's circle to make additional comments.

Documentation

- Encourage participants to complete comment cards. Solicit input about the effectiveness of the process as well as input on the project
- Recorders summarize key points made by each speaker
- A written summary of the event can be included in the P2 plan, provided to stakeholders in regular scheduled communications (newsletters, project updates) and posted on the project's website
- Copies of the summary can be provided to event participants and to the public.

Hints

- A revolving conversation/Samoan circle can be used effectively with as few as 10 or as many as 500 people
- It may be important to clearly define the purpose/topic of the forum
- Dialogue can be stalled or become monopolized. The convenor must be clear that participants, as a group, control the meeting
- Convenor may want to ask for questions relating to understanding the process after explaining it and before the conversation begins
- Project team members and/or decision maker may take a seat in the speakers circle, as appropriate, but must respect the process and other participants; they may not monopolize the circle.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After the event, gather the team together to debrief. Ask:
    - What went well?
    - What could be improved?
    - Was anything confusing?
    - What are the major things we learned?
    - What action is needed for requests and/ or questions asked by attendees?
    - How well did the event meet the objectives outlined in the P2 plan?

Resources

Staffing

- Fewer project staff generally required than for an open house
- Several people need to record the key points of the discussion.

Equipment

- Microphone for each speaker's chair
- Speaker's table (optional)
- Free-standing chairs
- Recorders' stations
- Flip charts, butcher paper or computers for recorders.

Space and room

- Include a sign-in table at the entrance
- Locate refreshment station on the opposite side of the room
- Set up room in concentric circles of chairs with 4-6 speaker's chairs, microphones for each and an optional table in the centre.

Budget

- The largest expense is staff time

Variations

- In its pure form, the circle continues until everyone who wishes to speak has spoken
- The convenor may gradually close the meeting by coming to the speaker's circle and when it's his or her turn to take a seat, instead removing that seat. This can be repeated until all speaker seats are gone.

Additional Information

- Note: The Samoan Circle was created by IAP2 founding member Larry Aggens www.involve.com. In response to confusion about the name Samoan Circle, IAP2 has renamed it Revolving Conversation, with permission. Some people also refer to this technique as a Conversation Circle

Study circles

A democratic and highly participatory process involving numerous small groups in making a difference in their communities.

Description

A study circle process involves people from all over a neighbourhood, city, county, school district or region meeting in small groups during the same period of time. Each study circle is a small, diverse group of 8 to 12 people. Individual circles are facilitated by people who have been trained in the process. All circles learn from the same set of detailed information prepared especially for the process. All the study circles work on the same issue and seek solutions for the whole community. At the end of a round of study circles, participants from all of the circles may come together in a large community meeting to work together on the action ideas from the different circles.

Use to

- Engage many people on an issue without having them meet at the same time and place
- Involve a large number of participants from all walks of life
- Identify opportunities for action to create social change
- Uncover areas of agreement and common concern among a diverse group of people.

Participants

- Most study circle processes are designed to recruit diverse participation within a community, organisation or the general public. While each circle has eight to 12 participants, there may be dozens of groups working on the same issue at the same time.

Timing

- A 'round' of study circles usually takes about two months. It can include from 10 to 50 circles, depending upon the size of the community
- Each study circle typically meets four times depending on the topic being addressed and the associated discussion guide being used. The circles often meet weekly.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if a study circle process will help achieve them
- Conduct coalition building to form an organising committee that reflects the whole community. This group typically includes representatives of 5-15 organisations. To ensure diverse community participation, the program must be driven by a group of community leaders and organisations that represent the diversity of the whole community, not just a few sectors, constituencies or groups. Help this group coalesce as a team so that it will provide

strong support for the program

- Identify a coordinator for the overall effort to work with the various committees. Define the coordinator's job clearly. Establish clear lines of responsibility for different functions
- Organise work groups to share the work for organising the study circles. Possible work groups include fund raising, sites and logistics, facilitator recruitment and training, communications, kick-off event and documentation and evaluation
- Conduct pilot study circles among the organising committee members
- Develop a study circles plan that includes program goals, geographic scope, how to achieve diversity in the circles, resource needs and sources and how the organising committee will support the action ideas that come from the circles
- Organise easy-to-use, nonpartisan discussion material. Decide whether to create your own materials or use discussion guides from the Study Circle Resource Centre (the Centre has readily available discussion guides on a wide range of topics)
- Secure facilitators who will be viewed as impartial and reflect the community's diversity and who are trained in the Study Circle process (see the Study Circle Resource Center's Guide for training facilitators)
- Recruit participants using a variety of methods suitable for the different segments of the community you are trying to reach. Organising committee members will need to have clear recruitment responsibilities. Plan for how you will reach the unaffiliated.

Implementation

- Conduct a kick-off event. This will help attract attention to the effort, motivate participants and recruit new participants
- Conduct the circles in one central location or in locations all over the community
- The process for each circle is guided by an impartial facilitator. Each circle sets its own ground rules for respectful, productive discussion
- The process progresses from a session on personal experience of the issue, to sessions that examine many points of view on the issue, to a session that considers strategies for action and change.
- Facilitators summarise results and bring them to the organising committee, which identifies themes across the circles. These themes form the foundation for recommendations
- The organising committee may choose to conduct an action forum, where participants review the ideas for action and determine which to implement. The organising committee continues to support and track the action efforts.

Documentation

- In the study circle process, comments are typically recorded on flip charts. At the end of each round, the facilitator is responsible for making sure the group agrees to a summary of the session
- Document the basics, such as who participated, where and when. You may want to use a participant questionnaire to obtain background information
- Document the results of the study circle. Highlight areas of agreement, disagreement, uncertainty or ambivalence, unanswered questions, ideas for action and community resources and assets.
- Consider using interviews or focus groups to test or verify what has been learned from the session-to-session notes. This may be especially important if the results will have high visibility in the media.

Hints

- To recruit participation from hard-to-reach parts of the community, consider having a credible representative go door-to-door to promote study circle participation or approach potential participants through trusted representatives or links to their groups. Conduct each study circle at a time and place that is convenient and safe for participants

- Using the discussion guides from the Study Circle Resource Centre can save time and effort since the guide has already been tested. Developing your own guide is likely to add at least two months to the organising effort
- In your planning, consider how results of the study circles will be used and whether you need visible commitment from decision makers, such as elected officials, for the program to succeed.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Establish an evaluation committee to collect and organise information, interpret the data and communicate findings
- Revisit the goals set by the organising committee and identify benchmarks to determine if you are meeting the goals
- Ask participants and facilitators to fill out performance appraisals at the end of a round of circles
- Track outcomes. Possible outcomes include new understanding of an issue, new relationships, new collaborations, policy changes and structural changes in organisations
- Evaluate the process, including the quality of facilitation, the discussion guide, facilities, food and other logistics.

Resources

Staffing

- Community-wide study circles require a broad coalition of interests with the commitment to make it happen. An organising committee of 5-15 people can begin the process, but additional committees are needed to work on fundraising, logistics, recruitment, etc.
- Typically, a coordinator is hired to work with the organising committee and working committees. For small communities, the coordinator may work part-time. For larger communities, a full-time coordinator is probably necessary. Support staff may also be necessary
- Facilitators (volunteer or paid) will be needed for each study circle
- The organising committee may want to consider an independent evaluator for the program.

Equipment

- Audiovisual equipment may be needed for the kick-off or action forum but not for the study circles.

Space and room

- Study circles may take place at one location or across the community. Using just one location is easier to organise and provides participants with a sense of the being part of a large community effort. Dispersed locations reinforce the message of diversity by involving different neighbourhoods and locations
- Pick out sites for the study circles that will work for a diverse group of participants. Make plans for child care, food, transportation, accessibility and other logistics.

Budget

- The cost of depends upon the strength of community support. While there is typically considerable in-kind support for a study circles program, the organising committee will need to plan for a significant fundraising effort to obtain both financial and in-kind support
- Costs may include staff, promotional materials, office expenses, discussion materials, translators, child care, transportation reimbursements, recording materials and food. In addition, the kick-off and action events may require room rental, audiovisual equipment, honoraria for speakers and entertainment costs.

Variations

- You may want to combine your kick-off with the first round of study circles. The advantage of this approach is that you can capitalize on the energy created by the first session.

You can also use the kick-off to organise people into circles by posting locations and times and having people self-select. The combined event requires a short kick-off to allow time for the first round of circles.

Additional Information

- Note: The Study Circle Resource Centre provides training and materials (how to guides, discussion guides, case studies, etc.) to support study circles. Information for this Tip sheet was extracted from the Center's Website www.studycircles.org

Surveys

Random sampling of population, often by telephone or mail, to gain statistically valid specific information.

Description

Surveys provide data about a portion of the population. The sample size and design varies according to purpose of the survey and the degree of confidence desired. Surveys may be conducted in person, via the mail, by telephone or via the internet.

Use to

- Gain perspectives from people unlikely to participate otherwise
- Gather input from a cross-section of the public
- Obtain a higher rate of response than most other forms of communication.

Participants

- Persons surveyed are typically selected randomly to represent a given population.

Timing

- The response rate to mail surveys is often in direct relationship to the number of contacts with subjects
- Telephone surveys can be completed quickly and relatively inexpensively
- Schedule surveys when they are most likely to be completed; avoid heavy mail seasons; avoid calls during meal times or at children's bedtimes.

Preparation

- Review P2 plan objectives to determine if a survey will contribute to achieving them
- Evaluate a survey's risks. Do you have the resources to develop survey content, manage the process and evaluate results? Will the public perceive the survey as having a bias? How will the data be used?
- Identify key topics to be included in the survey. Frame survey questions clearly and concisely and identify length of survey content
- Identify random selection process and pool
- Obtain names, addresses and phone information for people in survey pool
- Determine survey sample size (in line with statistically based confidence levels)
- Establish survey timeline, including administration, compilation, analysis and documentation of results
- Review questions for bias due to wording choice
- Conduct a test survey; revise process and questions, as needed
- Train project and surveying staff on survey techniques, objectives and process
- Prepare documentation tools including survey questionnaires, databases, etc.

Implementation

- Publicise upcoming survey
- For a mail survey, a sequence of four contacts are suggested: advance notice letter, survey form, thank you and reminder postcard, and follow-up letter with additional survey form to those who have not yet responded
- Phone surveyors must convey professionalism and legitimacy
- Provide phone surveyors with survey forms, a cover page detailing identification information, call records and help sheets offering advice

for situations they are likely to encounter

- Enter survey data into a coded database and prepare summaries
- Involve project team members in analyzing survey data
- Document survey results; include an executive summary
- Share survey results with stakeholders
- Thank participants.

Documentation

- The entire survey process needs to be documented. Include the rationale for the sample selected, a copy of the survey form, information provided to surveyors and analysis of the data
- Document the database coding system
- Issue a report that details survey findings; provide an executive summary or overview.

Hints

- Mailed surveys must be professionally and logically laid out and must have eye appeal
- Consider a centralized location for making survey calls to promote surveyor efficiency and consistency
- An advance letter mailed to phone survey subjects increases their willingness to take part; include project information, as appropriate and how to get more information in the advance letter.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After the survey, gather the team together to debrief. Include a sampling of survey subjects, if possible. Ask:
    - What went well?
    - What could be improved?
    - Was anything confusing?
    - What are the major things we learned?
    - What action is needed for requests and/or questions asked by attendees?
    - How well did the survey meet the objectives outlined in the P2 plan?

Resources

Staffing

- The most important consideration is that the survey instrument and process must be designed by a knowledgeable professional. Assistance may be available from universities and consultants
- Graduate students with experience in survey design and administration may be hired to administer telephone surveys
- Plan staff time to test the survey instrument with a small group. Debrief this group to check for clarity of questions and avoidance of bias. Address any concerns raised by test group members
- Survey timeline and complexity will determine the amount of staff resources needed
- To complete each 20 minute phone survey (the outside time limit for a phone survey), expect the surveyor to expend 40 minutes. Obtaining responses from 200 people will require about 133 person-hours
- Database design and coding expertise are also essential to getting useful survey results
- Including people outside the project team to analyze survey data can increase the legitimacy of the results.

Equipment

- Database software to hold survey records.

Space and room

- A call centre set up can be used to administer telephone surveys.

Budget

- Significant budget is required to produce a statistically valid survey, administer it, analyze the data and produce a report.

Variations

- Make survey instruments available at open houses, fairs, public meetings and other events where people come to get project information

- Use a Web-based survey and send the link for it via e-mail to the survey pool; a Web-based survey eliminates data entry staffing requirements.

Additional Information

- Czaja, Ron, and Johnny Blair. Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996.

Tours and field trips

Tours and field trips allow the 'first hand' experience of visiting a facility or location of interest.

Description

A tour or field trip is an organised visit to a site or facility. Its purpose is to share information. Most tours or field trips involve presentations coupled with question-and¬answer sessions. An interactive exercise, such as taking environmental quality readings, may also be planned.

Use to

- Inform people through experience
- Help people understand physical realities like size or remoteness
- Help people make comparisons of alternative sites, technologies or facilities
- Build rapport within a group, such as a work group or advisory committee
- Attract media interest, if desired.

Participants

- Tours and field trips are typically conducted with a select group of individuals such as advisory group members or people who sign up in advance

Timing

- If possible, provide optional dates and times to allow for different work schedules
- Announce tours well in advance so people have time to arrange for time off work and child care needs.

Preparation

- Determine if a tour or field trip will help you meet your P2 objectives
- Plan an itinerary that will allow adequate time to present relevant information and respond to questions
- Alert all tour participants to logistical arrangements so they are where they need to be before the tour is to begin, particularly if tour vehicles (bus or van) are scheduled. Provide a careful estimate of return times
- Make sure the tour guide thoroughly understands the participants' level of knowledge ahead of time
- Inform participants of proper clothing needed (ie coats, special footwear) and any restrictions on electronic devices (ie cameras, cellular telephones) that may apply
- Prepare careful lists of participants with emergency contact information for each. Check with your legal advisor to decide if waivers for liability are needed from participants. If possible, have these completed in advance of tour or field trip
- Consider using travel time to deliver background presentations
- Make all logistical arrangements ahead of time. Catching presenters off-guard will not make a favourable impression on tour participants
- In most instances, tours involve arranging for transportation to move people around a site or from site to site. In some cases, conducting a tour may involve flying people from city to city to compare facilities. Consider participants' accessibility requirements. Take advantage of driving time to provide background information, if feasible
- Consider contingency plans for the possibility of getting ahead of or behind schedule

- Make sure security personnel are aware of tours into secured facilities; arrange for badging as appropriate.

Implementation

- Provide tour guides with cellular telephones and telephone numbers for all planned stops so that if the tour goes off the planned schedule, relevant individuals can be notified
- If a tour vehicle does not have a lavatory, plan for stops at locations where tour participants can use restrooms
- If appropriate, provide beverages and snacks
- If meals are arranged, make sure participants know relevant details (ie cost, meal choices) ahead of time
- Equip tour vehicles with a first aid kit and fire extinguisher. Make contingency plans in case a tour participant becomes injured or ill
- Tours can be exhausting. Consider provisions to allow participants to rest between tour stops.

Documentation

- Prepare scripts for presentations ahead of time. Encourage tour guides to stick to the scripts if possible
- Document questions asked, particularly those that are not answered or require follow up
- Take pictures of individuals on the tour.

Hints

- Be clear on what you hope to accomplish with the tour. Is sharing information your primary focus or is rapport building important, too? Make sure your design fits your objectives
- Provide maps, diagrams and background information to participants ahead of time so they will know what to expect
- Make sure tour guides are as objective as possible in presenting information. Otherwise, they may offend project detractors
- Provide likely questions to tour guides ahead of time so they are prepared to respond
- Consider ahead of time whether you want to encourage media participation. You can organise a separate tour for media representatives or include media on a tour planned for others.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After the tour has ended, gather tour guides and other relevant project staff to debrief
- Review tour objectives and discuss how well they were met
- Evaluate the content and delivery of all presentations
- Evaluate the way questions were handled. Make provisions for getting back to anyone who asked a question that was not adequately addressed
- Reconsider itineraries for future tours.

Resources

Staffing

- Good tour guides have excellent communication and interpersonal skills. They need to plan for the likely information needs of the tour participants and be responsive to the needs of the group
- All presenters should be thoroughly prepared to address likely questions.

Equipment

- Make sure tour vehicles will allow comfortable travel for all participants and a good view of allocations to be visited
- Make necessary provisions for physical limitations of participants
- If presentations are to be delivered on a tour vehicle, make sure all participants can hear what is being said.

Space and room

- Consider the possibility of using meeting rooms during tours by vehicle to provide seating that is more comfortable for informational presentations.

Budget

- Cost of vehicles.

Variations

- Tours can be particularly helpful for siting studies where alternative locations are being considered
- A self-guided tour may work well if you provide participants with a map and key information about the sites and facilities they will encounter.

Workshop

A public forum at which participants work together on prescribed assignments or exercises to provide specific input to the process.

Description

At a workshop, participants work in small groups on a pre-designed assignment. People may rove from location to location or stay in one small group. Small groups may be assisted by an assigned facilitator or may be designed to be self-facilitated. The work may include sharing perspectives, identifying issues, prioritizing a list, developing a joint proposal, mapping or evaluating alternatives or commenting on a draft product.

The work of each group is typically presented verbally or in writing prior to the end of the forum.

Use to

- Encourage members of the public to share perspectives and work together toward results
- Foster discussion and progress on a specific issue and look for common ground
- Surface new ideas and creative problem solving
- Connect representatives of various interests
- Get participants engaged in the project and in finding workable, sustainable decisions.

Participants

- Generally open to the public; may request participants to sign up in advance.

Timing

- Select a time that works for most of the participants
- A single session will run at least two to three hours and may last all day.

Preparation

- Determine if a workshop will meet some of your P2 objectives
- Reserve a convenient location; consider whether it needs to be perceived as neutral
- Be clear about the purpose of the workshop and how you will use the results
- Conduct an assessment of the issues to determine who should be invited and how you will invite or recruit them
- Plan and prepare all meeting notifications and invitations. The notifications and invitations should clarify the workshop purpose and how the results will be used. Make sure attendees know they are coming to work and interact and not just listen to presentations and ask questions or make comments
- Carefully prepare the workshop assignment; make the instructions clear and straightforward and provide appropriate support materials (eg handouts, maps, graphics). Design the assignment to get useful information and products to meet your participation objectives. As you design the assignments, think about how you will use their results in your decision making process
- Pretest the workshop assignment to make sure that people who are unfamiliar with project details will understand the tasks involved
- Determine what participants will need to know to do the assignments. Plan how everyone will get relevant and needed information (eg with an opening overview presentation or through resource material or people)
- Before finalising all materials, review them with the project team. Hold a planning meeting for the project team prior to each workshop and practice the exercises
- Confirm attendance of project team members and key resource people. Conduct an orientation meeting/training session prior to

the workshop and pass out a briefing sheet on the workshop process. Be clear on each support person's role. Make sure facilitators understand the group exercises and purposes

- Plan for equipment and refreshments
- If you will break into small groups, decide how you will do this. For example, if you want people with diverse opinions mixed together in groups, consider pre-assigning small groups (eg with colour-coded name tags) or have them count off at the start of the meeting since people with similar viewpoints tend to sit together at the beginning of the meeting
- Consider the need to document the results of small group efforts ahead of time.

Implementation

- Obtain participants' agreement to the agenda, process and ground rules at the beginning
- Provide information that will be useful to meet the group's objectives
- Provide clear instructions for the exercise
- Explain how small groups will report to the larger group and make sure there is enough time reserved for alto share their results
- Break into small groups
- Have one or more staff people rove from group to group to assist. You can also have experts participate in small groups to lend their expertise, but caution them not to dominate the group or to be directive
- Show respect for all perspectives
- Be clear on how the workshop results will be used in the process
- Come back together at the end of the workshop (or at the end of each exercise) So small groups can share results with the full group, describe the next step in the process and how the workshop results will be used, discuss what documentation they will get from the workshop and thank all who came and participated.

Documentation

- Provide a record of small group results and any further processing by the full group
- Reach closure with the group on how ideas and information will be documented and used
- Decide ahead of time how you will handle documentation if particular interests appear to be missing or others show up in especially large numbers
- Later in the process, show the public how the workshop results contributed in the decision process.

Hints

- A small group ceases to be small when you have more than 10 people. Decide ahead of time how you will handle it if attendance is greater than expected
- Choose a venue and room based on the number of attendees expected
- Work out plans for how communications with the media will be handled ahead of time
- Consider whether your venue has the size and acoustics to handle people at several tables talking at once
- To help with planning, you can ask (but don't require) people to RSVP. Some people will RSVP and not show up, others will show up without having sent an RSVP, but it will help you estimate attendance. It also allows you to pre-assign small groups in advance, if desired
- Start groups with easier questions and 'warm-up' exercises, especially questions that help the group bond, build respect and find what they might have in common. This helps participants get comfortable before diving into the more challenging parts of the workshop.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Ask participants for their views on how well the workshop met its objectives (use a comment form, a sheet posted for participant comments or a quick group evaluation at the end of the meeting)

- After attendees have left, gather the team together to debrief. Ask:
  - What went well?
  - What could be improved?
  - Was anything confusing?
  - What are the major things we learned?
  - What action is needed for requests and/ or questions asked by attendees?
  - How well did the event meet the objectives outlined in the public involvement plan?

Resources

Staffing

- For optimal management of the small group process, assign a facilitator to each group and train the facilitators in the process and basic facilitation skills
- Preparation for workshop meetings is often more intensive than preparation for public meetings or open houses. Generally, you need to develop more materials and the materials are more sophisticated
- Staff with expertise in the relevant topics may be needed at the workshop to serve as a content expert and resource.

Equipment

- Flip chart for each small group.
- Projector for opening presentation
- Small group supplies as required for exercises: dots, Post-Its™, sticky wall, maps with acetate overlays, markers, pens, note cards, tape, etc.

Space and room

- Round tables are scattered about the room or in nearby rooms, possibly with a separate space for an opening presentation and wrap-up with the full group.
- Each table has needed supplies and materials
- Refreshments are provided to reflect your appreciation of their time and effort.

Budget

- Cost of planning the process and having an adequate number of small group facilitators
- Room rental
- Meeting announcements and invitation including printing and mailing
- Refreshments
- Materials and maps. If it is a map-intensive exercise, particularly if it requires multiple GIS (geographic information system) maps, this can be a significant expense.

Variations

- A workshop may conclude with processing the results from the small groups to create a combined product for all groups
- Computer-assisted polling can be used at a workshop to provide real-time results and the ability to focus discussions based on the polling results

World Café

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.

Description

World Cafés are designed to foster open communication and sharing within a group. Questions are designed to begin at a general level and move toward more focused meaning around a particular topic. Participants move to new tables for each question so that they connect with a larger group of individuals and hear new perspectives. As a result, ideas flow around the room and thinking converges on shared meaning by ‘listening into the middle’.

Use to

- Foster open and meaningful discussion of a topic
- Surface areas of commonality and draw

people into common problem solving

- Remove the formal atmosphere of a traditional meeting, adding to participants' comfort, and involve a wide variety of people in a meaningful way, rather than in a confrontational setting
- Gain a high quantity of responses on specific topics in a short time. Provide information from a range of perspectives
- Build community among diverse participants.

Participants

- May be used for an open forum or a group of invited participants
- Timing
- A single World Café meeting is probably best conducted in two to three hours
- World Café sessions have varied from 90 minutes to several days.

Preparation

- Review the objectives outlined in the overall P2 plan to determine whether this event will contribute to achieving them.
- 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.
- Publicise the event and invite target participants.
- Arrange for refreshments and room set up.
- The seven principles of World Cafés:
  - set the context
  - create hospitable space
  - explore questions that matter
  - encourage everyone's contribution
  - cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
  - listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
  - harvest and share collective discoveries.

Implementation

- Set up tables with seating for four with tablecloths and short floral centrepieces. Randomly scatter tables around the room. Use round tables, if feasible. Your goal is to make the setting look conducive to conversation and different from a standard meeting format. Put butcher block paper on each table to encourage doodling. Provide coloured markers or sticky notes to help record thoughts
- Ask one person per table to volunteer to serve as host. This person remains at the 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 Café as a series of conversations among four people at different tables
- Request participants to record comments and points of agreement using the butcher block paper on their tables or sticky notes (or flip charts or a sticky wall)
- Table host welcomes participants, reads instructions and facilitates group discussion to accomplish assigned task
- When the facilitator rings a 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 mingle with others from one round to the next
- After a series of conversations about the topic at hand, participants return to their original tables to share what they have heard
- To conclude, tables share a common theme with the group at large
- To conclude, consider having groups post summaries along a wall. Then direct participants on a gallery walk to view the results.

Documentation

- Consider how to document the discussions ahead of time. The participants might like to help decide how to report 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
- A written summary of the event can be included in the participation plan, provided to stakeholders in regular scheduled communications (newsletters, project updates) and posted on the project's Web site.

Hints

- Room set up is important to the success of this technique. The setting should be conducive to conversation and not be as institutional as a standard meeting format
- Allows for people to work in small groups without the need for trained facilitators. Ensure table hosts have the skills to keep their group on task and that the event purpose and process is clearly explained to all participants
- A lead facilitator may be needed to circulate through the room and make sure all tables are staying on task
- Think through how to bring closure to the series of conversations Be aware that it may become very tedious if each table feels the need to report all of the commonalities they discovered
- Have a fall-back plan of how to move forward in the event of high emotions or lack of willingness to participate in this format
- Know what to do if more or less people show up than expected.

Evaluation/Debrief

- After participants leave, gather the project team and reflect on the event. Ask:
    - What information did participants share with each other?
    - What inferences can we draw from the similarities and differences in the table summaries?
    - What do they suggest in terms of next steps?
    - Are there any actions that came out of this event?

Resources

Staffing

- A core team may be needed to develop initial questions
- Staffing needs depend on the number of participants
- One person is needed to facilitate the event. Depending on how the large-group sharing is done, several recorders may be needed
- It may be advisable for project staff or anyone else perceived as being biased to avoid serving as table hosts.

Equipment

- Adequate small round tables for conversations of four
- Flip charts and paper or other tools for recording table summaries and large-group sharing
- Refreshments (beverages and snacks) appropriate for your participants.

Space and room

- The space needs to be large enough to accommodate sufficient numbers of tables of four for the expected number of participants
- Tables should be covered with tablecloths and each have a centrepiece (the room should feel like a café)
- Wall space may be needed for flip chart paper and/or sticky walls.

Budget

- Primary cost is for the facilitator
- Depending on the expected number of participants, you may need to rent

a large facility and the corresponding quantities of tables, linens and chairs

Variations

- To conclude a World Café meeting, consider asking participants at each table to record their summary thoughts on 6x8 or 8x10 cards. The cards can be collected and then posted on a large sheet of butcher paper or a sticky wall and perhaps grouped according to theme. Participants then take a gallery walk to view the comments. People can leave after they have viewed the comments or regroup to share observations or highlights
- World Cafés can be designed around one question or a series of questions.

Additional Information

- The World Café website provides information on current projects, references, listings of professionals, and other resources. www.theworldcafe.com
- Brown, Juanita, David Isaacs, and the World Café Community. The World Café: Shaping our Futures through Conversations that Matter. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005

World Wide Web and other internet tools

An electronically based information repository, post office, meeting place, bulletin board and speaker's platform.

Description

The World Wide Web operates like an electronic post office and library. It provides a powerful tool for sharing information and facilitating communications. The Internet or 'Net' is defined as a decentralized, worldwide network of computers that can communicate with each other. The World Wide Web or 'Web', is a global system of linking documents, images, sounds and other files across the Internet.

Use to

- Reach people who won't/can't come to a meeting due to distance, busy schedules or other concerns
- Reach people across a very large geographic area
- Maintain a repository of fact sheets, newsletters, news releases, photos, timelines and any other information of interest to stakeholders
- Provide a contact point for stakeholders
- Send notices and information to stakeholders
- Create an easy-to-reach bulletin board or chat space for stakeholders to express their opinions
- Provide an easy-to-access place for people to leave comments.

Participants

- Open to anyone with access to a computer and the skills to use it. Depending upon the community, internet communications may not reach less-affluent or less-educated members of the population.

Timing

- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
- Post and revise information regularly to maintain freshness. Depending on the project, this might be daily, weekly or monthly.

Preparation

- Consider your P2 objectives and how the Internet and World Wide Web might help achieve those objectives
- Develop a plan for your site's Web page, list server or other Internet-based electronic tools. Understand how each tool might be used, who will maintain it and what purposes it will serve
- Develop timely material to post on your Web site
- Find a host server on which to post your site files. Get an address or URL for your site

- Design your Web site to meet the needs of your stakeholders
- Test your Web site for readability, clarity and navigation (do all the links work?) before posting it 'live'. Ask a few coworkers and/or stakeholders to test the site for you
- If you are using your Web site as a way for people to comment as well as an information repository, design the comment form or instrument to guide stakeholders so they can provide comments that are useful, meaningful and relatively easy to analyze and compile. As with other aspects of your Web site and with other comment forms, test to insure quality.

Implementation

- Once designed, developed and tested, post your site
- Promote and advertise your site and its URL (address) through all your marketing channels and on all your materials
- Maintain and update site, respond to comments and e-mails and regularly evaluate and modify the site.

Documentation

- Keep an archive of material that has been posted on the web
- Track e-mails and comments submitted by site visitors, adding these comments to your summaries and analyses of written, phone and other comments
- Track visits to your website.

Hints

Over Reliance

- The biggest pitfall may be relying too heavily on the Web for outreach. The web is wonderful, but cannot do everything
- Not everyone has Internet access. Any Web-based information or access must be accompanied by equivalent opportunities through other means
- Some material, such as a detailed map, may be less suitable for viewing on a computer screen. Not everyone will have access to a high-resolution colour printer that can print in various formats and paper sizes
- Some information, particularly sensitive information, may be inappropriate for electronic communications. For example, e-mail is probably not a good way to notify someone that his/her family's drinking water source is highly contaminated and dangerous
- In spite of relationships that have blossomed after 'meeting on-line', in general, the Internet is not a great way to develop relationships, build trust or show empathy. Traveling to meet someone in their community or home shows much more concern and interest than an e-mail exchange or webpage.

Writing and publishing on the web

- Reading on a computer screen is different than reading a printed document, so writing for the Web is different as well. 79% of users scan the page instead of reading word-for-word. Reading from computer screens is 25% slower than from paper
- Web content should have 50% of the word count of its paper equivalent
- Since readers can enter your site at any page, each page must be independent and not assume the reader has read the 'previous' page. Users don't read whole pages, so put the critical information at the top
- Highlight more liberally than with print, emphasizing important words. Don't use blue text to highlight as it is more commonly used for hyperlinks. Don't underline text. Underlined words denote hypertext
- Graphics are great, but watch download time
- Writing must adjust to this 'Web way of reading.' Paragraphs should contain only one idea and 50 words or fewer
- The Web is informal and readers are informal when they use it. So use a more informal style of writing.

- Aim for documents of 600 or 700 words. Over 1,000 is getting too long for online reading. If it's possible to cut a word out, cut it out
- Provide more detailed information on secondary pages or using special file types that can capture an entire document for download or print (eg PDF files)
- Help people find, navigate and use your page.

Web-based Tools

- Electronic bulletin boards allow people to have conversations over time, even if they never meet or are never even on-line at the same time
- BLOGS (Web logs) are increasingly popular places to hold on-line conversations. Find out what people are saying about your project
- A wiki (wih-kee) is a Web application that allows users to add content, as on an Internet forum, but also allows anyone to edit the content.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Track use by recording user/visitor sessions (time actually spent on the pages themselves) and evaluate, including pages are most commonly visited. Note: 'hits' can be registered without people actually visiting your site, from search engines for example, and thus are a less-useful measure of how much your site is used than user/visitor sessions
- Use an on-line 'suggestion box' or 'comment form' to get feedback and ideas from users and visitors.

Resources

Staffing

- Site designer who understands Web design elements such as graphics, text editing, accessibility, etc. Note: If done with appropriate content management software and system, future updates can be made by someone without technical Web skills or knowledge of Web coding requirements
- Writer and subject-matter expert to create content throughout the project
- Web editor to prepare all content for posting throughout project
- Someone to be the contact person (the person who receives e-mail from site visitors). This person needs to be responsive, replying to e-mails, tracking and documenting comments, etc.

Equipment

- Server to host Web site
- Software for writing, encoding, posting, maintaining site.

Space and Room

- None needed other than workspace for staff.

Budget

- Publishing on the Web can save costs compared with traditional printing and mailing costs. However, content must be kept up-to-date. Webmasters have special skills and can be expensive
- If you establish your site using a content management system, the organisation can make updates without knowing or paying for technical Web skills and can save those costs during the life of your project.

Variations

- In addition to websites, the Internet offers other tools that can support and augment your P2 process:
  - A list server is an electronic mailing list that people can add themselves to and remove themselves from, thus saving you the work of maintaining the list. A list server can be set up so only you, as the host, can use it to mail to all members or designed so that anyone on the list can mail to everyone else on the list
  - Whether using a list server or standard electronic mailing list, e-mail offers a convenient and inexpensive option for sharing news, distributing electronic newsletters, distributing meeting notices, etc.
  - Chat rooms and bulletin boards can provide ways for people to share

comments with each other. Joint Internet and telephone meeting software now allows people from around the world to interact both visually and through audio simultaneously in real time.

Additional Information

- www.sun.com/980713/webwriting
- www.webstyleguide.com

Yarning Circle

Context – This process has been successfully used in regional SA. It has been considered a successful practice which both builds capacity and provides a safe space for issues to be shared that impact upon Aboriginal communities and communities generally.

The objectives of each day has been around finding solutions to and raising awareness of

- *'The importance of high expectations for Aboriginal learners'*
- *'making early years sites welcoming to Aboriginal Families and their children'*

As well as offering an enriching cultural connection to non-Aboriginal community members.

Aboriginal and Cultural learning, connecting, decision making and relationship building (The title for this process and the context of it occurring may vary across communities, cultures and understandings. Aboriginal people are the experts in this process.

Description

This process is like a 'goldfish bowl' setting where those seeking to learn more sit around the experts of the information.

The process is about connecting elders, young people, communities, educators, employers, schools and other partners… People seeking to learn more, find answers or empower local decision making would be observers and enquirers of the Yarning Circle process.

Use to

- Create deeper understanding of culture and needs, wishes, desires between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
- Create deeper and more respectful relationships through cultural understanding and positive intent
- Identify complex issues or seek culturally appropriate advice or guidance from Aboriginal Peoples.

Participants

- 10-12 Aboriginal individuals consisting of a cross section of groups (youth, Elders, parents, educators, community representatives)
- Several observers of pre-determined backgrounds who will benefit from observing and enquiring about the topic of conversation (yarning topic)
- A good ratio is approximately one to five for breakaway activities later in the process.

Timing

- The timing of a yarning circle varies depends on what the objective of the day is. For a full process where an entire dialogue takes place initially through observation, then through enquiry and dialogue can take up to 5 hours (plus breaks). The planning and size of the event will determine overall time spent. The time can vary provided the integrity of the process is not diminished
- This process is not a 'half day' activity.

Preparation

- Review the objectives of the plan to be clear that this process will assist in achieving them
- Ensure you have a team or group to support the planning and implementation process.
- Identify (through local community links and resources) the key Aboriginal (and/or TSI) people (guests) who can best offer insights into the theme and objectives you hope to address
- Identify the most appropriate and culturally neutral environment to run the session

- Ensure you are working with Aboriginal leaders from your organisation or community to ensure your planning is culturally appropriate
- Consider equipment, resources, catering and logistical needs and allocate responsibilities to team members to ensure all aspects are done
- Identify your target audience/engagement group and ensure timely invitations and RSVP times and contacts
- Final RSVP'd attendees considered to plan seating, diversity across groups or teams and maximum 'relationship building' opportunities
- Identify the key discussion topics and share these with the Aboriginal guests well prior to the day of the yarning circle
- Create a visual resource/agenda to guide the facilitation of the day (powerpoint/handout etc)
- Provide table information or documents for participants to note and record their responses on for enquiry during the day
- Prepare the format of the day to introduce the process, the cultural appropriateness of Listening and observing and the 'one person talking' protocol of a yarning circle.

Implementation

- Set up in plenty of time for early arrivals and technology run through
- Prepare team and facilitators with a briefing and review plan, agenda and logistics, housekeeping
- As participants arrive, welcome, ensure they have signed in and invite them to find their seat. Welcome and connect people who may not know each other
- Arrange the 'circle' of seats for the Aboriginal guests to sit so that the wider participants can feel connected and engaged in their observation of the yarning. Around a table works best
- It is important that no one sits with their back to the yarning circle. Arrange the room to ensure this
- Formally welcome all participants, with special recognition of the guest Yarning people (Aboriginal guests)
- Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country (as appropriate) usually an Aboriginal guest as per prior arrangement (do not put participants on the spot, on the day of the activity)
- Offer an introduction or ice breaking activity to enable participants to familiarise themselves with others
- Declare the goals and objectives of the day and how it is hoped they will be achieved before introducing the first part of the process
- Some culturally or historically sensitive information along with personal stories will be shared and this information may be re-shared within the context of awareness raising or well informed decision making, but not linked to the teller of the story or sharer of the information
- Where an Aboriginal Guest chooses not to answer certain enquiry questions, the wider participation group must respect there are sensitivities about their questioning that can't be shared in this forum. This heightens the cultural competence of all non- Aboriginal participants as well
- Step 1 – the Aboriginal Guests, on having previously been provided with the objectives of the day will commence a discussion between themselves each sharing stories and views, while the remaining participants observe. This process takes approximately one hour. It may run longer depending on number of participants. Between 5 & 10 minutes is the regular amount if the guests are 'story telling' as the process encourages. If the process turns into a dialogue between the guests, the process should be inclusive of all voices and may encourage some external facilitation to keep the conversation or story going. It is important to ensure that everybody in the Yarning Circle has been heard or offered the opportunity to speak. This is the way within a Yarning Circle, given it is based on Aboriginal Story telling techniques

- Participants who are observing the yarning circle will be invited to note areas of interest they have heard about and ask questions on conclusion of the yarn
- Step 2 – Guests continue their discussions without an audience while the observers identify in table groups key questions and enquiries they would like to pose. The table groups can then ask questions of the whole yarning group in the first instance. This process will take about 30 minutes and will be independently recorded by the facilitation team
- Step 3 – The Guests will join tables of participants so that a deeper enquiry can occur into areas that were discussed among the large Yarning Circle. More personal conversations will allow a deeper insight into the stories of the guests so that this information can be gathered and shared for a wider input into the objectives of the day. This process will take approximately one hour
- Step 4 – Each table will feed back to the wider group on the top three 'learnings' from their experience. This will be captured by the facilitators of the session
- It is important that the 'observer and enquirer' participants see themselves as having a dual opportunity. From the outset, participants will be invested in the goal of the day that led to their invitation to participate (stakeholders or interested parties). Alongside their own ideas based on the intent of the day, they will help to identify the key issues as they apply to the local Aboriginal community. They can add these perspectives to their input and provide some comprehensive feedback through the process to inform the intent of the engagement process
- Secondly, the opportunity to participate in such a rich cultural experience for all represents an authentic and important aspect intended through community engagement where diversity of opinions and voice is heard.

Documentation

- Comments, ideas, reflections and planning can be recorded in a number of ways in this process. Consider Flip charts or white boards along with a single participant document that is designed to capture the key points of the day and be handed back to collate and inform next steps post engagement
- Capturing activities of the day via photos or film may be done within the cultural protocols and confidentiality issues, along with prior consent of all participants. It offers a richness to the evaluation process and journey of engagement.

Evaluation/Debrief

- Review the Evaluation plan developed before you commenced the process and align the outcomes with the objectives.
- You will almost certainly find more information and different perspectives than you had sought, so be sure to capture these in a way that highlights the genuine intent of the participants
- Collate and analyse the comments, input, suggestions and outcomes of the day and over lay them with the objectives identified in your planning processes
- Document any challenges and apply your evaluation both to the qualitative and quantitative measures that fall out of the process. (Process Evaluation and Outcomes evaluation).

Follow up

- In line with your promise to the public who participated, in time, send information back that explains how their input has had an influence
- Extend thanks to those who shared their personal stories and experiences with a room full of people they did not necessarily know
- Provide certificates of participation.

Cost

- Depending on the relationship with community, the space or venue chosen to run the event may be discounted or in kind
- Similarly this may apply to catering, although it is important for a long session such as a yarning circle, to ensure that food and

refreshments are available at each break time to sustain the deep and sometimes emotional aspects of the process.

Hints

- Further information about what sits deeply behind this process and the cultural significance of it can be found through following the links below.
- http://8ways.wikispaces.com/
- http://aboriginallearningcircle.com/

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Government of South Australia
Department for Education and Child Development