



Engaging hearts and minds

A study into conducting successful
engagement to deliver positive
outcomes for communities and organisations

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Executive Summary

Effective community engagement empowers consumers to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities. It goes beyond simply informing communities of decisions that have already been made and puts communities at the heart of organisational planning and delivery. This approach is more likely to ensure that projects deliver positive outcomes that reflect community needs.

In order to successfully engage with communities, an organisation must change from thinking about communities to thinking like communities. Sufficient expertise and experience must be built to identify appropriate engagement methods that will support jointly created solutions and deliver positive outcomes.

In 2019, Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS), working with Scottish Water and the Customer Forum, commissioned research to identify the components of good practice community engagement.

Research used qualitative methods, focusing on four communities that had participated in successful community engagement programmes.

Research found that successful engagement must:

- > Be inclusive, accessible and representative;
- > Ensure communities are fully involved in engagement programmes as early as possible;
- > Establish communities' trust and confidence in engagement programmes;
- > Tailor engagement methods to individual communities;
- > Be flexible to respond to and incorporate community ideas and needs.

In addition, organisations must:

- > Fully commit to delivering engagement programmes that genuinely enable communities to influence decision making;
- > Scope engagement programmes in detail to allocate appropriate time, finance and staff resources;
- > Engage external expertise where appropriate;
- > Evaluate the impact of the engagement;
- > Evidence to the community how their input has influenced decision making and outcomes.

Based on research findings, this report sets out a checklist of the components of successful and effective community engagement (Table 1). This will support the development and delivery of best practice engagement to secure positive outcomes for communities and service providers.

We believe this report will help wider sectors to consider what is required to deliver good practice in community engagement. The research findings and checklist are universal in their application.

Table 1: The components of successful community engagement

Pre Delivery	National Standard
1. Early engagement between partner organisations and community members.	Planning
2. Clear engagement programme objectives are stated in a formal, agreed plan.	Planning
3. Adequate and appropriate time, finance and staff resource are allocated.	Planning
4. Recruitment methods engage a representative sample of the community.	Planning; Methods
5. The roles and responsibilities of lead organisations, partners and communities are agreed to be fair and clearly defined.	Working together
6. Clear outcomes are identified prior to the start of community engagement programmes and used to inform evaluation during and after delivery.	Planning; Evaluation

Delivery	National Standard
7. Experienced and qualified facilitators in community engagement are used.	Working together; Methods
8. Engagement is flexible and responsive to community needs and ideas.	Methods
9. Communities can develop and shape plans to reflect topics they want to discuss.	Planning; Methods
10. Methods reflect the needs of target groups, complexity of issues and nature of feedback.	Methods
11. Lead and/or partner organisations are present to deliver information and answer questions.	Methods
12. Participants are offered a financial incentive.	Inclusion and support
13. Engagement activities are timed to suit community members.	Inclusion and support
14. Communications maximise participation and support understanding of complex issues to encourage contribution during engagement activities.	Inclusion and support; Communications
15. Communities increase understanding of topics, gain confidence in expressing their views and feel empowered to effect change in their communities.	Impact
16. Regular review meetings held between lead organisations and partner organisations.	Working together

Post Delivery	National Standard
17. Communities are continually updated on the outcomes of the engagement programme using a range of formats.	Communications; Impact
18. Improved local reputation and greater trust in organisations is fostered by communities.	Impact
19. A stronger internal customer-centric approach and culture is fostered by organisations.	Impact
20. Integration between different or disparate sections of the community is achieved, even after the departure of the lead organisation.	Impact; Working together
21. Evaluation conducted to assess the success of engagement and inform future programmes.	Evaluation
22. Evaluation is independent, potentially conducted by third party bodies.	Evaluation



Introduction

Citizens Advice Scotland uses research and evidence to put consumers at the heart of policy and regulation in the energy, post and water sectors in Scotland. We work with government, regulators and business to put consumers first, designing policy and practice around their needs and aspirations.

Citizens Advice Scotland works closely with water industry stakeholders to promote the needs of consumers. Recently, this has included working closely with Scottish Water to support the development of community engagement strategy as part of the Strategic Review of Charges 2021-27 process.

Only 35% of Scottish citizens feel they have any influence over decisions impacting their community, and 82% state that they would like more of a say in decisions that affect their community¹. Traditional participatory engagement methods (such as consultations, public meetings and information campaigns) are failing to reach and engage large sections of the population, and potentially exclude those who want to be involved in engagement activities but for whom traditional methods do not work².

Organisations must consider moving from simply adopting engagement methods that demonstrate some sort of exercise has taken place to gather community views, to more involved engagement processes that empower communities to influence decision making and deliver outcomes that reflect communities' needs.

Work between an organisation and an empowered community strengthens the likelihood that outcomes will be mutually beneficial. Respectful dialogue and

organisational commitment to co-designing and co-producing projects are central to this process.

CAS recently published two reports calling for stronger community engagement frameworks. They addressed communities affected by flooding³ and involving communities in issues related to water and the environment⁴. This initiated a commitment from Scottish Water to take forward CAS's recommendations, which would result in:

- > Greater local democracy involving communities more in public sector activities that impact upon them;
- > The development of stronger, more resilient communities;
- > More innovative engagement mechanisms to increase consumers' say in how services are delivered;
- > Better consumer understanding of how their behaviour impacts the water environment and which measures can be adopted to better protect it;
- > Increased dialogue between organisations and communities on the design and delivery of Scottish Water's capital investment programme;
- > Access to local knowledge and a better understanding of community needs.

The Scottish Government views representative community engagement as an essential part of decision making⁵. The Scottish Government's National Outcomes support that people in Scotland "live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe" and that they are encouraged to "volunteer, take responsibility for our community and engage with decisions about it"⁶.

¹ Attitudes to Local Democracy in Scotland (Ipsos MORI 2014)

² <http://whatworksscotland.blogspot.com/2017/05/facilitative-leadership-involving-citizens-and-communities-in-local-decision-making.html>

³ Riding the Waves: Keeping the community on board (Citizens Advice Scotland 2017)

⁴ Untapped Potential: Consumer views on water policy (Citizens Advice Scotland 2018)

⁵ UK Government's National Planning Framework for England; Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015; the Localism Act 2011; <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment>; Renewing Scotland's Public Services: priorities for reform in response to the Christie Commission (Scottish Government 2011)

⁶ This aim is expressed in the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, a set of 16 outcomes that combined will support the Scottish Government's goal of making "Scotland a better place to live and a more prosperous and successful country." The full list of National Outcomes is available at: www2.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome

Additionally, the water industry's vision for Scotland calls for Scotland's people to be involved and inspired "to love their water and only use what they need". The vision also seeks to promote "access to the natural environment and encourage communities to enjoy and protect it"⁷.

Scottish Water's activities are a key part of supporting the delivery of this vision. Scottish Water services 96% of Scottish households⁸, which provides it with a unique opportunity to use engagement activities to involve communities in decision making. Combining a more active role with education could encourage behaviours from consumers that will better protect the natural environment and support the achievement of the sector's vision.

CAS believes that it is critical to empower communities to effect real change. The delivery of capital investment projects can have a significant impact on communities, therefore it is important that communities are more fully engaged when work is planned in their area. The Water Industry Commission for Scotland (the Commission) expects Scottish Water to deliver "increased dialogue with communities around local issues, potential solutions and where and why Scottish Water has allocated money to projects in its capital investment programme"⁹.

There is a commitment from Scottish Water to involve and empower communities earlier within the pre-planning stage of the investment process to ensure that outcomes are shaped by their views¹⁰.

This will promote community-centred and innovative solutions to address service and investment issues, and will involve communities as partners in the design and delivery of projects.

CAS is committed to supporting Scottish Water to develop community engagement strategies and practices. These will build effective and reciprocal relationships with communities that will co-produce projects and deliver positive change.

CAS partnered with Scottish Water and the Customer Forum to conduct qualitative research to identify the required components that signal best practice community engagement.

Only 35% of Scottish citizens feel they have any influence over decisions impacting their community...

⁷ <https://www.thewaterreport.co.uk/single-post/2019/10/20/Scotland%E2%80%99s-water-sector-co-creates-vision-with-social-purpose>

⁸ Annual Report: Private Water Supplies (Drinking Water Quality Regulator 2018)

⁹ Initial Decision Paper 5: Communicating Output and Cost Effectiveness (The Water Industry Commission for Scotland 2018)

¹⁰ Draft Strategic Projections (Scottish Water 2018)

Methodology

The research objectives were:

1. To conduct a literature review to define community engagement; identify existing models and frameworks of community engagement; identify the legislative, local and governmental drivers for community engagement; and identify previous research on processes and methods of community engagement.
2. To conduct interviews with organisations and communities from four case studies that are examples of good practice community engagement to:
 - > Understand how community engagement was approached and delivered;
 - > Identify the lessons learned from each case study, and how these influenced future project planning;
 - > Understand the components of successful community engagement for both organisations and communities;
 - > Examine the contribution of particular processes and methods and how they contributed to beneficial outcomes for the community;
 - > Identify barriers to, or opportunities for, successful community engagement.

The four case studies (Appendix A) are reflective of a range of communities and geographies.

Ipsos MORI was appointed to undertake the research. Interviews included community members, community groups, as well as ‘lead’ organisations¹¹ and ‘partner’ organisations¹².

Partner organisations may include: local authorities and other public sector bodies; utility companies; universities; organisations specialising in relevant topics such as community development; and facilitation experts.

Ipsos MORI conducted in-depth telephone interviews with the lead and partner organisations.

In addition, focus groups and/or in-depth interviews were conducted with community members. This allowed them time to recall and consider the components, which they felt that had contributed to an effective engagement experience.

CAS has produced a “bottom-up”, community-informed view of what successful community engagement looks like. Understanding communities’ perspectives of what they need to be successfully engaged is essential to enabling organisations to deliver good practice community engagement.

A full list of the number of research participants that were recruited in each case study can be seen in Table 2.

¹¹ ‘Lead’ organisations are the primary organisations undertaking the engagement. They are responsible for delivering the project or service the engagement programme is seeking to influence and inform.

¹² Partner organisations are organisations contracted by the lead organisation to support the delivery of community engagement (e.g. by organising the logistics of engagement; by facilitating engagement; or by providing expertise on how to effectively conduct engagement).

Table 2: Number of participants from each community engagement programme

Community engagement programme	Number of participants		
	Lead organisations	Partner organisations and stakeholders	Community members/ representatives ¹³
Glasgow Canals (Scottish Canals)	1	3	3
Solent Achieving Value from Efficiency (Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks)	1	4	12
Place Standard pilot (Keep Scotland Beautiful)	1	4	2
Price Review Process (Yarra Valley Water)	1	3	6

¹³In some circumstances, Ipsos MORI could not contact community members that had participated in the programme. As an alternative, interviews were carried out with a representative of community organisations who had worked on the programme and who were able to provide the community perspective.





A Framework of Community Engagement

Desk based research was carried out to analyse drivers for community engagement on a UK, Scottish and local level.

Findings established that existing models for the design and implementation of community engagement can support organisations to: decide which methods of engagement should be used; ensure engagement is appropriate and feasible; and design, implement and evaluate engagement programmes¹⁴.

Drawing on existing models promotes confidence that engagement programmes are based on sound principles that have been tested within similar contexts. Additionally, using established models helps organisations to consider and address all potential obstacles and concerns.

Positive outcomes from effective community engagement

Successful and effective community engagement goes beyond traditional forms of participatory engagement. It sets out to empower consumers to influence the decisions which affect their lives and their communities¹⁵. When delivered well, engagement provides a space for communities and organisations to co-produce projects to achieve positive change¹⁶.

When delivered to its full potential, community engagement supports communities to

understand and articulate informed views on a range of issues. This is especially important when addressing complex or new topics, for example, involving communities in activities that support climate change targets.

Critically, community engagement must be based on equality between a community and an organisation and a commitment to delivering shared outcomes¹⁷.

¹⁴ Such as: the Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOiCE) model; INVOLVE's planning framework; the National Standards for Community Engagement; and the Sciencewise framework.

¹⁵ Principles for Community Empowerment (Scottish Government Strategic Scrutiny Group 2019)

¹⁶ National Standards for Community Engagement (Scottish Government 2016)

¹⁷ Scottish Community Development Centre. Available at: <https://www.scdc.org.uk/hub/co-production/more?rq=reciprocal>

I. Positive outcomes for communities

1. **Delivering additional value.** By identifying community ideas and needs, organisations can deliver additional social benefits to communities beyond the core aims of the project that is the subject of the engagement process.
2. **Building trust and legitimacy.** Enabling communities to influence decision making builds trust and legitimises projects through ensuring communities feel respected and listened to.
3. **Building social capital**¹⁸. Community engagement encourages collaboration between different community members. This delivers social capital through building local relationships; supporting community members to better appreciate and understand others' viewpoints; and fostering within people a sense of empowerment and self-belief to effect change in their communities.
4. **Supporting communities to become more resilient.** Social capital built by community engagement, potential investment and support of community initiatives, and the process of influencing and jointly designing projects can help communities become more resilient and self-resourcing.
5. **Enhancing democracy.** The involvement of communities in the development of services and benefits encourages both greater transparency and accountability of organisations and more active civic participation among consumers.

II. Positive outcomes for organisations

6. **Supporting behavioural change.** Community engagement provides a way for communities and organisations to work together to bring about positive behavioural changes to address specific issues. For example, engagement can provide organisations with an opportunity to educate consumers on particular issues, such as the environmental impact of inappropriate disposal of household waste and its impact upon the environment.
7. **Better quality decision making.** Communities can offer insights into their experience of service deliver, highlight previously unknown inefficiencies and frustrations, and suggest alternative approaches that may not have been apparent to organisations. Organisations can use this insight to make more informed decisions which demonstrate they “act on community needs and ambitions”¹⁹.

Conversely, a lack of robust community engagement may cause people to feel excluded and disengaged with what is going on in their local community. This can result in trust and legitimacy being eroded.

¹⁸ Social capital is defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups”. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>

¹⁹ National Standards for Community Engagement (Scottish Government 2016)

Moving from community engagement to community empowerment

Community engagement can be targeted towards communities of geography as well as communities of interest. It encompasses a broad range of activities through which an organisation interacts with consumers and communities to address and respond to issues affecting them²⁰.

I. The spectrum of community engagement

The spectrum of community engagement can be thought of as a five-tiered inverted triangle (Appendix B), with the least advanced engagement methods at the bottom and more advanced forms of ‘empowerment’ towards the top.

In order for organisations to reach the top tier of ‘empowerment’, they must first develop capacity within the ‘involve’ and ‘collaborate’ tiers. Operating in the top tiers of the spectrum will generate greater social capital through building capacity within communities and embedding their knowledge and needs into outcomes. Furthermore, successful and empowering community engagement will require an organisation to start thinking like the communities they are serving.

II. Methods of community engagement across the spectrum

If an organisation is delivering the ‘empowerment’, ‘involve’ or ‘collaborate’ tiers they are likely to be using varied methods of engagement to appropriately respond to the needs of different communities and types of project. These might include co-production methods such as workshops and user panels, or more fully deliberative engagement methods such as citizens’ juries²¹ or community coaching²².

The bottom two tiers of ‘consult’ and ‘inform’ are characterised by more traditional participatory engagement methods such as public information campaigns (e.g. posters and leaflets), drop-in sessions, surveys and consultations. These do not provide the same opportunities for community members to influence decisions. They may be largely dependent on self-selection and can exclude large portions of the community who cannot attend or are unaware of the engagement process. Furthermore, some consumers may want to be engaged with but find it difficult to access traditional methods, or have little faith that their voices will be heard and acted upon²³.

²⁰ Strengthening the Voice of Consumers in Energy Networks’ Business Planning (Citizens Advice 2018)

²¹ A citizens’ jury is generally composed of around 12-24 randomly selected citizens, demographically representative of an area, who come together to deliberate on a given issue over a number of days.

²² Community coaching involves individuals going into a community to encourage them to achieve their full potential and build social capital by working together. It recognises that local involvement in development interventions helps avoid the risk of providing unworkable solutions.

²³ What Works Scotland. Available at: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/topics/community-engagement/>

Key Findings

This section sets out important factors that the four communities and organisations within the research consider to be the key components of effective and successful community-led engagement and outcomes.

Findings are broadly categorised using an amended version of the National Standards for Community Engagement. This is a set of measurable engagement performance indicators that are widely regarded as best practice²⁴.

The research highlighted the importance of evaluation both during and after engagement programmes, as supported by the Sciencewise and INVOLVE frameworks, therefore ‘evaluation’ has been added to the categories used. Many

findings from the four case studies encompassed both the ‘inclusion’ and ‘support’ standard. Therefore these are represented as one.

Therefore the categories used are:

- > Planning
- > Working Together
- > Inclusion and Support
- > Communication
- > Methods
- > Impact
- > Evaluation²⁵

Planning

Clear aims and objectives must be articulated within a formal written plan. Equally important is clearly establishing the roles and responsibilities of both the organisation and the community as early as possible. This ensures there is a shared understanding of the objectives and intended outcomes of the engagement programme, which creates mutual accountability and makes it easier for the engagement process to be evaluated.

Community members should be involved in the engagement programmes as early as possible to give them adequate opportunity to shape the agenda of engagement activities. Engagement programmes need to be flexible enough to adapt future activities to the emerging needs of communities and incorporate their ideas. This will ensure that the engagement process reflects communities’ views, and that the project that is the subject of the engagement will include ideas that are salient to communities.

Ensuring that the process is flexible and can adapt project plans to incorporate communities’ ideas and needs will encourage a sense of ownership within communities. Additionally, incorporating communities’ ideas is more likely to establish trust and confidence in the engagement process.

Community engagement programmes need to be appropriately resourced in terms of staff, finance and time. For lead and partner organisations, engagement is resource-intensive, particularly in relation to time. To ensure as much time as possible is allocated for the engagement process, organisations should, at the earliest opportunity, identify and involve the people and organisations who will be impacted by the focus of the engagement.

It is important for organisations to set aside adequate time for building robust relationships with the community and recruiting participants. Sufficient time must be also be set aside for each subsequent stage of the engagement programme (for example: contracting partner organisations; designing engagement activities and associated materials such as discussion guides; conducting the engagement activities; taking community ideas on board; and adjusting project plans to reflect these).

Allocating appropriate time and resource contributes to better quality decisions, and avoids the need to potentially reverse decisions that proved unpalatable to the community because it had not been adequately consulted.

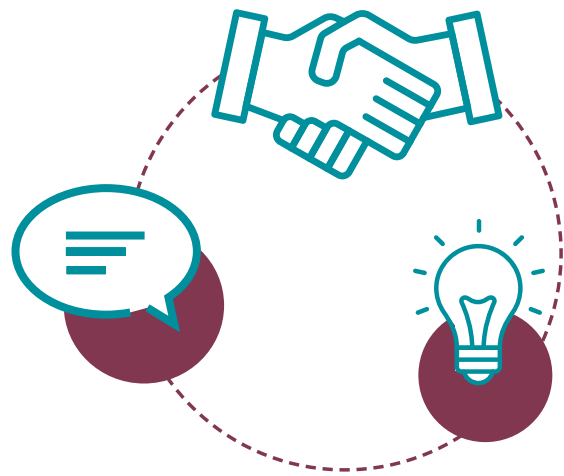
²⁴ Communities Scotland. Available at: <https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/EngagementR5.pdf>

²⁵ Research into Community Engagement Best Practice: Technical Research Report (Ipsos MORI 2019)

Working together

Working with partner organisations

Working with partner organisations can increase the likelihood of lead organisations delivering high quality community engagement. Partner organisations can bring specialist skills, expertise and understanding of how to most effectively engage with communities during an engagement programme.



Case Study

United Utilities customer panels

As part of its commitment to gathering ongoing feedback from customers, United Utilities' set up an online panel, WaterTalk, in 2017. The panel has around 8,000 members, who sign up via the United Utilities website, and who are periodically invited to take part in surveys exploring customers' service needs and priorities. Panel members are provided with a financial incentive for taking part in surveys.

Complementing the online panel is the United Utilities YourVoice customer panel, which was set up to gather feedback on the company's performance and to ensure that customers are at the heart of its business planning decisions. Representation on the panel includes a mix of customer, environmental and regulatory representatives.

Additionally, research found that using an external facilitator can help communities view engagement activities as neutral which encourages trust and participation as community members believe their views will be listened to.

In all of the case studies in the research, the partner and lead organisations reported establishing positive relationships with each other. This was attributed to the lead organisation selecting partner organisations with the appropriate skills, and who were enthusiastic and willing to contribute time and effort. Key to working with partner organisations is ensuring that all organisations share common goals.

It is essential that lead organisations ensure that roles and responsibilities for each party are clarified and that tasks are fairly allocated. This helps to avoid undue pressure on any one organisation, and maintains positive, productive working relationships. A framework for roles and tasks should be discussed and agreed early in the process at meetings and formalised in writing (e.g. in a Terms of Reference document). Regular review of the overall programme progress is also important to identify and address any concerns.

Piloting the Place Standard in Hillhead and Harestanes

East Dunbartonshire Council, Keep Scotland Beautiful and NHS Health Scotland agreed in June 2016 to jointly develop and implement a pilot project that would involve using the Place Standard to engage with the communities of Hillhead and Harestanes in Kirkintilloch. The Place Standard tool was jointly developed by NHS Health Scotland, Architecture and Design Scotland and the Scottish Government with advisory input from Glasgow City Council and was launched in December 2015. The tool identifies 14 themes around which structured consultation can be developed (e.g. “housing and community”, “work and local economy”, “play and recreation”, and so on).

The overarching aim of the community engagement programme was to provide a robust basis for future dialogue with public agencies and other stakeholders about how the area could be improved and help inform the development of a Locality Plan, as required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The pilot project was launched in June 2016 and ran until February 2017. A range of methods were used to facilitate engagement including: focus groups among particular segments of the community (parents, school children, young adults, people with literacy difficulties or for whom English was a second language, the LGBTI+ community, and care home residents, among others); an online survey; and public meetings.

Working with communities

Community members should be engaged on topics that are of direct relevance to their community, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the process must be discussed and agreed early. Engagement programmes must explore common goals to embed a sense of shared purpose. This will help to build relationships amongst different factions of the community where there has previously been a lack of communication between residents, or even a sense of division.



Inclusion and support

Ensuring an inclusive approach to community engagement is critical to successfully delivering shared outcomes. Every effort should be made to overcome barriers to participation. This could be done, for example, by ensuring that material used throughout the engagement process, from recruitment to activities, is available in multiple languages that reflect the demographic of the community and written in an informal style that is easy to understand.

Organisations should avoid using communications that are unfamiliar or appear overly technical. Using informal language rather than official jargon will help organisations avoid appearing intimidating. To achieve the correct tone, organisations may hire external expertise (e.g. communications specialists) to assist with developing communications.

It is important to include a representative cross section of the community in engagement activities. This ensures that outcomes reflect the opinions and wishes of the entire community, and not simply a limited demographic. Local knowledge or enlisting the support of community groups can be used to identify and reach individuals that do not usually engage in community activities or social groups that are difficult to penetrate.



Case Study

Environment Agency deliberative workshops

The Environment Agency ran a series of workshops across five areas in England at risk of, or affected by, flooding to examine different approaches to informing the public about flood risk. The project began with the establishment of an oversight group which undertook a literature review and a mapping of current flood risk communications and hosted a design and development workshop for key stakeholders to identify areas of focus and discussion before any engagement with the public took place.

Following this, a series of public workshops were held in Oxford and York, where people had experience of flooding in their homes; and in Leicester, Newtown and Skegness, areas where there were high risks of flooding. Participants were recruited to be broadly representative of the populations in these areas. The workshops in each location began with a mid-week evening introductory event, followed by a full-day workshop the following Saturday. A reconvened workshop was then carried out with 28 participants from the original workshops, plus representatives from Public Health England, the Red Cross, the National Flood Forum and the Environment Agency, to produce more concrete recommendations.

During engagement activities, participants should be provided with the support they need to engage effectively so that their views, even minority and opposing, can be expressed and captured.

Complex issues and concepts should be simplified in a way that ensures participants can fully understand and discuss them (for example, through using gamification techniques²⁶). Additionally, participants should be provided with sufficient time before and during engagement activities to reflect on relevant issues before becoming actively involved in the next stage of discussion.

It is important to time engagement activities to suit participants. This will ensure that as many people as possible from the target demographics can attend sessions. Additionally, the provision of financial incentives will encourage attendance from people who require travel, childcare, or time off work to attend engagement activities.

²⁶ These are engagement exercises that make the issues under discussion more fun and accessible through creating games around them (e.g. running quizzes based around earlier exercises to reinforce learning and encourage reflection).

Communication

Organisations should plan their engagement programmes to send communications out well in advance of the actual engagement activities taking place. This is likely to result in higher levels of participation by community members.

Different people will require different methods of communication. Organisations should use multiple methods (for example, advertising engagement both through social media and posters in community spaces) to reach more people.

Some communication channels are more effective than others in securing representative participation. In particular, face-to-face channels, which include a personal aspect to the process, can foster a sense of connection

among community members and be effective in recruiting a wide demographic.

A range of multi-channel communications enables organisations to reach a wide demographic. It also helps them to elevate the importance of the projects in the minds of community members. This can promote increased participation rates and help to reduce drop-off rates when there are multiple sessions. The use of imagery and visual tools can also be beneficial in helping participants to fully engage in the most effective way.

Case Study

Yarra Valley Water, Citizens Jury

In 2017, Australia's Yarra Valley Water delivered a customer engagement programme to help formulate its five-yearly price submission for its regulator. For the final stage of the customer engagement journey, Yarra Valley Water convened a citizens jury, which lasted for five days within a three-month period, to understand customers' willingness to trade-off between water pricing and service standards. Specifically, the citizens jury sought to answer the question: "We need to find a balance between price and service which is fair for everyone. How should we do this?"

Yarra Valley Water commissioned external facilitators, New Democracy Foundation and Mosaic Lab, to work together to deliver the jury. In total, 30 Yarra Valley Water customers took part, selected to be representative of the overall customer base. Jurors were provided with an online discussion forum to use between sessions, which was also made available to the wider community of Yarra Valley Water customers, to enable them to engage with the jurors and contribute their own views. After the final session, the jury submitted a report of ten key recommendations to Yarra Valley Water.

Post-engagement communication with community members is essential. Sharing how a community input has been taken on board by an organisation and how it has impacted project outcomes will demonstrate to the community how they have influenced decision-making. This will support a stronger sense of ownership of a project, and promote pride in project outcomes. It also addresses any perceptions that the engagement is merely a "tick box" exercise.

Post-engagement communication should take place using a range of channels such as meetings, social media posts, YouTube videos, leaflets, posters and newsletters. As in the case of pre-engagement communications, the use of multiple channels will ensure maximum reach and will avoid excluding any particular groups or individuals.

Methods

A wide range of community engagement methods are available to suit differing projects and communities. Methods can be more traditional in approach, such as online surveys and focus groups, or focussed on increasing community empowerment, such as citizens' juries or charrettes²⁷.



Case Study

South Staffordshire Water customer roadshows

South Staffordshire Water held a series of roadshows to help customers get advice about their water bills. The aim of the roadshows was to make sure customers that may be struggling with their household bills were aware of the range of support options available. Customers were encouraged to take their bill along to their local roadshow to get face-to-face advice from staff from South Staffordshire Water, and to discuss flexible payment arrangements and special tariffs available.

At the road shows staff discussed other aspects of water service provision with customers, including the quality of supplies and the use of water meters. Each roadshow lasted from 10am until 4pm, and was located within town centres and community facilities across the region.

Crucially, methods must be adapted to suit the individual requirements of different engagement programmes and community groups.

Organisations must have a clear understanding of why they are engaging with the public and what they are hoping to achieve. They must also familiarise themselves with the characteristics and components of the communities and the groups they wish to engage. These steps will support the appropriate selection of engagement methods.

Organisations should also consider the type of information they want to elicit from the group and the nature of the topic. This will help to ensure that the methods are fit for purpose and

accessible to a representative cross-section of the community.

Less successful methods of engagement tend to be larger-scale or open invitation²⁸ methods (e.g. surveys, online forums and public meetings). Less personalised and targeted methods of engagement tend to have a lower uptake and do not promote debate and deliberative discussion.

For groups within a community who do not traditionally engage, or might find mainstream methods difficult or unappealing, alternative and innovative approaches such as arts based engagement or guided walks might act as a more helpful form of engagement.

²⁷ A charrette is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others to collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers.

²⁸ Open invitation events are ones where anyone can attend, instead of events that target specific demographics to ensure a representative participant sample.

Scottish Canals, Glasgow Canals Project

Scottish Canals, Glasgow City Council and Bigg Regeneration led a project that sought to regenerate the Woodside, Firhill and Hamiltonhill communities through which the Glasgow branch of the Forth and Clyde Canal passes. These communities were targeted for regeneration by the Partnership as they were among the most deprived areas in Scotland, had consistently low levels of health, and had large areas of vacant and derelict land.

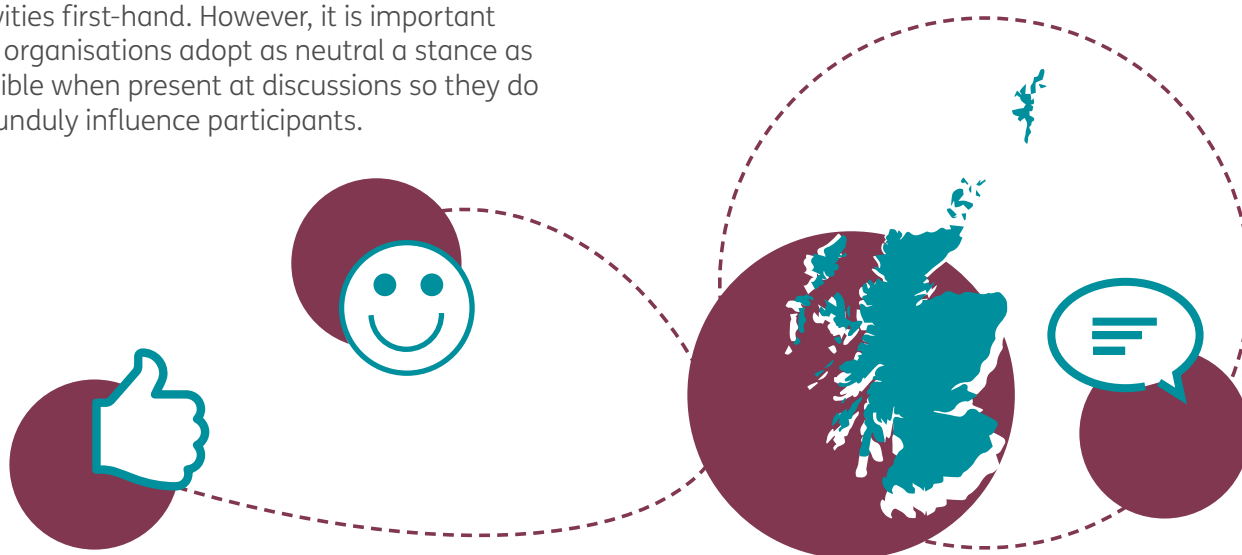
The Partnership embarked on a community engagement programme, titled “What Floats your Boat?”, to a vision and masterplan for the Woodside, Firhill and Hamiltonhill areas. The programme consisted of a design charrette, which brought together a wide range of interested stakeholders and local community members to explore design ideas for the local area. The charrette took place over four days in February 2015. Participants explored and identified the key issues in the area currently, and then discussed different future scenarios for the area. This led to the production of a draft development framework and masterplan that was presented to participants on the final day. Over a period of four days, the charrette engaged with over 300 stakeholders and members of the local community.

Strong facilitation of all methods is essential to foster effective dialogue on engagement programmes. This helps community members to feel sufficiently at ease to contribute and ensures that no one individual dominates the discussions. Using trained, external facilitators is seen to provide a level of independence and objectivity to the engagement process, and to increase credibility.

Organisations that are conducting the engagement programme attending the engagement activities helps to give the process credibility from the perspective of the community members. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for community members to ask organisations questions. It also lets organisations hear the discussions that take place during engagement activities first-hand. However, it is important that organisations adopt as neutral a stance as possible when present at discussions so they do not unduly influence participants.

In order to address complex issues, or discuss multiple issues, more than one engagement session can be considered. This avoids trying to cover too much in one session and provides participants with an opportunity to consider and reflect on the sessions.

Participant feedback should be sought at every engagement session and activity. Their feedback should be built into subsequent sessions and activities as appropriate. This will serve to reassure participants that their views are being considered seriously and are influencing the process. Feedback activities could include time devoted at the beginning of each session to reflect on previous activities and on what more needs to be done.



Impact

Whilst key aims and objectives of initial engagement and discussions may be achieved, it may be some time before longer term impacts from community engagement are realised.

For communities, engagement can deliver positive change beyond the project objectives, such as:

- > Forging new contacts and friendships, including people they would not normally meet in the course of their day-to-day lives. For example, in one case study it was felt that prior to engagement there had been a lack of communication and a sense of division within the community. However, engagement helped to establish common goals, which promoted a sense of shared purpose;
- > Developing a better appreciation of others' life circumstances and associated viewpoints, which facilitates more open and inclusive discussion;
- > Becoming better educated on the topics under discussion, which enables community members to form views and explore these with others;
- > Gaining more confidence in expressing their views and generally developing improved interpersonal skills, for example "questioning skills" and "influencing skills";
- > Feeling empowered to effect change in their communities, both through changing their behaviours, and through contributing to local discussion and debates. This in turn generates further willingness to participate in future engagement activities.

Case Study

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), Solent Achieving Value from Efficiency (SAVE)

The SAVE project aimed to assess the use of energy efficiency measures to encourage behaviour change in relation to energy use, and reduce demand on the energy network. The project was led by SSEN. Over four years, the project tested the effectiveness of four methods of intervention: media campaigns; adding a financial incentive; deploying free LED lighting to households; and using a community engagement approach.

Community Coaching was used, which embedded a coach within target communities to work closely with community members and provide insights into why customers respond to energy efficiency and how local residents could act together to reduce their energy demand. The programme also examined the key drivers of behaviour change in relation to energy consumption, exploring the extent to which the community was influenced by considerations such as "saving money", "saving the planet" and "being part of a caring community".

It was delivered in two communities, Kings Worthy in Winchester and Shirley Warren in Southampton. A range of local stakeholders in these areas were brought in to help develop and deliver the programme, including utilities (Southern Water, South Gas Networks), local authorities (Southampton, Winchester and Eastleigh), and two local host organisations to help deliver the programme (The Environment Centre and Winchester Action on Climate Change). Conclusion of the programme, with findings shared at a dissemination workshop with residents from both communities and preparation of a final programme report.

For organisations, the impact of effective community engagement may:

- > Improve their local reputation and increase the credibility and legitimacy of projects;
- > Instil greater trust amongst communities, which could help to address a pre-existing difficult, or non-existent, relationship;
- > Create a stronger internal consumer-centric approach and culture: conducting engagement programmes reinforces the need to be more consumer-focussed and to involve the community in decision making where possible;

Evaluation

An essential component to any programme of public engagement is a robust evaluation process. This will assess the quality of an engagement programme and to what degree its objectives were met.

Evaluation also advances organisational understanding of what makes community engagement successful. Evaluation should capture which elements of the engagement programme worked well and why; which areas worked less well; what outcomes were achieved; and how these compared to the original objectives. Learnings can be directed to the delivery of future engagement programmes to increase the likelihood of their success.

The use of external and independent evaluators will add rigour and credibility to evaluation findings. This will also act as a check and balance against a self-assessed programme.

Any programme of community engagement must have clear aims and objectives from the outset. Additionally, agreed indicators of success can help to track the programme's progress against its intended outcomes.

- > Improve knowledge and understanding amongst community members about the organisation;
- > Improve relationships and understanding between lead and partner organisations. This helps them to forge new relationships with each other, or improve upon existing relationships, which in turn supports the opportunity for future joint working to benefit communities.

Potential risks to delivering best practice community engagement

When planning for a programme of community engagement, organisations must be aware of the risks that may impact its successful delivery. For example, this may include inadequate community engagement experience or failure to manage community expectations.

A list of potential risks is noted in Appendix C, as well as suggested mitigation.





Conclusions

Effective community engagement empowers people to influence decisions that affect their lives and their communities²⁹. Organisations that invest adequate time, resource and expertise in community engagement will deliver societal and organisational benefits.

Joint working between a community and an organisation towards shared outcomes will achieve better results than an organisation working alone. Effective community engagement will leave a legacy of mutual benefits, as well as improving trust between a community and a service provider.

Ensuring that communities are fully involved and are confident in the process is crucial to developing effective community engagement policy and practice. This should be supported by robust programme evaluation and applying lessons that are learned to future engagement programmes.

The checklist CAS has developed will support organisations to plan for, deliver and measure the effectiveness of community engagement.



²⁹ Principles for Community Empowerment (Scottish Government Strategic Scrutiny Group 2019)



The components of successful community engagement: a checklist for organisations

Research findings support the development of a helpful checklist. This has been compiled to inform the process of developing community engagement programmes. It will support the measurement of past community engagement programmes, as a process of continuous improvement.

Pre Delivery	National Standard
1. Early engagement between partner organisations and community members.	Planning
2. Clear engagement programme objectives are stated in a formal, agreed plan.	Planning
3. Adequate and appropriate time, finance and staff resource are allocated.	Planning
4. Recruitment methods engage a representative sample of the community.	Planning; Methods
5. The roles and responsibilities of lead organisations, partners and communities are agreed to be fair and clearly defined.	Working together
6. Clear outcomes are identified prior to the start of community engagement programmes and used to inform evaluation during and after delivery.	Planning; Evaluation

Delivery	National Standard
7. Experienced and qualified facilitators in community engagement are used.	Working together; Methods
8. Engagement is flexible and responsive to community needs and ideas.	Methods
9. Communities can develop and shape plans to reflect topics they want to discuss.	Planning; Methods
10. Methods reflect the needs of target groups, complexity of issues and nature of feedback.	Methods
11. Lead and/or partner organisations are present to deliver information and answer questions.	Methods
12. Participants are offered a financial incentive.	Inclusion and support
13. Engagement activities are timed to suit community members.	Inclusion and support
14. Communications maximise participation and support understanding of complex issues to encourage contribution during engagement activities.	Inclusion and support; Communications
15. Communities increase their understanding of topics, gain confidence in expressing their views and feel empowered to effect change in their communities.	Impact
16. Regular review meetings held between lead organisations and partner organisations.	Working together

Post Delivery	National Standard
17. Communities are continually updated on the outcomes of the engagement programme using a range of format.	Communications; Impact
18. Improved local reputation and greater trust in organisations is fostered by communities.	Impact
19. A stronger internal customer-centric approach and culture is fostered by organisations.	Impact
20. Integration between different or disparate sections of the community is achieved, even after the departure of the lead organisation.	Impact; Working together
21. Evaluation conducted to assess the success of engagement and inform future programmes.	Evaluation
22. Evaluation is independent, potentially conducted by third party bodies.	Evaluation

Appendix A:

List of case studies used in the research

Scottish Canals, Glasgow Canal Project

The Glasgow Canal Project involved collaborative working between Scottish Canals and local organisations, residents and stakeholders to regenerate the heritage environment around Glasgow's canal network. Community engagement primarily involved the use of charrettes for residents of the Woodside, Firhill and Hamiltonhill areas of the city. Community engagement primarily involved the use of charrettes.

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), Solent Achieving Value from Efficiency (SAVE) project

Led by SSEN, the SAVE programme aimed to establish to what extent energy efficiency measures could be used as a tool for managing peak energy demand as an alternative to network enforcement. It used a community coaching approach among residents of two communities: Kings Worthy in Winchester and Shirley Warren in Southampton. The community engagement programme sought to understand how community members could work together to change their energy consumption.

Yarra Valley Water, Price Review Process

Yarra Valley Water, Australia, is Melbourne's largest retail water utility. They carried out a community engagement programme using a citizens' jury to explore customer expectations in relation to price and service. The programme was delivered in line with the water regulator's pricing framework guidelines, which had consumer engagement as a central area of focus.

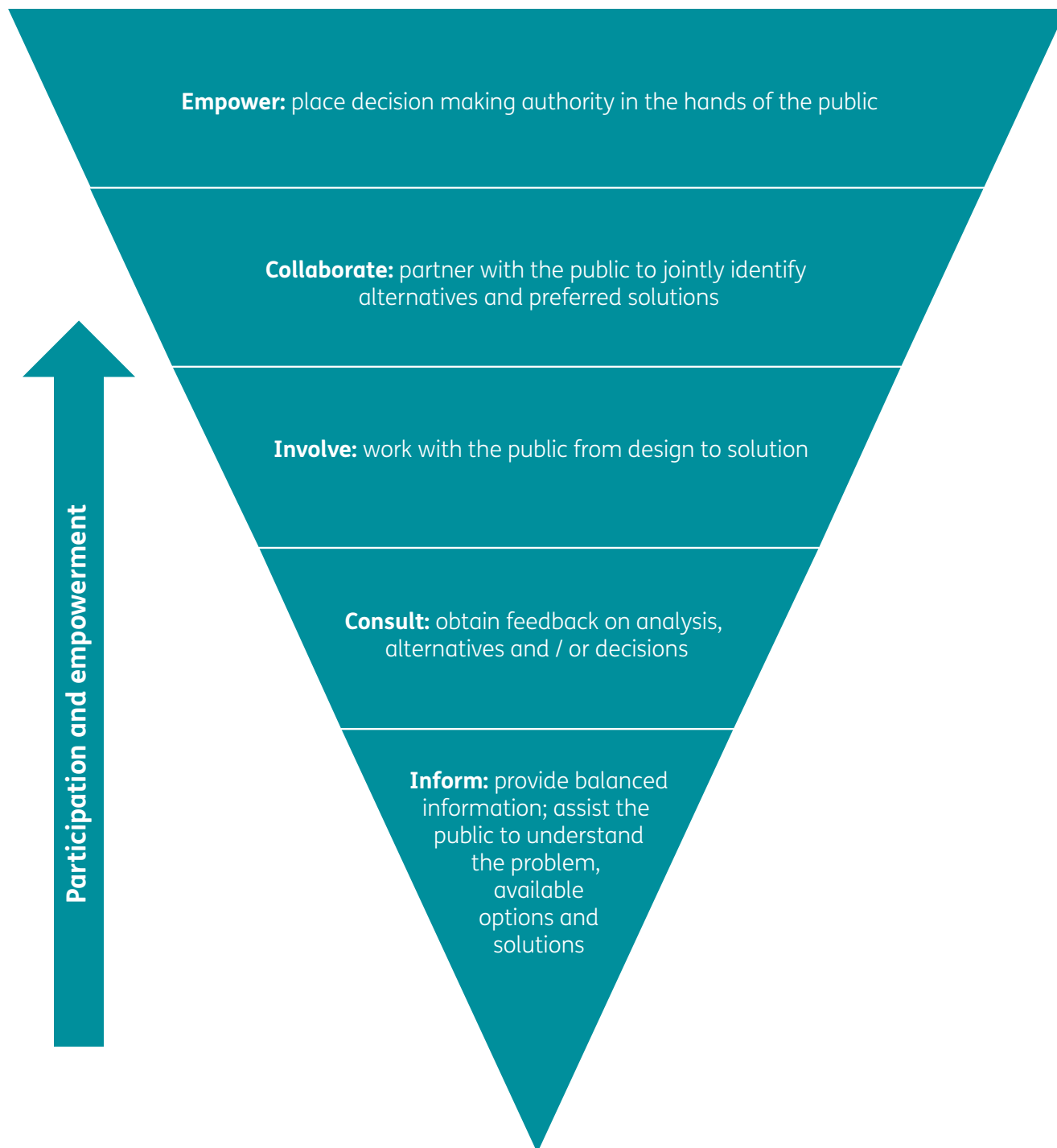
Keep Scotland Beautiful, Piloting of the Place Standard

Keep Scotland Beautiful, East Dunbartonshire Council, and NHS Health Scotland jointly piloted the Place Standard tool in Hillhead and Harestanes. This project involved using a range of methods to engage with local residents (including focus groups, an online survey and public meetings).

Appendix B:

The spectrum of engagement³⁰

The spectrum of community engagement



¹¹ 'Lead' organisations are the primary organisations undertaking the engagement. They are responsible for delivering the project or service the engagement programme is seeking to influence and inform.

¹² Partner organisations are organisations contracted by the lead organisation to support the delivery of community engagement (e.g. by organising the logistics of engagement; by facilitating engagement; or by providing expertise on how to effectively conduct engagement).

Appendix C:

Potential risks to effective community engagement and mitigation

Table 4: Potential risks to delivering best practice community engagement

Potential risk	Mitigation
Insufficient resources (such as: staff resources, time and finance) to deliver engagement programmes.	<p>Understanding the scope of engagement activities at the pre-planning stage will support organisations to identify the resources they require.</p> <p>Engagement is a resource intensive activity therefore organisations must be prepared to commit staff, time and finance to ensure activities are appropriately resourced.</p>
Organisations may lack in-house expertise and experience to design and facilitate effective community engagement.	External expertise should be sought as experienced facilitation is essential to ensuring a wide range of community voices are heard and views are captured.
Communities' expectations of the extent to which their views will influence the design and delivery of an organisation's project delivery may exceed what is practical and reasonable.	<p>Being transparent with community members and explaining the limitations associated with a project are essential. This supports the development of trust and project legitimacy, and will encourage open and productive relationships between organisations and communities.</p> <p>Communications must be open, honest and clear. Engagement methods must be chosen that will help to build trust and promote working together.</p>
Communities may not trust that their views will be considered and may view engagement as a "tick box" exercise, therefore are reluctant to get involved.	Additionally, independent facilitators and evaluators can promote trust in the engagement process and encourage participation.
Previous community engagement has left deep seated mistrust of, or hostility towards, an organisation.	Independent partner organisations can be used to broker discussions between lead organisations and community members. This will help to explore what is required to move forward, and to agree a plan to implement mutually beneficial engagement methods.

Appendix D:

Assessment of engagement methods

In addition to conducting interviews on methods amongst the four community engagement case studies, Ipsos MORI conducted an assessment of different community engagement methods, describing their benefits and shortcomings, and the contexts in which these are likely to be most useful for the organisation to gather information and acceptable to the community.

Table 5: Assessment of engagement methods

Methods under each level of engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Inform		
Methods includes: media campaigns, letters, emails, leaflets, drop-in events and public meetings.	Can raise awareness of key issues of importance, and of previously unknown projects, services or initiatives.	Limited scope to engage community members as the information flow is “top down” and one directional.
Consult		
Surveys	Provides quantifiable findings; Can be representative of a wider population; Can reach a large number of people, allowing views of different groups to be compared; Allows for repeated measurement and analysis of trends over time.	In isolation, does not allow for in-depth exploration of attitudes, perceptions and ideas; Limited scope for community members to engage with and learn from each other; Limited scope for community members to offer feedback or contribute new ideas outside of pre-defined survey questions.
Online and digital engagement	Ability to reach wide range of people, including people in remote and rural areas; Offers flexibility for participants, where there is no set date/time for involvement; Can be more cost effective than engaging through face-to-face techniques.	Restricted to those with access to internet/smart devices.

Focus groups	<p>Allows in-depth exploration of issues to understand reasons behind views;</p> <p>High level of involvement and interaction due to relatively small number of participants;</p> <p>Can target recruitment of particular demographic groups to ensure they are represented;</p> <p>Allows participants to engage with and learn from each other.</p>	<p>Responses are not quantifiable, so not used as a means of gauging opinion of wider population;</p> <p>Typically a small group of people who are not necessarily representative of the wider community;</p> <p>Dependent on skilled facilitation;</p> <p>Can be dominated by one or two confident individuals.</p>
Public meetings	<p>If attendance is high, a large number of people can be reached;</p> <p>Having “open invite” approach, can demonstrate openness and transparency;</p> <p>Can help garner publicity for a project;</p> <p>Can help community members to build networks.</p>	<p>Difficult to ensure high level of attendance/participation;</p> <p>Without targeted recruitment, can risk lack of representation from different types of groups who may have different viewpoints;</p> <p>Can risk excluding participants if not held in an accessible location and at a convenient time.</p>
Road shows and mobile engagement	<p>Has potential to reach a wider range of people as it removes the onus on them to proactively attend an event.</p>	<p>Nature of engagement is likely to consist of short, one-to-one discussions, and may lack the depth and detail offered by other methods.</p>



Empowerment (this includes the top three tiers of: empower, collaborate and involve)

Co-production	<p>Ensures that those who will be at the receiving end of a project, or service have an opportunity to influence its development;</p> <p>Enables community members and professionals to work together as equals and learn from each other;</p> <p>Builds skills and confidence among participants.</p>	<p>Can be resource intensive, involving significant time commitment from both participants and organisers;</p> <p>Typically a small group of people who are not necessarily representative of the wider community.</p>
Panels	<p>Allows views to be tracked over time;</p> <p>Regular nature of engagement can build momentum and enthusiasm;</p> <p>Can target recruitment of particular demographic groups to ensure they are represented.</p>	<p>Can be resource intensive, involving significant and long term time commitment;</p> <p>Typically a small group of people who are not necessarily representative of the wider community, and can involve the “usual suspects” who participate in consultations;</p>
Citizens’ juries	<p>Allow direct community input into decision making;</p> <p>Community input reflects informed decisions based on evidence from experts;</p> <p>Can target recruitment of particular demographic groups to ensure they are represented;</p> <p>Allows for focussed deliberation.</p>	<p>Can be dominated by a small number of people.</p> <p>Potential for participants to be led to a certain decision;</p> <p>Dependent on skilled facilitation;</p> <p>Can be resource intensive, involving a significant time commitment.</p>
Charettes	<p>Allows community members to be directly involved in design of solutions for their area;</p> <p>Encourages collaboration between different groups of stakeholders and community, which in turn can build positive relationships between them.</p>	<p>Can raise unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved when the process finishes;</p> <p>Can be dominated by experts/ professionals rather than community members.</p>



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