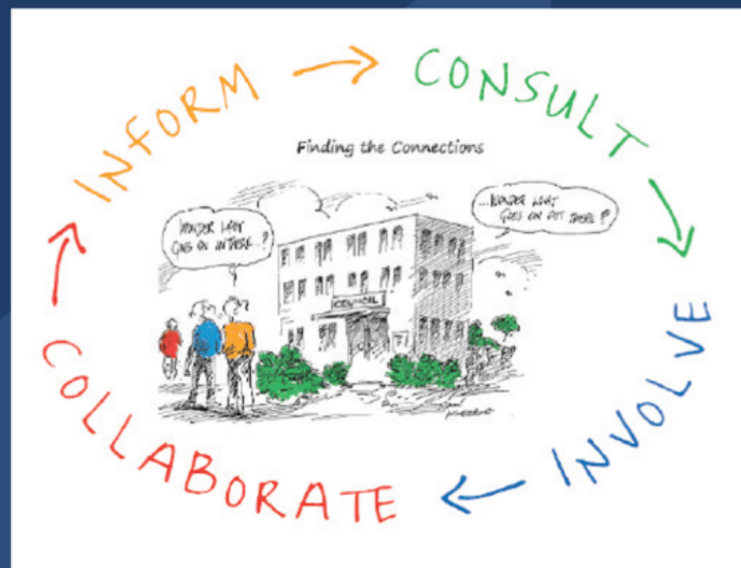# Community Engagement Framework

A Model Framework for leading practice in Local Government in South Australia

Background to the development of the handbook

The "*Community Engagement Handbook*" (the Handbook) was prepared as part of a broader Local Government Community Engagement Project, a joint initiative of the Local Government Association of SA (LGA) and the SA Government through the Office for State/Local Government Relations.

 The project was introduced to Councils in mid March 2007 when Councils were invited to respond to a questionnaire focussing on current community engagement practices, and to nominate case study examples. A summary report of the responses, "*Community Engagement – Snapshot of Councils*", and a publication showcasing leading practice examples, *"Community Engagement Showcase"* were prepared and are available at http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/members/engage

This Handbook is an outcome of the second phase of the project and is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model introduced in the *"Community Engagement Showcase".* IAP2 was founded in 1990 as the International Association of Public Participation Practitioners (IAP3) to respond to the rising global interest in public participation. The initial mission was to promote the values and best practices associated with involving the public in government and industry decisions which affect their lives. The model is based on three foundations, that is, (1) *values based, (2) decision oriented and (3) goal driven.* It provides a consistent approach to community engagement which facilitates a common understanding and approach between Councils and communities.

Research and feedback from Council staff in earlier stages of the Community Engagement Project suggested the Handbook needed to be a practical tool to increase its appeal and continuous use. The Handbook is therefore a process oriented "how to" guide which can be adapted for use in a range of circumstances by Councils of differing size. ***The format and graphics have remained basic with the intent of presenting council with a basic canvas to put their own stamp on***. Links to examples of how council's have adapted the guide are included in this revision of the Handbook (see the References).

The draft Handbook was "'road tested" by four Councils who participated in a Pilot Study. These case study examples are available at http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/members/engage.

Valuable input was also provided by members of a Reading Reference Group (refer page 48) who patiently read through several drafts of the Handbook and provided invaluable feedback for improvement. The Project Team acknowledge and sincerely thank those who participated through the development of the Handbook for their commitment, effort and enthusiasm. Funding for the Handbook from the SA Government and the Local Government Research and Development Scheme is also acknowledged.

Following the launch of the Handbook in March 2007 a training program was developed for Council members and staff in the use of the Handbook and has been delivered since then as part of the LGA Education and Training Program.

Handbook Revisions

In 2010, a Community Engagement Techniques module was added to the training program in response to attendee feedback.

In 2012, the Handbook underwent revisions to incorporate leading practice in community engagement and feedback from participants in the training program. Again in 2015, councils were asked to provide feedback for further revisions and to provide case studies for inclusion in the Handbook.
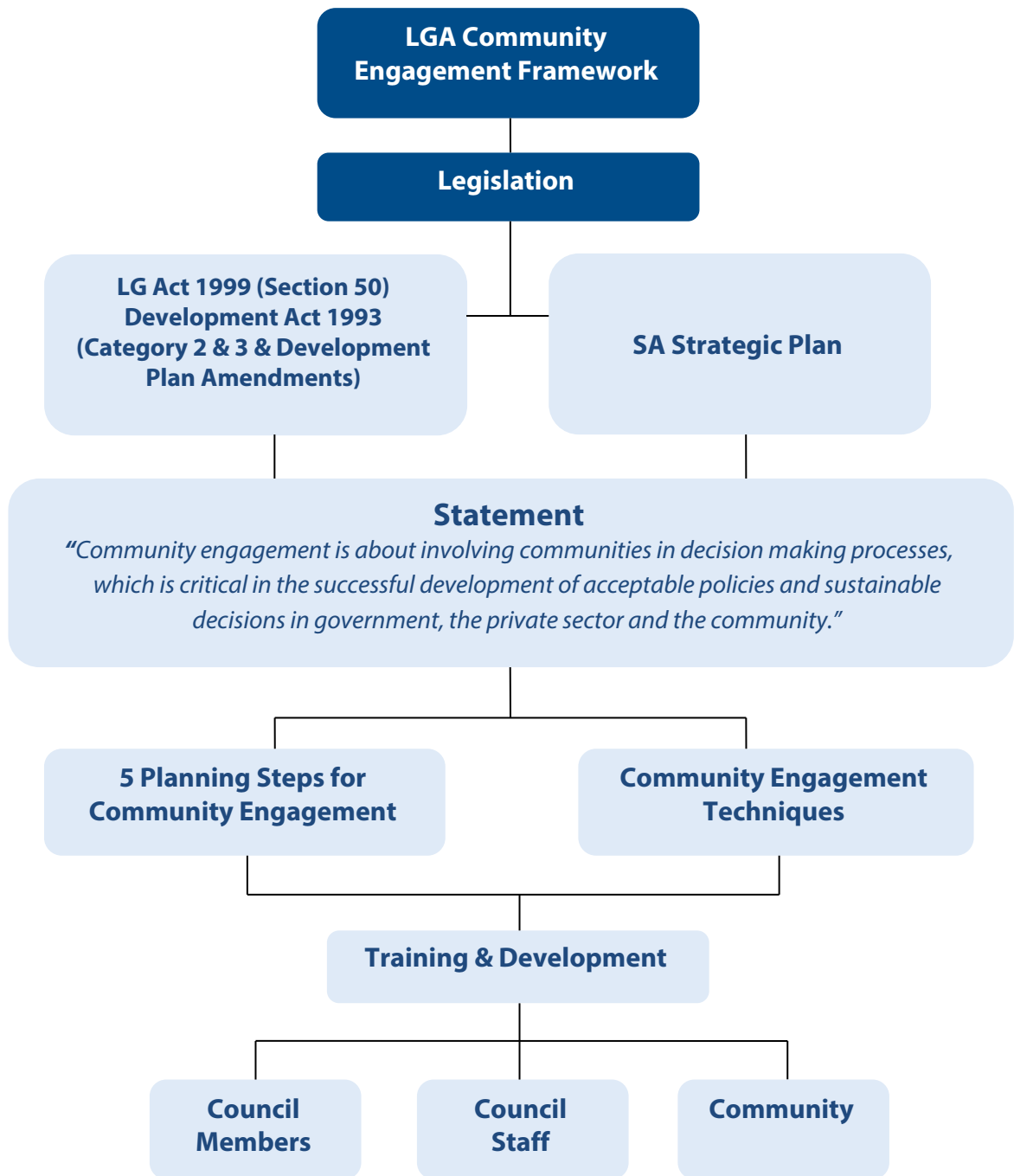
The review of the LGA SA model public consultation policy and substantial amendments in February 2016, (prompted by changes to section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999 by the Local Government (Accountability and Governance) Amendment Act 2015) required additional revisions to the Handbook. Thend another revision as the 5th edition of the Handbook in 2016 and the 6th edition publishe in October 2022..

The benefits to be gained through the application of the model framework outlined in the Handbook are covered in training available to Council Members and staff through the LGA Training program. For further information contact the LGA Training Service, telephone 08 8224 2035 or email: training@lga.sa.gov.au.

This Handbook has been designed for web access via LGA Community Engagement Handbook revised 6th Edition. It is also intended to supplement the work undertaken in the Community Engagement Project with information available from that web page.

Project Consultants 2008: Margaret Heylen (Project Manager) **and 2007** Barbara Chappell (Author)

Handbook Revisions 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2022: Barbara Chappell

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Statement

"Community engagement is about involving communities in decision making processes, which is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and sustainable decisions in government, the private sector and the community."

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Getting the basics right relies on effective planning

The focus of the *Community Engagement Handbook* is on getting the basics right in the first instance so council project staff can then build community engagement practices and tools that meet the needs of their council and their communities. This essentially involves planning effectively for community engagement rather than enthusiastically reaching out for interesting or new engagement techniques without proper planning. A planned approach will set in place a strong foundation that Councils can build on to drive community engagement initiatives.

The principal aim of the Handbook is to provide Councils with a model framework to adapt to local circumstances for effective planning and implementation of community engagement processes for small and large projects. Secondary aims are to:

- clarify the consultation requirements of the Local Government Act (Section 50) and Development Act 1993, as distinct from non-legislated consultation, and to ensure integration into a logical framework;
- provide a method for the selection of community engagement that is most closely aligned to expectations of Council Members and stakeholders who have an interest in the decision to be made;
- provide guidance in the selection of community engagement techniques that will achieve the objectives of the engagement process
- demonstrate ways of providing feedback to communities on their input and to inform decision making processes; and
- outline the importance of implementing the outcomes of the decision making processes.

Importantly, the Handbook is based squarely on the principle that **effective planning needs to precede the selection of techniques for community engagement.** Getting the planning right first will ensure the selection of techniques is based on achieving the purpose of the engagement and meeting objectives set during the planning phases to effectively engage stakeholders and communities in appropriate ways to support the decision making process. Although many publications are available on engagement techniques, the key focus of this Handbook is on planning first to fully understand what is at stake before selecting techniques selected to support decision making.

As part of the 2012 update a section on how to use selected techniques was added to the Handbook along with case studies to demonstrate their practical application. Introductions to the use of *on-line engagement techniques*; *engaging Aboriginal communities* and *engaging people with disabilities* were also included in this section and a table of techniques adapted from the IAP2 Toolbox is provided as **Appendix 1**.

In adapting the model framework, Councils are encouraged to consider how best to integrate community engagement projects with other organisational systems such as, project and risk management, communication and evaluation programs. The diversity of such systems throughout Councils and the constant updates make any detailed descriptions in the Handbook impractical. However, we are always open to providing links to examples of systems that support community engagement that councils may want to share.

The Handbook will be a valuable tool for all those who have an interest in and responsibility for designing and implementing community engagement initiatives, including Council Members and staff from a range of disciplines - Planning and Development, Social Planning, Community Development, Library Services, Infrastructure and Traffic Management, Governance, Strategy and Policy, and Customer Service.

As Councils progressively take up the model framework at the local level, a longer-term outcome will be a shift towards consistency in approaches to community engagement across Local Government in South Australia. This consistency supports capacity building in community engagement in councils and communities.

The Centre For Excellence

Local Excellence – Councils Working Together for Communities

At the LGA's April 2011 General Meeting, the President announced a "Local Excellence – Councils Working Together for Communities" Program. One of the themes was Community Engagement. The purpose of this theme was to provide meaning to and a context for further research, discussion, decision making and reform regarding 'Community Engagement' as a focus of Local Government Excellence in South Australia.[1]

In exploring community engagement matters it is expected that the following questions will be considered as they apply to Local Government in South Australia:

- are communities adequately aware of the role of Local Government?
- do Councils need to invest more heavily in all forms of communication from signposting Council ovals, parks and recreation facilities to provision of information to media?
- do Councils place too high an expectation on communities coming to them to be consulted (websites, offices, meetings etc) rather than going to the community (community organisations and events, online panels, social media etc)?
- do Councils undertake enough liaison/outreach to schools and participation in civics education?
- do Councils do enough work to promote understanding of Local Government between elections?
- are Councils investing enough resources in communications to gain community support for writing Local Government into the Australian Constitution?
- how many Councils have used/adopted the principles and policies set out in the LGA Community Engagement Handbook and do they need more support?
- are public meetings still relevant as a consultation mechanism given the low support they often receive?
- are some Councils "sheepish" about complaints and do enough to treat feedback as the breakfast of champions"?
- do enough Councils understand the impact of a poor customer experience on Local Government's image?
- what place does social media and mobile technology have in customer interaction and communication with Councils now and into the future?
- are Councils responsive enough to media?
- do Councils explain the purpose of regulatory functions well?
- is there a stronger role for the LGA in promoting understanding of Local Government?

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1 Local Excellence – Councils Working Together for Communities. Work Program, September 2011

Planning for community engagement

What do we mean by "community engagement"?

The definition of "community engagement" used in the Handbook is as follows:

"Community engagement is about involving communities in decision making processes, which is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and sustainable decisions in government, the private sector and the community."[2]

Community engagement is increasingly acknowledged as a valuable process, not only for providing opportunities for community members to participate in decisions that affect them and at a level that meets their expectations, but also to strengthen and enhance the relationship between communities and local government by engaging communities at program and service levels. The first edition of the Handbook focused on engaging communities in providing input to support decisions being made by Elected Members. The practice of community engagement in South Australia has progressed in councils (not all and not consistently) to a stage where engaging communities is becoming an expected part of the relationship between councils and their communities. In this 5th edition, this progression is acknowledged and integrated into the Handbook.

Levels of engagement – Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate

This Handbook is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model introduced in the *"Community Engagement Showcase"* referred to earlier. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) outlines various levels of community engagement. They have been adapted for use in the Handbook as follows[3]:

Inform	One way communication providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened.
Consult	Two way communications designed to obtain public feedback about ideas on rationale, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.
Involve	Facilitating active participation by stakeholders designed to help identify issues and views from a diverse range of perspectives so that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered throughout a decision making process.
Collaborate	Working together in partnership to determine how to develop understanding of all issues and interests as stakeholders work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions to support the process of decision making.

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[2] Adapted from www.dpi.wa.gov.au/communityengagement/717.asp
[3] Refer http://www.iap2.org.au for more information.

It is to be noted that the IAP2 Spectrum includes "Empower" as a level of engagement (see page 3), whereby final decision making is placed in the hands of the public. Under the Local Government Act 1999, the only decision making power which is likely to be placed in the hands of the public is that of electing Council Members every 4 years. The Act empowers an elected Council in South Australia to make policy, strategic and budget decisions except where delegated to staff, a committee, or a subsidiary, but delegations for decision making cannot be made to the public.

However, the terms "empower" and "empowering communities" are often used by Councils and other governments when referring to community development and community capacity building initiatives. That is, "empower" more often sits at an operational or service level rather than at a decision making level, as many Councils engage with local communities in this way. The following definition of "empower" has been developed for the Handbook.

Empower	Providing opportunities and resources for communities to directly contribute to solutions by valuing local talents and skills and acknowledging their capacity to be decision makers in their own lives.

Government agencies, practitioners and much of the literature are increasingly replacing the term "community consultation" with "community engagement". Whilst "consultation" has been used as a general term to describe how Councils approach communities about decisions that affect them, the general use of "consultation" has sometimes created unrealistic expectations and confusion within communities about their level of influence. The intent of the "consultation" approach is quite often unclear and not well articulated.

As can be seen from the table above, "**engagement" does not replace the term "consultation"**, it **identifies consultation as only one of the levels of engagement,** along with *inform, involve and collaborate* as alternative levels of influence in decision making.

Please note:

▪ "Community engagement" will replace the words "public participation", except when direct reference is made to the IAP2 Spectrum; and
▪ "Elected Members" and "decision makers" will be used interchangeably.
▪ "Stakeholder" will be used to refer in general to community members
▪ "Key Stakeholders" will be used to refer to people who maybe directly involved or who may have direct influence on an engagement process.

IAP2 Spectrum of public participation[4]

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal: To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	**Public Participation Goal:** To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	**Public Participation Goal:** To work with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	**Public Participation Goal:** To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including development of alternatives and identification of preferred solution.	**Public Participation Goal:** To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed.	**Promise to the Public:** We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	**Promise to the Public:** We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	**Promise to the Public:** 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.	**Promise to the Public:** We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques ▪ Newsletters ▪ Fact Sheets ▪ Web sites ▪ Open Days	**Example techniques** ▪ Public comment ▪ Focus Groups ▪ Surveys	**Example techniques** ▪ Workshops ▪ Reference/Working/Steering Groups ▪ Deliberate polling	**Example techniques** ▪ Citizen Advisory Committees ▪ Consensus building ▪ Participatory decision-making	**Example techniques** ▪ Citizen's Juries ▪ Ballots ▪ Future Search

Throughout the process of community engagement, there is likely to be movement back and forth along the Spectrum as the plan is implemented and/or before Council makes a final decision.

A case for positioning the *inform* level across the Spectrum has been put forward by many practitioners. From a practical and logical perspective, effective engagement with stakeholders at all levels on the Spectrum requires a strategic flow of information.

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[4] IAP2 – refer website: http://www.iap2.org.au/spectrum.pdf

Phase One

Planning for community engagement

Steps to be covered in this section are: **Page**

Phase One Planning

Phase Two Strategy Development

Phase Three Implementatio --

Phase Four Feedback and Reporting

Phase Five Evaluation

Phase One – Planning for community engagement

Planning is the key to sustainable decision making**. A sustainable decision (as defined in the IAP2 model) requires consideration of four criteria: (1) technical feasibility; (2) economic feasibility; (3) environmental compatibility; and (4) social/public acceptability**[5]. Working within the local government environment may require consideration of additional criteria such as legislative parameters, risk management, governance and political agenda.

Essentially, communities contribute to the social and cultural components that help find the common ground within the criteria for sustainability. Planning for community engagement is the process that makes this possible and will mean the difference between:

- a process leading to a decision that meets the criteria and can be implemented successfully; and
- a decision that fails to measure up to the criteria and is at risk of not being implemented successfully.

The choice to engage communities in decision making processes depends on a number of factors which need to be considered in the planning process. These factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- Opportunities to facilitate understanding through information sharing.
- Local Government legislation. For Example, Section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999 (SA).
- Previous community engagement experiences.
- Democratic right of individuals to be involved in decisions affecting them and contribute to community building.
- The desirability of incorporating community values, interests and needs into decision making.
- Development of sustainable decisions and outcomes.

STEP 1 – Work with decision makers

Identifying who the decision makers are, what their role is, and when and how they will make decisions is central to effective governance. As previously discussed, the Elected Member body of Council holds the legislated responsibility for making final decisions. Therefore, it is important to clarify Elected Member's expectations and their role in community engagement, and to gain their commitment to the process as early as possible. The way this is achieved may depend to some extent on council protocols and the nature and political context of the decisions to be made (refer **Appendix 2** – Role of Council Members in Community Engagement Processes).

Strategies for working with Elected Members include:

- As a short term strategy provide a briefing for Elected Members on draft community engagement plans before proceeding with community engagement.
- A longer term strategy is to provide a series of information sessions for Elected Members to support them in developing understanding and confidence in the model engagement framework.

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[5] IAP2 Planning for Effective Public Participation, 2006

Other people who may have an impact on decisions at an operational level at various stages are staff, managers, technicians, consultants and key stakeholders. Their expectations and the roles they may play in the process will need to be clarified. Consider the following:

- Convening a project team, including a Community Engagement Co-ordinator to take responsibility for the community engagement process. This approach will help to facilitate a shared and collaborative understanding and approach across relevant disciplines and departments within council and support effective community engagement, communication and project management. It will also provide opportunities to develop and integrate internal community engagement practices throughout council's culture and prepare staff for external community engagement.
- Encourage staff who use a project management and/or risk assessment process to identify community engagement entry points in the processes they are already using. One clear entry point for project management staff is the *identification of stakeholders phase* in a project.
- Senior managers are the people who enable staff to do effective community engagement. Information sessions tailored to the needs of senior staff will help them to understand the planning process undertaken by staff.

Key points to getting it right - working with decision makers

✓ Clarify the roles of decision makers and when and how they will make decisions.
✓ Acknowledge the elected body of Council as the final decision maker.
✓ Identify who else may make operational decisions or recommendations to decisions makers throughout the community engagement process.
✓ Meet with Elected Members as early as possible to clarify their expectations and gain their commitment to the engagement process.
✓ Clarify the expectations of internal stakeholders and decision makers and key external stakeholders.
✓ Consider the appointment of a Community Engagement Co-ordinator for each project.
✓ Provide relevant levels of training and development in community engagement for decision makers, managers and staff.

Step 2 – clarify the purpose for engaging the community

Councils are required under Section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999 to consult the community on specific requirements. Where there is no legislative requirement, it is important to clarify what community members are being asked to consider or being asked to decide. Being *unclear* about what the community is being asked to consider and what they can influence in a decision making process is a common reason for tension between councils and communities and why some issues seem to remain unresolved over a long period of time. A critical part of the engagement process is to clarify with those involved in the planning process (Council Members, the project team and key stakeholders) what they think is the purpose of engaging the community and then write it down in a statement.

Case Study – Vehicle Access Adelaide City Council

The Adelaide City Council has been working on improving vibrancy in the CBD. Peel Street was designated as a space that could be modified to increase its vibrancy. Council wanted feedback from the community on vehicle access to the street.[6]

In the initial engagement stage the purpose statement was:

the purpose of the engagement is to gather feedback from the community on a preferred option out of the three proposed.

In the second stage of the engagement the purpose statement was:

The purpose of the engagement is to consult the community on the permanent closure of the road in compliance with Section 32 Road Traffic Act 1961 and Section 359 of the Local Government Act 1934.

Determining the purpose of engaging the community

If you ask a group of ten people involved in a decision making process, "What are we trying to decide on here; is there a role for the community in the decision making process; and if so, what is that role?" – chances are you will end up with a variety of answers. It is important therefore as part of scoping out the process, to explore these answers and clarify the decision to be made and the purpose of engaging the community through effective questioning and deliberative discussions.

The questioning has to start somewhere, and **an obvious place to start is with the decision makers** as discussed in Step One. Where possible, hold a briefing with them to gather information and gain a perspective on their perception of what is at stake and draft what you are hearing into a purpose statement for them to consider. (See the recommended sign-off requirement on the planning template).[1]

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[6] http://yoursay.adelaidecitycouncil.com/leigh-street-closure

An effective purpose statement:[7]

The drafting of a purpose statement is best approached as a collaborative task with council project staff.

Guiding points in the development of a purpose statement are:

- a clear statement that describes what the decision/purpose/problem/opportunity/issue/project/program or service is about and what the community needs to consider as part of the decision making process
- reflects the needs of decision makers and the community
- describes the possible role the community may play in the decision making process
- something that stakeholders (council/community and others) want to explore and resolve
- expresses the statement clearly in common language free of jargon
- a statement that the majority of stakeholders can live with
- the KISS principle – keep it simple and straightforward

Once the purpose of engaging the community is agreed on internally with Elected Members and relevant staff, it is advisable, if possible to meet with key external stakeholders to gain an understanding of their perspective on the purpose of the engagement. This will help to identify early on in the process the areas of commonality and/or differences between council and the community.

Everyone who perceives they have a stake in a decision process is a stakeholder; however there will be people who either through influence, interest or impact will be considered to be key stakeholders. Involving key stakeholders early on in a process increases the chances of a sustainable outcome (the identification of other stakeholders is covered in the next step).

Reviewing the Purpose Statement

Following discussions with internal and external stakeholders it may be relevant to refine the purpose statement to reflect the shared expectations of internal and external stakeholders (see the case study example below).

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[7] Adapted from Twyford, V, Beyond Public Meetings, *Connecting Community Engagement with Decision-Making,* 2006

Case Study - New or Old Bridge City of Onkaparinga

In the City of Onkaparinga a decision on the future of a bridge built by original settlers in an area was originally focused on retaining and repairing the old bridge; or building a new bridge. In the early stages of planning the engagement with the local community, council officers decided to door knocked key stakeholders, (i.e. people living in close proximity to the bridge) to gather information and assess expectations on the future of the bridge. What they discovered was the long history of a row of trees planted in memory of returned soldiers that would have to be removed if the decision was made to build a new bridge.

With this new information, the purpose statement was refined to acknowledge the value the local community placed on the trees. Making a discovery like this early on in the process can mean the difference between people tying themselves to a tree; or agreeing to the planting of a new row of trees with seeds germinated from the original trees; and the building of a new bridge that will sustain access for the community into the future.

Key points to getting it right - clarifying the decision to be made

✓ Be clear about the purpose of engaging the community and what they are being asked to consider as part of a decision making process.

✓ Meet with internal stakeholders (Council members and relevant staff) to clarify the purpose of the engagement and the decision to be made.

✓ Draft a purpose statement for review and endorsement of internal stakeholders

✓ Meet with key external stakeholders (where possible) to gather information and gain their perspective on the engagement process and the decision to be made.

✓ Redefine the purpose statement based on what is acceptable to the majority of stakeholders.

Step 3 – identify key stakeholders

A stakeholder is defined as someone who may be affected by or have a specific interest in a decision or issue under consideration.

There are various ways to identify stakeholders. Whatever approach is used, it is important to *develop one that is consistent and transparent* to ensure equitable inclusion of all potential stakeholders who reflect the demographics and values of the community. Not only will this ensure a credible process and equitable representation, but the approach will help to develop community trust in the engagement process.

One way of identifying stakeholders is to sort them into primary, secondary and tertiary categories (a method used in project management). If a project management process exists in your council and stakeholder identification is part of the process, this presents an integration point for your community engagement process. A general description of the three categories are provided below for guidance only – review and adapt them to your council requirements.

Primary stakeholders are those who have a **direct interest** in an outcome. Examples may include:

- Elected Members; and
- Key community members, groups, agencies or organisations, businesses, people who live or work in close proximity to a project or will be directly affected by a project or decision (this may include "absent owners" of leased/rented business or residential properties);
- Individual activists and community groups and government and non-government agencies who may have a significant influence on the outcome of an engagement (e.g. an agency with funding to contribute to a project).

It is recommended that contact be made as early as possible with primary stakeholders to develop effective working relationships and to find out from them who else may need to be included in the process.

Secondary stakeholders are those who have a **general interest** in a project or issue and may include:

- people who live and work in the broader Council area;
- business owners;
- council project staff;
- community groups in the Council area; and
- consultants involved in a project.

Tertiary stakeholders are those that **do not always fit neatly** into the primary or secondary stakeholder category depending on the nature of the community engagement. They may include:

- State and Federal Government authorities;
- Government agencies and organisations;
- non-government agencies and organisations;
- individual activists or activist groups
- tourists, and
- media.

The following is an alternative approach to the identification of stakeholders.

Stakeholders who are decision makers, namely:

- Council Members and, in particular relevant Ward Councillor/s.

Stakeholders who are influencers, such as:

- key community groups and leaders, experts, activists, media, consultants; and
- council staff working on the project and those who may make recommendations or have an impact on decision making.

Stakeholders who are the affected people, such as:

- People living in the community (residents and ratepayers), other interested individuals and groups such as shack owners, business people and service providers.

Stakeholders who perceive they have a stake hold, such as:

- Tourists, community activists, and state-wide special interest groups.

The list of potential stakeholder groups below is provided an example only. The list is not exhaustive but could be adjusted to suit specific Council requirements)

- Absent business and residential owners
- Community Groups
- Consultants
- Cultural Groups
- Council Members
- Council staff
- Developers
- Environmental Groups
- Government Organisations/agencies

- Industry
- Local Business owners
- Media
- Non-Government Organisations/agencies
- Residents
- Residents Action Groups
- State & Federal Government/Politicians
- Service Providers
- Sport & Recreation Groups

Appendix 3 is a stakeholder list template. **Appendix 4** is a Stakeholder and Community Identification Tool. **Appendix 9** is a planning template where there is a section for recording stakeholder's details.

"Hard to Reach" Stakeholders and potential barriers to accessing community engagement

The Victorian Local Governance Association undertook a collaborative study on this topic in 2005 and the publication "*Hard to Reach - Local Government, social profiling and civic infrastructure*" provides useful information and references. The final report on this study was delivered in 2008[8].

The following list, provides a snapshot of potential barriers to consider in identifying ways to maximising opportunities for access to community engagement processes. **Appendix 5** is a Stakeholder and Community Assessment Tool.

- Age (children/youth/middle age/seniors)
- Apathy – Why is it relevant to me?
- Childcare and elder care responsibilities
- Community bullying
- Gender roles – for example, women as primary carers, single parents
- Cultural norms or religious customs
- Use of technical jargon
- Language and cultural barriers
- Ineffective communication between Council Members / staff and community members
- Drug and / or alcohol dependency
- Access to and capability to work with IT

- Industry and business
- Low income or unemployment
- Low literacy levels
- Mental and other health issues
- Physical disability or mobility and access difficulties
- Prior experiences of not being listened
- Shift work or seasonal events
- Access to transport
- Indigenous people and/or newly arrived refugees who may have experiences of disadvantage or isolation.
- Homelessness or transient population

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[8] Social inclusion of the hard to reach: community consultation and the hard to reach: local government, social profiling and civic infrastructure: final report - http://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/swin:9858

Key points to getting it right – identifying stakeholders
✓ Develop a consistent method for the identification of stakeholders to ensure inclusive, credible and equitable representation in community engagement processes.
✓ Develop a list of potential stakeholders.
✓ Meet with key stakeholders as early as possible in the process and work with them to develop a comprehensive stakeholder list.
✓ Develop effective working relationships with stakeholders.
✓ Consider ways to identify potential "hard to reach" stakeholders and barriers to accessing community engagement processes, and maximise opportunities to engaging those stakeholders.

Step 4 - consider legislative requirements

The *Local Government Act 1999* Section 50 (1) requires that a Council must prepare and adopt a public consultation policy www.parliament.sa.gov.au. Section 50 (2) states:

- the policy must set out steps that the Council will follow in cases where this Act requires that it must follow its public consultation policy (see **Appendices 6 and 7**); and
- may set out steps the Council will follow in other cases involving non-legislated Council decision making.

Section 50 describes the minimum steps that must be taken for public consultation where required, which are consistent with the techniques used at the **consult** level of community engagement as described on the IAP2 Spectrum.

The LGA Public Consultation Discussion Paper March 2007 referred to Councils being able to "include additional requirements as it thinks appropriate". However while Councils are able to apply broader engagement activities, in doing so, they should take into consideration the need to comply with the specific consultation requirements of the Act and be clear about the steps taken to achieve compliance.

Another significant piece of legislation, the Development Act 1993 www.parliament.sa.gov.au requires Councils to consult members of the community on Category 2 and 3 Development Applications.

In April 2016 the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act was passed in the SA Parliament[9]. The changes that are most relevant to local government are the development of a State Community Engagement Charter as part of an integrated planning system and the diminishing role of local government in major planning decisions.

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[9] http://communityalliancesa.org.au/planning-reform/

Case Study – Annual Business Plan City of Port Lincoln

In the City of Port Lincoln staff tried a variety of ways to engage with the community on their Draft Annual Business Plan (ABP) this year (2016). They tried a Community Street stall event where they had a table and Council banners and a couple of Elected Members and Senior Management Staff at tables with hardcopies of the online survey and 4 ipads. They encouraged the community walking by to complete the online survey via ipads. 17 people complete the online survey at the street stall, and quite a number of people took a hardcopy of the survey to complete and return.

They also tried a Facebook Poll through the Port Lincoln Times (local newspaper), but this didn't prove very successful. This was another first time in trying another method to engage with the community.

However raising awareness of the consultation period on the Draft ABP through a 30 second TV advert on the local TV, which proved to be quite effective. This was the first year of promoting the Draft ABP on TV and we would use this media again for promoting various consultations.

Key points to getting it right - consider legislative requirements

- ✓ Comply with the legislative requirements to consult and follow the prescribed steps as set out in Section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999, Councils Public Consultation Policy, and the Development Act 1993.
- ✓ In situations where there are no legislative requirements, engage communities in decision making at an appropriate level of community engagement.
- ✓ Be clear about the distinction between the specific steps taken to meet the consultation requirements of the Local Government Act 1999 or the Development Act 1993, as opposed to any additional non-legislated steps taken to engage more broadly.

Step 5 - select a level of community engagement

When selecting a level of community engagement the expectations of internal and external stakeholders may differ about how much influence the community will have in a decision making process. It is important to be aware of and understand the source and nature of these expectations about the level of influence to inform your selection of the level of engagement.

Consideration will need to be given to the following:
- Background information, including Council Reports, Briefing Papers, Project Scopes and Reviews.
- Level of interest from community as perceived by internal stakeholders (Council Members and staff).
- Level of interest being shown by the community.
- Underlying values and views of internal and external stakeholders.
- Degree of complexity – is there a single issue or multiple issues and how are they interrelated?
- Degree of potential community impact and/or outrage – what is the community perception of the risk presented by the issue/s?
- Degree of political sensitivity – is there potential for individuals/groups/Elected Members to use the situation to make political gains?
- Availability of human, material and financial resources.
- Media interest.

Some of the information required to determine expectations will be found in documentation such as Council Reports or survey results; and on social media sites such as council "Have Your Say" pages; or FaceBook or Twitter. Other sources of information about expectations may be gathered through talking and listening to stakeholders. As you talk to people bear in mind the decisions people make and the way they behave are driven by their values. The values people hold are the internal standards by which they judge events and make decisions about what is good, bad, right, wrong, fair, or unfair[10]. Values and aspirations determine the level of interest and the positions people take on an issue, which in turn, drives their expectations.

It may not always be possible to meet face to face with all stakeholders. This may be determined to a larger extent by available resources, such as time, skills, budget, communication preferences (including face-to-face and online), and a Council's approach to community engagement.

Where possible talk to key stakeholders early on in the process to gain an understanding of their expectations and to develop collaborative relationships.

Using the IAP2 Spectrum as a guide in the selection of a level of engagement is one methodology which appeals to community development staff.

An alternative methodology is the use of the Community Engagement Matrix which appeals to planning and infrastructure staff.

IAP2 Spectrum *(as a selection methodology)*

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[10] IAP2 Planning for Effective Public Participation, 2006

Refer to the extract from the IAP2 Spectrum[11] below to review the goals and promises for each level of engagement (participation). Take the time (where possible) to work through the Spectrum with a project team, decision makers, and key external stakeholders to determine what level of engagement they expect. If the decision makers select *consult* as their preferred level of engagement and key stakeholders select *involve*, it may be possible to negotiate the levels of engagement (*see the following case study example*). It is always better to under promise on the engagement levels and over deliver on the engagement promise.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal/Level: To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	**Public Participation Goal/Level:** To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	**Public Participation Goal/Level:** To work with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	**Public Participation Goal/Level:** To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including development of alternatives and identification of preferred solution	**Public Participation Goal/Level:** To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to community We will keep you informed.	**Promise to community** We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	**Promise to community** We will include you in our activities to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	**Promise to community** 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.	**Promise to community** We will implement what you decide.

Case Study – Entry Statement City of Onkaparinga

In a small regional town in SA the local Council wanted to *consult* the community on an entry statement for the town because the growth in population was increasing traffic to the area. Visitors to the area complained about missing the entry to the town. The community on the other hand were interested in more than the entry statement. They wanted to be able to tell Council of their concerns about the impact the population growth was having on the local infrastructure and to share their ideas for resolving some of the emerging issues.

The council staff recommended engaging the community at the *involve* which included the establishment of a Community Reference Group that was facilitated by the local school principle. The group worked with council to address the emerging issues and then went on to build community relations among the long-term and new residents.

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[11] IAP2 – refer website: http://www.iap2.org.au/spectrum.pdf

Levels of engagement

A description of each of the levels of participation is provided in this section to demonstrate the differences between them; and case studies are provided to demonstrate the use of each level.

Inform

Information provision is a one-way communication of information to the public. It covers both passive access to information by people via a range of formats such as the phone, publications and websites, and more active measures by government to disseminate information through education and awareness activities that may gain a response from members of the community. It is the active response to information that qualifies "inform" as a level of engagement because it can lead to participation from stakeholders through wanting more information.

Case Study from the Town of Gawler

In this case study example, providing information about an emergency situation such as a flood damaged road in a local district that needs immediate action to ensure the safety of people in a community, is only one part of working at the "inform" level. Providing updates on the situation and contact details to enable people to gain further information may actively engage them at this level and lead to participation from the public that benefits everyone. For example, people may phone their neighbours, knock on their doors, text them or send them an email to check they know about an emergency situation they have been informed of by council.

The Pinery Fire Recovery Newsletters published by the Town of Gawler are a great example of engaging the community at the inform level

http://www.gawler.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=641&c=48446

Effective information strategies require information that:

- is accurate, easy to access and easy to understand
- is relevant and interesting to the intended audience
- is delivered through appropriate channels (face-to-face, hardcopy and online)
- is tailored where necessary in language, style and content, and
- directs people to where they can access further information if required.

The effectiveness of government information sharing and information sharing processes should be evaluated with opportunities for the public to provide feedback on the provision of information.

Consult

Consultation is a two-way interaction in which local government seeks and receives the views of members of communities about decisions on policies, programs, services or projects that affect them directly or in which they may have a significant interest.

Consultation can occur at various points in the process of planning or developing policies, programs services and projects. The feedback can be used to help frame an issue, identify or assess options and to evaluate what is already in place. Consultation can involve issues that are specific or quite general.

Case Study from the City of Burnside
The requirement in the LG Act 1999 to consult communities on Annual Business Plans has proved to be a challenge for many councils. The City of Burnside consulted their community at a number of points throughout the development of their Annual Business Plan and Budget 2016. They started off the consultation process by reviewing data from their Annual Community Survey results. They used this data to prepare a draft plan that underwent consultation with council staff and Elected Members. They again consulted the community through an on-line survey and a series of three community discussion forums on the draft Annual Business Plan and Budget. The forums were based around specific questions that council was looking for answers to from the community and Q&A sessions to ensure people got to ask about what was specific and important to them.   http://engage.burnside.sa.gov.au/201617-draft-business-plan-and-budget?preview=true

Critical elements of effective consultation include a shared understanding of how community input will inform policy or decision-making processes and timely feedback to participants on how their input contributed to the final outcome. Council may not be able to act on community desires or demands, however they can acknowledge them and provide well considered responses, which are generally respected by the community.

Involve

Involvement recognises and acknowledges a role for the public in proposing and/or shaping process, policy dialogue, program and service options. Participation is achieved through a range of deliberative techniques such as discussion forums, focus groups, workshops and reference groups. Such processes assist staff to engage people in active involvement and/or co-production with government providing direction and support for the process.

The City of Marion wanted to increase awareness of coastal issues, so they held workshops to engage the community and encourage their active involvement. The workshops recognised that while council values and is committed to the coast, it is not solely responsible for it. They support collaboration between government and council partners, as well as with community and between community groups.

This case study is an example of council engaging at the involve level while they build understanding and relationships while aiming towards collaboration on the implementation of project along the coast. https://www.marion.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=560&c=8427

Deliberative processes often take more time and resources as participants need to build their awareness and knowledge about the issues and each other in order to contribute effectively.

Collaborate

Collaboration enables people to raise their own issues with government and can also encourage or enable participants to partner with decision makers and take responsibility for their contribution to solutions. The partnering and sharing of the power, roles, responsibilities for the engagement process is what distinguishes the engagement level of collaboration from involvement. Engagement at the *involve* level is driven by government (with government in the power position), whereas engagement at the *collaborate* level is driven by local government and the community (shared power).

Case Study from the City of Salisbury

The Northern Collaborative Project (NCP) is one of the state-wide Commonwealth CHSP Collaborative Projects Program funded for sector support and development in South Australia. The Northern Collaborative Project works with stakeholders across the Port Adelaide Enfield (central), Tea Tree Gully, Salisbury and Playford local government regions.

The NCP aims to build the capacity of the community aged care sector to enhance outcomes for older people and their carers through:

- Developing and sustaining regional networks and partnerships
- Facilitating the identification of regional issues and resources
- Developing collaborative responses to address regional issues
- Ensuring the participation and engagement of older people in regional discussions and initiatives.

The work of the NCP is inclusive of all regional stakeholders, with the project's key activities and initiatives being driven by stakeholder input. The NCP is managed through an Executive Steering Group and provides for broad engagement through bi-monthly Northern Collaborative Network Forums and a range of Work Group meetings.
http://www.salisbury.sa.gov.au/Live/Community/Aged_Services/Northern_Collaborative_Project

Capacity to collaborate is not inherent in communities and Councils. It requires long-term development in most cases.

Empower

Empowerment provides opportunities and resources for communities to be part of solutions by valuing local knowledge, talents, skills and acknowledging the capacity of community members to be decision-makers in their own lives. Engaging at the empower level in a local government settings requires careful consideration to ensure expectations remain realistic and achievable. It may be unrealistic to set up community expectations about empowerment in decision making. However, opportunities to empower communities to make decisions present themselves within the decision making process such as in the next example.

| **Case Studies from the Port Pirie Regional Council and the City of Port Lincoln** |
|---|
| Councils who provide funds to assist community events are an example of engagement at the *empower* level. The Port Pirie Regional Council's Community Assistance Program is one example https://www.pirie.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=647#.V243_KL4GO0

 The City of Port Lincoln encourages community empowerment and sustainable practice through its Community Funding Assistance https://www.portlincoln.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=676 |

Working with communities on issues they have a level of expertise in allows staff to set realistic expectations throughout the process and support communities to move towards independence and sustainability. This approach decreases demands on council's resources.

Community Engagement Matrix

The Community Engagement Matrix is a tool designed to provide an alternative methodology for the selection of a level of engagement. However, it must be noted that using the Matrix is a technical approach and consideration must be given to the human elements as part of the engagement selection process when using this tool, such as:

- background information, including Council Reports, Briefing Papers, Project Scopes and Reviews;
- community engagement history of the organisation and community
- individual, community, organisational, and cultural values
- internal and external expectations about the level of engagement; and
- human, material and financial resources available.

Community Engagement Matrix
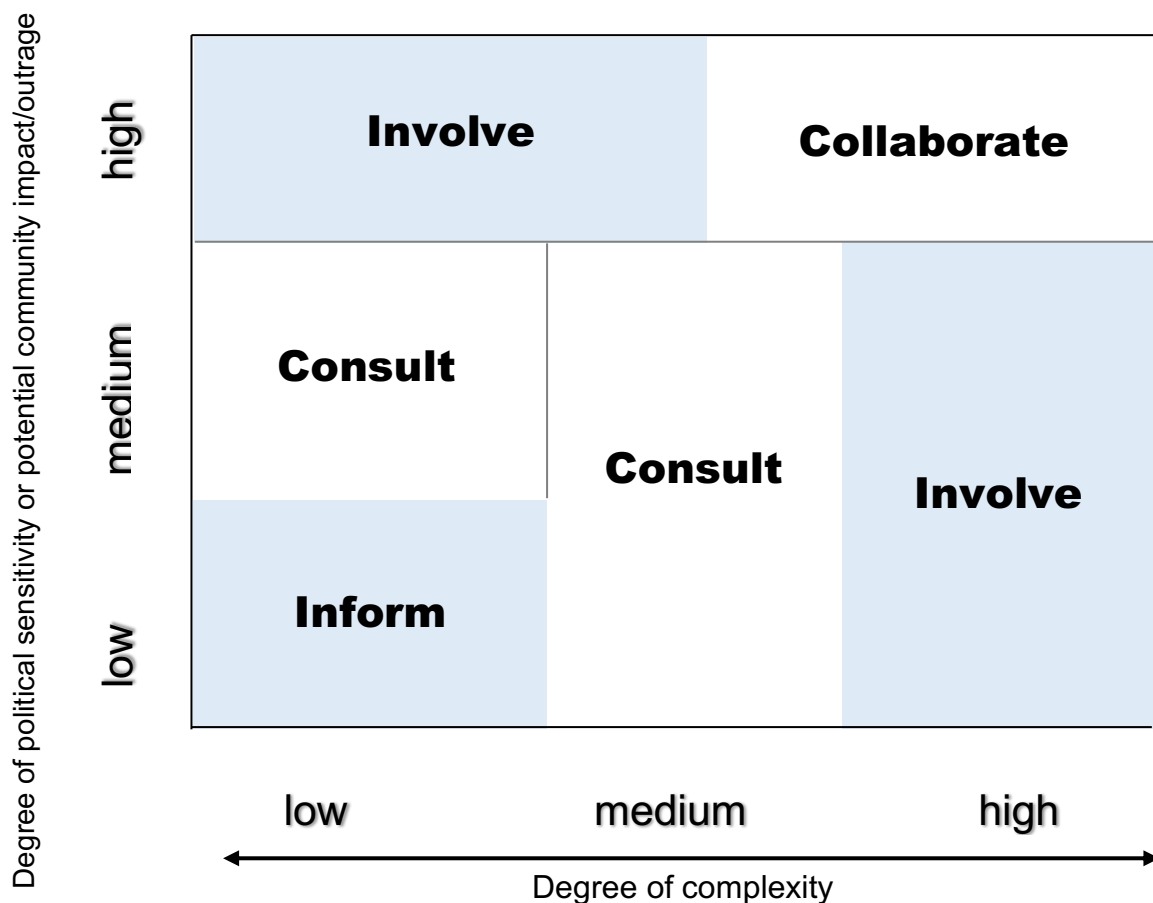
Source: Adapted from IAP2 and the City of Onkaparinga Community Engagement Matrix, 2005[12]

The horizontal axis on the Matrix relates to "*degree of complexity.* The vertical axis relates to *"potential community impact/outrage and political sensitivity"*. Measures of "*low*", "*medium*" and "*high*" are set out to provide further definition.

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[12] IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, City of Onkaparinga Community Engagement Handbook 2006

Degree of complexity

- there is one clear issue and/or problem that needs to be addressed (low); or
- there are more than one or two issues and/or problems that need be resolved (medium); or
- there are multiple issues and/or problems and it is unclear how to resolve them (high).

Degree of potential community impact and/or outrage

- the project will have little effect on communities and they will hardly notice any changes (low); or
- the project will fix a problem that will benefit communities and the change will cause minor inconvenience (medium); or
- the project will create a change that will have an impact on communities and the living environment, and the degree of impact/outrage and acceptance will vary (high).

Degree of political sensitivity

- the project has acceptance throughout communities (low); or
- there are groups in communities who may see potential in raising the profile of a project to gain attention for their cause (medium); or
- community expectations about the project are different to those of the decision makers and there is high potential for individuals and groups to use the uncertainty to gain attention (high).

A Matrix Score sheet is included below. It is to be noted that not all issues will be neatly ticked in one of the boxes and that other specific situations may arise during the community engagement process.

Matrix score sheet			
Assessment (tick the boxes ✓)	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
Degree of complexity ▪ Development of residential and business premises is dealt with through prescribed legislative process ▪ The range of issues are unclear, but they can be identified through research and discussion with stakeholders ▪ Council is committed to a community engagement process			
Degree of potential community impact/outrage ▪ There is realisation in sections of the community that the area will not survive in the long term without economic development ▪ There are groups in the community who want to maintain the area as it is ▪ The decision statement provided and supported by Council indicates the community will be directly involved in determining the preferred outcome			
Degree of political sensitivity ▪ The project has the support of the Ward Councillors ▪ Council is supporting community engagement to determine what the majority of stakeholders want for the area			
Total			

Take the scores from the total number of ticks in each column and follow the information below to begin to determine the level of community engagement.

✓ If the total score is three ticks in the "low" column, the "inform" level should be selected.

✓ If the total score is three ticks in the "medium" column, the "consult" level should be selected.

✓ If the total score is three ticks in the "high" column, the involve or collaborate level should be considered.

✓ If the total score in the "low" column is one tick and the score is two ticks in the "medium" or "high" column, the highest scoring column would indicate that "consult" should be selected - the leaning should be towards the highest number of ticks scored.

✓ If the total score in the "medium" column is two ticks and the score is one tick in the "high" column, the highest scoring column would indicate that "consult" should be selected as the main level with consideration for the "involve" level to address the variety of community concerns.

✓ If the total score in the "high" column is two ticks and the score is one tick in the "medium" column, the highest scoring column would indicate that "involve" should be selected.

✓ If there was a tick scored in each of the "low", "medium" and "high" columns, it would indicate that "involve" or "collaborate" should be considered to cover the varying degrees of sensitivity and impact/outrage.

✓ To decide between "involve" and "collaborate", revisit the degree of complexity - the more complex the issues and problems, the more you should consider the level of "collaborate". However, you will need to bear in mind that, in particular, for collaboration to be possible and effective, working relationships between stakeholders need to be established and maintained[13].

As indicated previously, consideration will need to be given to the expectations of internal and external stakeholders about the level of community engagement. Ideally, completing the Matrix exercise is a task for the project team, Council Members, and key external stakeholders collectively to gauge the level of community engagement expected. If the decision makers select *consult* as the method of community engagement and staff and key stakeholders select *involve*, it may be possible to negotiate the level of community engagement as indicated previously.

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[13] London, S, Collaboration and Community, 2005

Key points to getting it right - selecting a level of community engagement
✓ Selection of a level of community engagement may be driven by the expectations of internal and external stakeholders.
✓ Values determine our level of interest and the positions we take on an issue, which in turn, drive expectations.
✓ Consider a range of ways to determine the selection of the level of community engagement.
✓ Refer to the IAP2 Spectrum to review the goals and promises for each level of community engagement (participation).
✓ Use the IAP2 Spectrum and the Matrix as appropriate to your organisational needs.
✓ Negotiate the level of community engagement to suit the majority of stakeholders.
✓ Under promise on the community engagement goal and over deliver on the community engagement promise.

Step 6 – set up and maintain a community engagement record

It is important to maintain a record of documents used and produced throughout the community engagement process such as the following:

- Relevant Council Reports
- Briefing papers
- Project briefs and proposal
- Project team meeting notes
- Media releases
-
-
-
-

- Communication materials (hardcopy & online)
- Public participation registrations
- Survey feedback and responses
- Project plans and drawings
- Feedback and Outcome reports
-
-
-
-

(*add others*)

Staff change roles, decision makers may request changes to plans, and interest among community members may alter as the community engagement progresses. The benefits of good record keeping include:

- easy access to information for project teams and decision makers;
- project continuity following staff changes due to resignations or leave;
- evidence of the process; and
- good time management as a result of effective document retrieval.

The management of records and documents will depend on the internal management systems in place. Whether systems are electronic or manual, a file name and reference number is required or if applicable, reference to a project file. In summary, good record keeping is necessary to ensure:

- verification with accurate information, such as stakeholder contacts and Council updates;
- evidence of the process in the event of challenges from stakeholders;
- documentation for use in evaluation of the community engagement process
- compliance under the State Records Act 1997; and
- prompt responses to requests for review of a Council decision (Council grievance procedure), Freedom of Information Inquiries (FOI), and Ombudsman investigations.

Key points to getting it right – maintain community engagement records
✓ Develop a generic list of documents that need to be set up and maintained during all community engagement processes. Add additional documents as required for specific community engagements.
✓ Set up a file name for each community engagement or reference to a project file.
✓ Effective records management will result in efficient use of staff time through administrative processes, and support accountable and transparent processes.

Step 7 - establish evaluation measures

This Handbook provides basic measurements for evaluating the effectiveness of the community engagement process. Specific references on the development of a comprehensive community engagement evaluation methodology are as follows.

- Engaging Queenslanders: Evaluating community engagement[14]
- Book 2: The Engagement Planning Work Book, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment[15] (pg. 90 Table B.4).

The methodology selected to evaluate community engagement will depend on programs already established within Councils. It will need to include quantitative and qualitative measures and can be divided into two key areas of "process" and "outcome", which are continually identified, assessed against community engagement objectives and actioned through a feedback loop.

Quantitative methods are used to collect and measure numbers and statistics, such as the number of surveys or questionnaires distributed and returned. The numbers are collated, summarised and analysed as data. The data can be used to cross reference against other statistics to provide an accurate snapshot of a situation for use in decision making.

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[14] Engaging Queenslanders: *Evaluating community engagement,* www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au
[15] Book 2: *The Engagement Planning Work Book*, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment[15]
http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/105824/Book_2_-_The_Engagement_Planning_Workbook.pdf

- For example *(1),* demographic data can be used to cross check the statistical significance of the number of responses from specific age groups. Conclusions drawn from this information may indicate (for example) that the methods used to distribute a survey are not suited to young people. A process evaluation question to ask in this situation would be, "What needs to be done to gather information from young people?"

Qualitative methods are used to collect descriptions provided through the use of language, such as, comments provided in writing, over the phone or face to face in meetings. The answers provided are interpreted and conclusions are drawn.

- For example *(2),* a comment received indicates a stakeholder group do not feel enough information has been provided on the type of economic development that might be intended for an area. How this comment is interpreted is important. If it is taken to mean "What is intended for the area?" then providing information may lead to a community perception that economic development for the area is a foregone conclusion.

    However, if the comment is interpreted as "What is possible for the area?", the response may be to ask the group for further comment on what they think is possible, providing a very different outcome. The **outcome evaluation** would indicate that the second interpretation of the comment would be more likely to keep the process open and engaging.

The value in combining qualitative and quantitative evaluation measures is that the quantitative data provides a clear picture of the frequency and rarity of selections. However the qualitative data provides the information that gives meaning to the selections and provides direction for further investigation or clarifies trends or differences in the data.

The maximum value in the data gathered from process and outcome evaluation is achieved through a feedback loop.

- In response to their findings from the **process evaluation** example *(1)* mentioned above, text messaging is introduced as a technique to encourage increased participation by young people in community engagement initiatives.
- As a result of asking the stakeholder group in the **outcome evaluation** example *(2)* mentioned above, what type of economic development they think might be possible for the area, the group may agreed to meet with community engagement staff and openly share their views and aspirations.

If evaluation measures are set throughout the process, areas for improvement and emerging problems will be identified early and the probability of a sustainable decision being achieved will be increased.

Evaluation measures for Phase Two for example might be as follows:

- How do we know if the community engagement plan has been designed to deliver a sustainable outcome?
- How do we know if the plan is effective in dealing with stakeholder expectations?
- What can we learn from the process that needs to be dealt with before proceeding?

Refer to the example set out in the table below. An evaluation template is included as **Appendix 8.**

Community Engagement Evaluation – Phase One (example)

Criteria	Indicators	Process	Outcome	Recommendation
How do we know if the engagement plan has been designed to deliver a sustainable outcome?	The decision statement takes into account technical, economic, environmental issues and social stability	Council revised the decision statement to improve its public acceptability	Stakeholders are developing trust in the process because their views and concerns are being acknowledged	Promote the decision statement and the engagement process to stakeholders Set up a hotline for enquiries
How do we know if the plan is effective in dealing with stakeholder expectations?	The level/s of engagement are acceptable to a majority of stakeholders Inclusive stakeholder representation as cross referenced through demographic data	The levels of engagement are negotiated to meet the needs of Council and the community through early engagement with stakeholders	Council and a broad cross section of the community starting to work together effectively and gaining experience in effective community engagement	Council to continue to engage in activities to develop working relationships with stakeholders
What can we learn from the process that needs to be dealt with before proceeding?	The process evaluation measures identify emerging issues	The information on the emerging issues is fed back to the community engagement project team to develop appropriate responses	The project team meet with stakeholders to gather information to ensure they understand the full extent of the issues	Measure the engagement process throughout each phase and feedback issues to engagement project team for action

Key points to getting it right – establishing evaluation measures
✓ Develop evaluation measures that suit your organisational needs and resources.
✓ Gather quantitative and qualitative data to ensure comprehensive evaluation.
✓ Consider how to evaluate the "process" against set objectives and use the information gathered to improve "outcomes".
✓ Establish a feedback loop to gain maximum benefit from the evaluation process.
✓ Set up a template to simply, clearly, and accurately record evaluation measures.

Phase Two

Developing a community engagement plan

Steps to be covered in this section are: **Page**

Phase One
Planning

Phase Two
Strategy
Development

Phase Three
Implementation

Phase Four
Feedback and
Reporting

Phase Five
Evaluation

Phase two – developing a community engagement plan

A community engagement plan brings together all the elements of planning for community engagement and presents them in a format that provides a road map for Council Members, the project team, and stakeholders. This section of the Handbook outlines the format for the plan, and a template to record it is included as **Appendix 9**.

Step 1 - gather and record background information

It is useful to provide background information which describes the key events and provides a clear outline as to the reason for community engagement. Include the history, current status and information on what needs to happen to address the decision to be made. Remember to seek out and value local community and organisational knowledge when gathering background information. Sources of background information may include the following.

- Council reports
- Briefing papers
- Council record systems
- Internal and external reviews
- ▪
- ▪
- ▪

- Council members
- Council staff with some involvement in the topic
- Community groups and individuals
- Stakeholders
- ▪
- ▪
- ▪

(*add others*)

Step 2 - define community engagement objectives

The importance of being clear about the purpose of the engagement and the decision to be made has already been discussed. The way to achieve desired outcomes for the engagement is to set clear objectives which guide the process through to completion. An objective needs to be:

- **S**pecific and able to describe an action;
- **M**easurable;
- **A**chievable and accessible;
- **R**ealistic, recorded and referred to during the process; and
- **T**ime bound.

Overall "project objectives" need to be set to determine the main outcomes to be achieved in effective project management such as realistic timeframes and budget management. When determining the role of the community in a project, objectives need to be set for the level of community engagement selected and evaluated to ensure they are being met.

Examples of Objective at Levels on the Spectrum of Engagement

> **Engagement objective at the *inform* level**
>
> - To inform the general community by [date] about councils plans to engage the community on XXXX
>
> **Engagement objective at the *consult* level**
>
> - To conduct a workshop with stakeholders on [date] to review all available data and gather feedback on perceived gaps in the information by [date]
>
> **Engagement objective at the *involve* level**
>
> - To work with a Reference Group from [date] to [date] made up from a cross section of the community to select criteria to assess information that will be used to propose options for ....
>
> **Engagement objective at the *collaborate* level**
>
> - To meet with key stakeholders by [date] to determine roles and responsibilities for engagement with at least 75% of community members in the City of ...... before [date]
>
> **Engagement objective at the *empower* level**
>
> - To provide community members with the information and resources they request by [date] for their engagement activities.

Step 3 - Establish Community Engagement Parameters

Parameters provide a clear description of the limitations, possibilities and the negotiables and non-negotiables for an engagement process. The setting of parameters is often necessary to provide council with a starting point or baseline that supports realistic expectations. All resources have limitations and therefore effective allocation is dependent upon the technical, budgetary and human resources available, and/or legislative requirements. The key parameters to consider are as follows:

Legislative

- In Section 50 (2) (a) of the Local Government Act 1999 (SA) the policy must set out steps (see **Appendix 4**) that Council will follow in cases where the Act requires it must follow its public consultation policy, and (b) may set out steps that Council will follow in non-legislated situations involving Council decision making.
- The Development Act 1993 (SA) requires Councils to consult members of the community on Category 2 and 3 Development Applications.
- The Development Act 1993 (SA) – Community Engagement Charter

Geographic boundaries

- Boundaries will indicate the areas selected to include in the community engagement process.
- How the selection is made will depend on a number of factors such as, natural boundaries (a river), or constructed boundaries (main roads), or council ward boundaries.
- Economies of scale and use of resources indicate that a line must be drawn somewhere, so choices about the extent of the geographic area and how many residents and ratepayers to include in an community engagement process will need to be made at some point.
- The choice of boundaries should be based on specific criteria to demonstrate a considered approach to stakeholders.

Budget

- Funds available for a process will drive what can be expected and provided.
- It is unfair and unwise to raise the expectations of stakeholders by asking them what they want and then telling them they cannot have it because of a shortage of funds.
- The cost of community engagement increases as the level of participation moves along to the right of the Spectrum.
- It is important to know what funds are available for community engagement to avoid having to withdraw from a process due to lack of funds.
- Part of the commitment to community engagement includes the provision of adequate financial and human resources.
- Be clear about the community engagement process involving contributions from other sources, such as State or Federal agencies, grants, or private funding, where relevant.

Timelines
- Communities need enough time to participate in a community engagement process.
- Section 50 (2) (a) of the Local Government Act 1999 and Section 25 and 26 of the Development Act 1993 are specific about timeframes for legislated consultations.
- The scheduling of Council Reports may place restrictions on community engagement timeframes, but it is important to negotiate realistic timeframes wherever feasible to maintain the integrity and equity of the process.
- Meeting timeframes of community and voluntary organisations deserve similar consideration as those given to Council timeframes when setting community engagement deadlines.

Non-Negotiable

- Due to a range of conditions such as legislative requirements, public safety and technical issues, it is likely there will be some decisions that Councils will need to make without the public.
- These decisions need to be presented to the public as non-negotiable with clear explanations of why they are non-negotiable.

Negotiable

- Where Councils identify gaps in the information needed to make a sustainable decision or where there are a range of possible options for a sustainable outcome it is useful to clarify what the negotiables are such as, the number and location of community meetings; the layout of a new community centre; or determining the membership of a Community Reference Group.

Step 4 - identify key issues, interests and responses

Issues and levels of interest will emerge as work with stakeholders' progresses throughout the planning process. It is important to identify these matters as early as possible in the process and develop response strategies. Key aspects to consider are:

- Needs, interests, issues and impacts - some of these may be clearly evident, however it is important to speak directly to key stakeholder to become aware of any unknown issues or other agendas.
- Likely positions – each stakeholder is likely to have a slightly different perspective and will take up their own position of interest on the problem or issue based on their beliefs, values and assumptions. It is useful to acknowledge these positions and discuss them openly to help everyone gain a broader perspective.
- Response strategies – understanding positions of interest will guide responses and assist with facilitation of an inclusive process to allow people to discover common ground.

## Examples of issues, interests and response examples

- Council Members, the project team, and key stakeholders may indicate they all have very different expectations about who will provide the sources of information required to allow them to effectively explore issues. You can respond by organising a facilitated meeting to establish acceptable sources of information and gain agreement on any specific action that needs to be taken.
- Media releases can create debate among members of the community and raise issues based on their values. *"These values shape the way they perceive the problem or opportunity and possible solutions or actions"*[16]. You can respond by identifying values in common between the decision makers and stakeholders through active listening and use this as a common base from which to develop a shared direction.
- Preliminary surveys or project updates or newsletters gather information on the level of interest in a project. You can respond by inviting people who show an interest in joining a project mailing list or online community panel, and list the responses to their issues and concerns in the project newsletter/panel update.

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[16] IAP2, Planning for Effective Public Participation, 2006

Step 5 - select suitable techniques for community engagement

Selecting the right technique to engage the community is an essential step for a successful engagement. **A community engagement technique is what is used to facilitate engagement or interaction with the community**, such as a newsletter, workshop, questionnaire, on-line tool or a public forum.

As stated at the outset, getting the technique right relies on understanding what is at stake rather than starting with the selection of a community engagement technique, such as deciding to convene a public meeting. When the public meeting does not turn out quite as expected, we may be left wondering why the community reacted in a negative way. The way to avoid this is to develop a plan that has a clear purpose and objectives to be achieved; and then select the techniques that will enable those objectives to be achieved (see the flow of the process below)
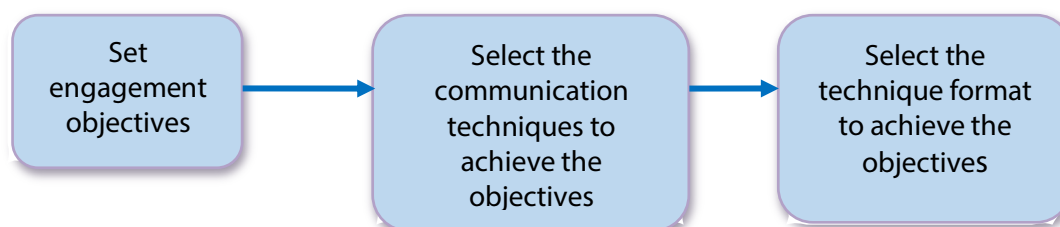
Before selecting a community engagement technique it is important to reflect on the planning to date and consider a number of factors including the following.

- Being clear about the community engagement objectives to be achieved.
- What techniques are most suited to the level of community engagement already selected?
- What resources are available to implement a technique such as an on-line forums or a participatory budgeting process.
- What will maximise participation in the community engagement process?
- What will be the most effective ways to reach out to different groups of stakeholders?
- What will be most suited to the three key areas that techniques can be divided into, namely, *information sharing, collecting information, and bringing people together*?[17] Examples are provided in the table below.

Information Sharing	Collecting Information	Bringing People Together
- Newsletter - Web site	- Survey - Phone poll	- Workshop - Field Trips

The following table is an extract from the IAP2 Spectrum which indicates examples of techniques suited to *each level* of community engagement.

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
▪ Fact Sheets ▪ Web sites ▪ Open Days	▪ Public comment ▪ Focus Groups ▪ Surveys	▪ Workshop ▪ Field Trips ▪ Deliberate polling	▪ Advisory Committees ▪ Citizen Juries ▪ Deliberative Dialogue

Examples of techniques are set out in a table in **Appendix 1** to illustrate what techniques work most effectively with the levels of *inform, consult, involve* and *collaborate* on the Spectrum.

The table also indicates what you can expect to work well and what to be aware of when using a particular technique. Examples and descriptions of community engagement techniques are provided in the *Techniques Section* of the Handbook. Other techniques can be found in the following references:

- *Engaging Queenslanders*: *A guide to community engagement methods and techniques"*[18]
- *NCDD Engagement Streams Framework*[19]

Some of the techniques in **Appendix 1** will be familiar to many people and are commonly used, such as surveys and workshops. Other techniques are likely to be less familiar and training in their use will be required. With some techniques the assistance of experienced facilitators will be necessary. The availability of suitably trained and experienced staff to implement community engagement initiatives will vary from council to council, with some having a designated engagement position and others assigning this role as part of a position description. Whatever the circumstances, it is strongly recommended that new techniques are researched and tested internally before venturing out to apply them in the community. See the *Techniques Section* of the Handbook for further information.

Examples of suitable techniques:

- An objective at the consult level was for Council to review all available data and identify gaps in information. A technique to gather information could be a survey (on-line or hardcopy) or a series of face-to-face interviews to collect relevant data. A technique for bringing people together to review all the data could be a workshop or a focus group. A technique to gather feedback from the community on the available date could be a comment form (on-line or hardcopy) or an open house session.

- An objective at the involve level was for Council to work with a Reference Group made up from a cross section of the community to determine what information they require to be able to explore the issues effectively. A technique to share information could be a mailed notice to all members of the community inviting expressions of interest in being part of the Group. A technique to bring people together could be an information session on what a Reference Group is and how it could function to meet the community engagement objectives".

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[18] Queensland Government Department of Communities, 2007
[19] www.thataway.org/streams

Step 6 – evaluate phase two

As indicated in Phase One, setting basic evaluation measures in place throughout the process will help to identify areas for improvement and any emerging problems. Examples of basic evaluation measures for Phase Two might be as follows.

- How will you know if the community engagement objectives are designed to achieve outcomes as described in the decision statement?
- What will indicate if the key issues and interests of stakeholders have been identified?
- How will appropriate responses be developed to address the issues and interests?
- How will you know if suitable techniques have been selected to engage stakeholders?
- What can be learned from this phase that needs to be dealt with before proceeding?
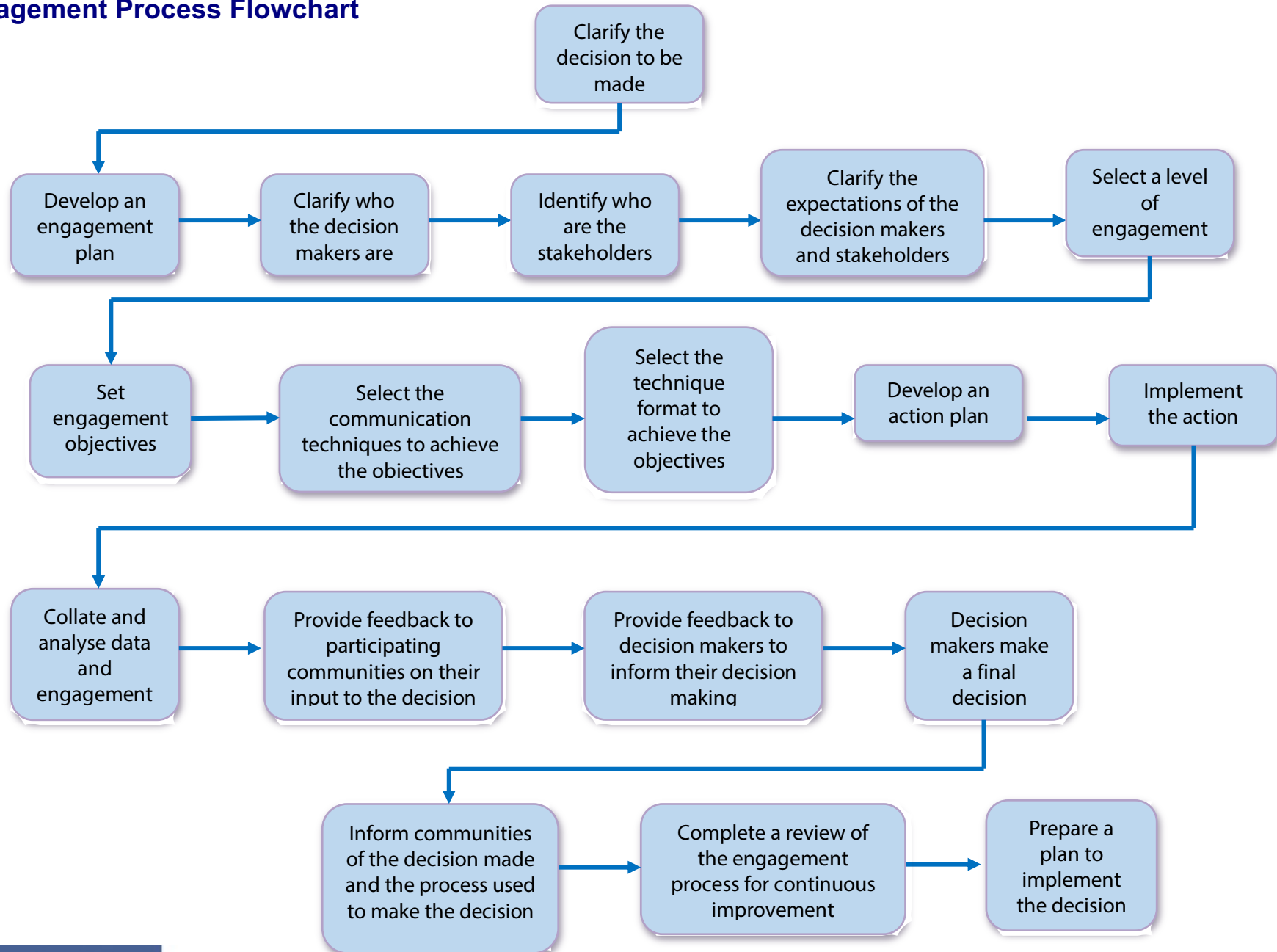
Refer to Phase 1 - Step 7 for an example of how to work with these measures on the evaluation template included as **Appendix 8.**

Key points to getting phase two right – developing a community engagement plan
✓ A Community Engagement Plan provides the "road map" for the Project Team.   ✓ Gather and record background information to include history, current status, and what needs to happen to address the decision to be made.   ✓ Set clear project and community engagement parameters to clarify limitations.   ✓ Set community engagement parameters to foster realistic expectations. Consider legislation, geographic boundaries, technical and human resources, budget and what is negotiable and non-negotiable.   ✓ Identify key issues and interests early and develop response strategies.   ✓ **Get the basics right**. Ensure all steps in the planning phase have been worked through before selecting community engagement techniques.   ✓ Evaluate Phase Two before proceeding.

An engagement process flowchart of the steps outlined to this point and the steps to complete the process is provided on the following page.
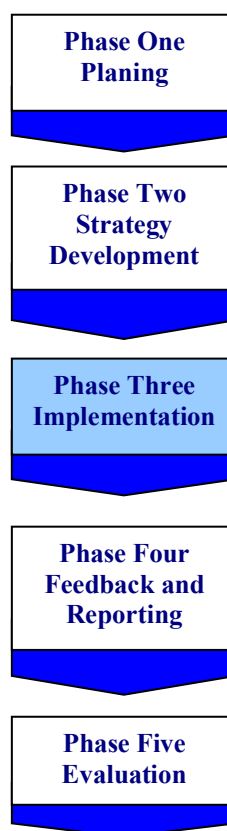
Engagement Process Flowchart

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                                    ┌─────────────────┐
                                    │  Clarify the    │
                                    │  decision to be │
                                    │  made           │
                                    └─────────────────┘
```

| Develop an engagement plan | → | Clarify who the decision makers are | → | Identify who are the stakeholders | → | Clarify the expectations of the decision makers and stakeholders | → | Select a level of engagement |

| Set engagement objectives | → | Select the communication techniques to achieve the objectives | → | Select the technique format to achieve the objectives | → | Develop an action plan | → | Implement the action |

| Collate and analyse data and engagement | → | Provide feedback to participating communities on their input to the decision | → | Provide feedback to decision makers to inform their decision making | → | Decision makers make a final decision |

| Inform communities of the decision made and the process used to make the decision | → | Complete a review of the engagement process for continuous improvement | → | Prepare a plan to implement the decision |

Phase Three

Implementing a community engagement plan

Steps to be covered in this section are: **Page**

| Phase One Planing |
| Phase Two Strategy Development |
| Phase Three Implementation |
| Phase Four Feedback and Reporting |
| Phase Five Evaluation |

Phase three – Implementing a community engagement strategy

Step 1 - develop an action plan

The community engagement plan is developed in Phase 2 to achieve the purpose of the engagement and to meet the set objectives. In Phase Three an Action Plan is developed to implement the community engagement plan. It sets out the tasks required and the operational decisions to be made. An Action Plan template is provided as **Appendix 10.**

It is suggested in Phase One – Step One that a community engagement coordinator be nominated for each separate community engagement project and that all communications and community engagement arrangements be coordinated through this person. It is also suggested that the coordinator take responsibility for monitoring the progress of the Action Plan. This task will involve:

- guiding the project team through each stage of the Action Plan to meet agreed deadlines;
- monitoring activities and emerging issues and developing responses;
- making any necessary adjustments to the action plan and schedules; and
- maintaining open communication with the project team, decision makers and stakeholders.

Step 2 - complete a task breakdown

Each task on the Action Plan may require further breakdown into more specific tasks to clarify what needs to be done, who needs to do it, when it is to be done by and when it is completed. **Appendix 11** is a Task Breakdown Sheet which can be used to:

- identify specific tasks;
- identify action and resources required to achieve the tasks;
- assign responsibilities for tasks; and
- set significant dates and establish deadlines.

Step 3 – evaluate phase three

Examples of basic evaluation measures for Phase Three might be as follows.

- How will the Action Plan support the implementation of the community engagement plan?
- What will indicate if the Action Plan is being co-ordinated effectively?
- How many people registered an interest in being part of the engagement process?
- How many people attended the engagement activities?
- How will you know if the activities were effective?
- How will you know if the activities were promoted effectively?
- What can be learned from this phase that needs to be dealt with before proceeding?

Refer to Phase 2 - Step 7 for an example of how to work with these measures on the evaluation template provided as **Appendix 8.**

Key points to getting phase three right – implementing a community engagement strategy
✓ Nominate a community engagement coordinator to monitor and review progress of the action plan.
✓ Develop an action plan which sets out tasks required to implement the community engagement plan.
✓ Prepare a task breakdown sheet which allocates responsibilities and resources and identifies significant dates and timelines.
✓ Evaluate Phase Three before proceeding.

Phase Four

Providing feedback to stakeholders and reporting to Council

Steps to be covered in this section are: **Page**

Phase One
Planning

Phase Two
Strategy
Development

Phase Three
Implementation

Phase Four
Feedback and
Reporting

Phase Five
Evaluation

Phase four – providing feedback to stakeholders and reporting to Council

The preparation of a *feedback summary* for stakeholders needs to be completed as soon as possible after the closing date of community engagement activities to maintain the integrity of the process. The feedback summary will need to demonstrate to stakeholders how their input was taken into account in the decision making process.

A *Council Report* which will include the feedback summary also needs to be prepared to provide decision makers with the information they need to inform their final decision.

Step 1 - collate and analyse information

Information gathered from a community engagement process can be collated for analysis in a variety of ways. The method chosen will depend on what is required to meet community engagement objectives and on the resources available within the organisation. There are a number of commercial and open source on-line tools available for consideration such as the On-Line Community Panel developed in partnership with the "*Ehrenberg Bass Institute*" and a number of SA Councils with the aim of increasing community participation[20]; "*EngagementHQ*" and "*Delib*" who will design online engagement platform to suit council needs. If access to data management software is unavailable, it is possible to set up a basic template in Word or Excel to collate the information. Aim for a consistent format that is easy for staff to use and provides results that are easy to interpret and make sense to stakeholders and decision makers.

Step 2 – provide feedback to stakeholders

Being able to report back on how stakeholders feedback has influenced the decision making process demonstrates democracy at work and the value of stakeholder input. A summary of feedback needs to include the following.

- Title and date
- Introduction and background information.
- Outcomes of the community engagement process, including any key issues or trends identified
- Quantitative and qualitative data.
- Exact words and phrases used by people in comments to ensure they recognise their own input and become aware that other people may express different opinions to theirs.
- A section for questions raised by the community and responses provided by Council.
- A summary of how the information has been analysed with any clear outcomes or indications of a division on a preferred outcome. This information is important for stakeholders as it demonstrates how varying views and aspirations are taken into account by decision makers within the broader policy and strategic frameworks as they consider the final outcome.

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[20] http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Online_Community_Panel_Pilot_Program_-_Final_Report_-_January_2009.pdf

Examples of reports can be found at:

- Adelaide City Councils "Your Say" (Archived Projects) http://yoursay.adelaidecitycouncil.com

- City of Marion "Community Consultation Projects" http://www.marion.sa.gov.au/community-consultation

- City of Holdfast Bay "Engagement Status Board" http://www.holdfast.sa.gov.au/statusboard

Step 3 - prepare a report for council

Provided Council Members are engaged in the community engagement process and have been kept informed of progress, the contents of a Council Report will serve to provide the final pieces of information they need to make a sustainable decision.

The Council Report needs to:

- restate the decision to be made as stated at the beginning of the community engagement process;
- provide information and feedback from the community in a way that is clear and succinct;
- clarify any key issues or trends and any strongly held views by communities;
- clarify issues which need to be taken into account to determine a sustainable decision; and
- make clear and equitable recommendations based on the information provided throughout the report.

When Council makes a final decision on a process inform the community of the outcome through established media, e.g. local newspapers, website posts, direct mail.

Step 4 - implementation of the final decision

As stated in Phase One, not being clear about the decision to be made is a common reason for tension between Councils and communities, and the reason why some issues seem to remain unresolved over a long period of time.

Another common reason for tension is the lack of clarity around the implementation of the outcomes of Council decisions. Consideration needs to be given to how the outcome will be implemented. The inclusion of the strategy for implementation of the decision in the Council Report and seeking its endorsement will add to the sustainability of the decision. Several Councils have record management systems that can log a decision and track the implementation of the outcome through to completion, adding further credibility to the community engagement process.

Step 5 – evaluation of phase four

Examples of basic evaluation measures for Phase Four are as follow:

- What data management criteria will be used to determine the collation and analysis of information?
- How will you monitor the compiling and distribution of feedback to community within the agreed timeframe?
- How will you know if the Council report presents a balanced account of community views, needs and interests
- How will you know the final decision made by Council has been communicated to the community?
- How will you monitor the implementation of Councils decision within an agreed timeframe?
- What can be learned from this phase that needs to be dealt with before proceeding?

Refer to Phase 2 - Step 7 for an example of how to work with these measures on the evaluation template provided as **Appendix 8.**

Key points to getting phase four right – providing feedback to stakeholders and council
✓ Collate and analyse data in a format that is easy to use and interpreted. ✓ Share feedback to demonstrate how community input has been taken into account in the decision making process. ✓ Prepare a Council report which provides information on which to make a sustainable decision. ✓ Consider how the decision outcome will be implemented and include recommendations for implementation in the Report to Council. ✓ Evaluate Phase Four before proceeding.

Phase Five

Compile final evaluation

Steps to be covered in this section are: **Page**

Phase One
Planning

Phase Two
Strategy
Development

Phase Three
Implementation

Phase Four
Feedback and
Reporting

Phase Five
Evaluation

Phase five – final evaluation

Step i – compile and prepare an evaluation report

Assessing whether the community engagement process has achieved its purpose and met the set objectives demonstrates to communities a commitment to continuous improvement. Evaluation at each phase of the community engagement process delivers valuable information about what is working and what needs to be adjusted before progressing to the next phase. This approach will make the task of compiling a final evaluation report more efficient, relevant and achievable.

Basic evaluation measures have been provided as examples at each phase in the Handbook. Measures relevant to each specific community engagement process will need to be considered as part of the evaluation methodology. Compiling the final evaluation may include the following additional tasks:

- Insert process evaluation questions on feedback forms distributed during the community engagement process.
- Conduct telephone interviews with a random sample of stakeholders during and after the process.
- Convene evaluation/summary meetings with the project team, decision makers and key stakeholders.
- Use a combination of all the techniques listed above if sufficient resources are available.

Example evaluation questions

Stakeholder Evaluation
- Did the community engagement process meet your expectations? And if so, how did it?
- Was the information provided during the community engagement accessible, understandable and delivered in a timely fashion?
- What opportunities did you have to participate in the community engagement process?
- Do you have any suggestions about what we could have done differently, better or more of?
- What part of the process did you appreciate most?
- What did you find the least helpful?

Project Team and Council Member Evaluation
- How did you know that the community engagement objectives had been met?
- What changed as a result of the community engagement process?
- What was learned from the process?

The final evaluation report may include:

- Title and date
- an introduction and description of the community engagement process;
- summaries of the evaluation of each phase of the process;
- commentary on what worked and added value, what did not work and detracted from the process, areas for improvement, lessons learned, the sustainable nature of the decision; and
- recommendations for future community engagement projects.

A Final Evaluation Report template is included as **Appendix 12.**

As a final task, communicate the outcomes of the evaluation to Council Members and relevant stakeholders.

Key points to getting phase five right – final evaluation
✓ Prepare a final evaluation of the community engagement process and outcomes. ✓ Include summaries from the evaluation of each phase and recommendations for any future community engagements in the report. ✓ Gather information from stakeholders using a variety of techniques. ✓ Communicate the outcomes of the evaluation to Council Members and stakeholders.

Community Engagement Handbook

A Model Framework for leading practice
In Local Government in South Australia

Techniques

Techniques for community engagement

A community engagement technique is what is used to facilitate engagement or interaction with communities. The diverse assortment of techniques developed over a period of time provide multiple choices for practitioners. The challenge for practitioners is in choosing the techniques that achieve the best results for communities and decision makers.

A number of techniques have been selected for inclusion in this section of the Handbook for a number of reasons such as to:

- demonstrate the characteristics that are fundamental to effective techniques (see World Café)
- respond to requests from training participants for techniques to achieve objectives such as engaging large groups of people on complex issues and how to engage specific groups such as Aboriginal communities and people with disabilities, and
- provide guidance for the use of on-line tools for community engagement

The IAP2 model structures techniques into the following three formats:

- techniques to share information
- techniques to collect information, and
- techniques to bring people together

We are generally very good at sharing and collecting information and most Councils have systems in place to do this. Bringing people together for participation in decision making is where there appears to be a need for knowledge and skill development. The techniques included in the Handbook serve as a starting point in meeting that need.

The techniques documented in the Handbook are only a small sample of what is currently available. References to a range of resources are provided to supplement the information in the Handbook and the finer details of the techniques included are taught in the LGA Training Program.

World cafe

Preface: The principles of the World Cafe technique are presented in the Handbook as representative of characteristics that can be applied to other community engagement techniques Consequently, the text on World Cafe is more extensive than any of the other techniques included in the Handbook. The blue tabs adjacent to the heading indicate this technique is suitable for use at these levels on the spectrum of participation.

World Cafe or Conversation Cafe is a technique that brings people together in simultaneous rounds of conversation about questions that matter. The World Cafe process was developed by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs[21] after observing how groups of people naturally conversed with one another in a social cafe style setting. In general this is how most techniques are developed, i.e. by tapping into human behaviours that support participation in decision making.

The process starts with a lead facilitator setting the context for the conversation and inviting participants to start a conversation with people at their host table and then move around to other tables to continue the conversation with other people. The intention behind this process is that the more conversations participants share, the broader their perspective becomes and the more likely they are to understand new ideas. After several rounds of conversation participants move back to their host table and share their experiences, new insights and understanding. The duration of a World Cafe can vary from 2 hours to several days or over a period of weekly sessions depending on the complexity of issues, the decision to be made and/or the resources available.

World Cafe appears informal in presentation; however it is underpinned by seven principles. These seven principles encompass the fundamental characteristics that make techniques in general effective. A description of ***each principle is provided as it relates to the World Cafe technique along with examples that highlight the characteristic of the principles at work in other techniques***. The seven principles are:

1. A clear context for the conversation
2. Creation of a hospitable space to talk together
3. Questions that matter and you don't already have the answers to
4. Encouraging contributions by everyone
5. Connection of diverse viewpoints
6. Listening together for insights
7. Sharing collective discoveries

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[21] Brown, J and Isaacs, D, The World Cafe: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter, 2005.

1. A clear context for the conversation

Some very conscientious attempts are made to provide good information to communities so they can prepare for participation in a community engagement activity. However people do not always have time to read the information provided or they tend to base their expectations on previous experiences and ignore the information provided. So it is vitally important at the beginning of any activity that aims to bring people together in conversations about things that matter *to present them with a context for the session. This is a principle of World Cafe, however it should not be confined to this technique alone.*

For example at the beginning of a World Cafe on the 30 Year Plan Population Growth Targets (Population Growth Targets Cafe) it would be necessary to provide the background to the setting of the targets, explain what is currently happening with population growth and why the participants have been brought together to have a conversation about it. This same approach applies to an information session on (for example) the placement of bollards on a reserve to reduce long-standing vandalism. People need to understand the background information in the first instance to help them understand what they can expect to contribute to the discussion.

2. Creation of a hospitable space to talk together

Bringing people together for a community conversation can create anxiety for a number of people. They may be holding strong emotions about an issue or recalling previous experiences that were unpleasant. Coming together in a community conversation should be as normal and comfortable as getting together for a BBQ or shared meal. A World Cafe is generally set up to look like a cafe where people would want to spend time in conversation. Some people go to the extent of table cloths and flowers on the tables and food and drink to share. How much you do to set things up will depend on available resources.

Meeting and greeting people as they arrive and helping them to find a host table is a significant part of the hospitable approach. Ideally, at each table there needs to be a table host to greet participants as they arrive and create a welcoming atmosphere. *This principle of creating a hospitable space to talk together needs to be applied to any community activity that brings people together.*

3. Questions that matter and you don't already have the answers to

The questions that are asked in a World Cafe play a critical role in the success of the process. Participants will let you know soon enough if they feel questions have been designed to achieve a particular response. *Questions need to be framed to encourage innovation and discovery of things not yet know to the people involved in a community conversation.*

Consider the following when selecting the question/s for a World Cafe;

1. The question needs to be an open question to encourage broad conversation, i.e. it needs to start with (for example) "how, what, why, when, where".

2. It needs to determine the scope of the question to be about "you/we/they", for example, "What challenges do I face in my work"? will generate a different conversation to "What challenges do we as a team face in our work"?; and

3. Do not bring assumptions into the question based on your own beliefs such as "How beneficial has this program been for you"? This question makes the assumption that the program has been beneficial. A question like this can create confusion and suspicion for participants and in many cases they will not realise why the conversation is not flowing. They just know they are not comfortable with the question.

One or more questions can be used during a session, however be careful about trying to cover too much ground with a series of questions that do not allow deep exploration of any single topic. Select a key question and use "lever" questions to open up further discussion on the topic. For example, a lever question following on from "What challenges do we as a team face in our work", might be, "What are the factors that make it challenging"?

4. Encouraging contributions by everyone

The hospitable nature of a World Cafe tends to encourage contributions from everyone at some point in the process. The initial welcoming of people to a host table can impact on how they will contribute to the conversation. Ideally it is worthwhile having trained table hosts to take on this task. In cases where there is the opportunity and resources to build capacity in the community, being able to train community members as table hosts is a valuable undertaking. Community Development staff are generally skilled in working with people and are worth considering for training as table host.

Some people need a few rounds of conversation before they find their voice. This becomes particularly evident where a hierarchy exists among groups. In the movement of participants from one table to another people feel liberated to express their opinions and the role of leaders shifts from director to participant.

When outlining the process to participants the lead facilitator needs to:

- Set guidelines for how people will work together during the session such as listening to one another, not interrupting and respecting each other's point of view. In World Cafe the guidelines are called "Table Etiquette". ***These guidelines need to be applied to all community conversation to provide a safe space for everyone to contribute to discussions***

- Encourage people to be curious (ask questions), listen to understand and contribute ideas and experiences, and

- Encourage people to record what they want captured from the conversation. A useful thing to use at a World Cafe is butchers paper as the "table cloths" and to provide lots of textas for people to write notes, draw and doodle on the paper. This way everyone takes responsibility for note taking.

5. Connection of diverse viewpoints

As people move from one table (conversation) to another they take links and connections from one conversation to another. People start to recognise themes, emerging insights and new questions in the conversations they are sharing. ***Rather than talking about something in isolation they begin to realise the way things happen as part of a whole system*** and start to tap into the collective knowledge of the participants and to look for integrated solutions.

6. Listening together for insights

When people enter community conversations they are generally focused on what they have to say. The speed of a conversation can make it hard to listen because everyone wants to make sure they get heard. One way to help people listen is to get them to write down what is important for them to share and for the table host to let everyone know they will get a chance to be heard. This frees everyone up to listen together to the views, ideas and insights that are being talked about.

When people listen together they can discover common ground which wasn't obvious at the beginning of a conversation.

7. Sharing collective discoveries

The final round of conversation happens with everyone returning to the table where the conversation started for them. It is at this point where participants are encouraged to share their mutual reflections on a "conversation of the whole". The deeper themes that participants have become aware of are discussed in this final round. Questions that may be asked include:

- "*What are you hearing at the centre of the conversation?*

- *What had real meaning for you in what you heard?*

- *What excited you? Challenged or surprised you?*

- *What's missing?*

- *What do we need more clarity about?*

- *What has been your major discovery, learning or insight so far?*

- *What's the next level of thinking we need to do"[22]?*

How this information is captured will need careful consideration if it is to contribute to a decision making process. One way is to ask participants to record their reflections to each question on a large sticky note and then post the notes under the question on a sticky wall[23] as a visual display of their collective thinking. They may want to sort their responses into themes using "Card Storming[24]" as a set up activity for an action planning workshop following the World Cafe. ***The important thing here is to plan to capture the information in a way that makes sense for participants and can convey their input effectively.***

When to use

World Cafe is a technique to use when there is an indication that participants want to explore/understand and to surface areas of commonality/divergence with the aim of problem solving such as, redevelopment of a creek in a suburban area to effectively manage flooding.

When not to use

World Cafe is not suitable for groups of people who are highly vulnerable (eg. victims of domestic violence, refugees), or groups with poor language skills or speech and hearing disabilities, or mixed groups with different languages.

Resources

The following is a list of basic resources that are needed for a World Cafe:

- a space large enough for the number of tables needed to seat the registered participants; and enough space in between tables for when people move around (consider access for people with disabilities) and so that people can hear one another above the level of conversation in the room
- audio visual equipment to convey information to participants
- a lead facilitator to set the context for the World Cafe and to keep the process on track
- table hosts either from the community or from Council preferably with training in hosting a table
- butchers paper, pens and sticky notes, Sticky Wall/s
- sets of World Cafe etiquette or ground rules for each table
- refreshments on arrival and during the session
- additional resources for people who need support to participate
- an evaluation form for participants and one for the organising team

Prior to the session, consideration needs to be given to developing information materials and promoting the session to the public. After the session all the information gathered needs to be collated into a report and distributed to participants and Council.

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[22] Brown, J and Isaacs, D, The World Cafe: *Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter*, 2005.

[23] A Sticky Wall is a large sheet of parachute material that an adhesive spray has been applied to so that notes can be posted and removed easily to allow sorting of information. The concept was developed by the US Institute of Cultural Affairs.

[24] Card Storming is a technique developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs

World cafe case study - Shared Recreation Space

A local council's service review uncovered a number of issues about the long term sustainability of a shared recreation space. The space was shared by netball, rugby, tennis and horse riding clubs. Each club was on a different permit rate and they had negotiated various conditions over the years. There was little interaction among the clubs and opportunities to share resources and maintain the facilities were not part of the way the clubs operated.

Council Officers wanted to meet with the clubs individually to communicate the new rates and conditions they had set in response to the data gathered during the review. The Community Engagement Officer recommended hosting a World Cafe to bring the clubs together in a conversation about not only the permits and conditions but about the long term future of the recreation grounds.

When everyone came together for the World Cafe, the netball club sat at one table, the rugby at another and so on. The lead facilitator set the context for the conversation and posed the question:

"*How do we determine a permit rate and set conditions that will support and maintain the recreation grounds for a long term future*?

The first round of conversation started as might be expected with the president of each club doing most of the talking at each table. It was when people started to move and mix with people from other clubs that the conversation took a discernible turn. The role of president shifted from speaker to listener and club members started to find their voice in the conversation. By the third round of conversations the room was buzzing with the sound of people sharing stories that had been previously been untold for all sorts of reasons. A cultural shift started in that space that was sustained by people who found their voice and a way to engage in shared conversations that make a difference.

Source: City of Onkaparinga, 2008.

Open Space

In Open Space meetings the people who attend set the agenda. They decide how they want to participate and what they want to discuss. Deciding to use this tool can be quite a challenge for Councils because it requires giving up some of the control to make space for open participation. The techniques works particularly well in situations where people have experienced loss and devastation through for example a natural disaster such as flooding or a bush fire and they feel disempowered or outraged.

Open Space provides people with a setting that allows them to do what they need to do to have their situation acknowledged and to self determine what they need to do about it and how they need to do it. The more traditional response by organisations to supporting people in need is to offer what the organisation thinks they need. This approach, although well intentioned, serves to further outrage and disempower people. The Open Space technique can support people to move through the outrage and disempowerment to a place of action and self-determination such as deciding what sort of counselling support they need following a disaster or what supplies they need most.

Councils may find the technique frees them up to be effectively responsive to community needs rather than reactive. Where there is a high level of interest in a situation, Open Space can help to manage large numbers of people as they move from a large group to the smaller topic of interest groups. In situations where a project has lost its way, Open Space can be used by Councils and communities to uncover the things that really matter and decide on the action needed to move things forward. For example, in a Council area where economic development had stalled, an Open Space session uncovered the most significant contributing factor was the lack of access to public transport. With this information Council was able to lobby for more public transport and propose alternative transport arrangements such as private services or Council sponsored services.

Open Space has a structure that enables it to be effective. It is underpinned by four principles:

1. Whoever comes are the right people (5 to 100+ people)
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened (self-determined agenda)
3. Whenever it starts is the right time (freedom from time pressures)
4. When it's over, it's over (a half or full day session, a number of sessions over a period of time)

An Open House session starts with everybody seated around a lead facilitator who provides context for the session and then invites whoever is present to set the agenda by naming a topic and writing it up on a sheet of butchers paper. This part of the process continues until everyone who wants to propose a topic has done so. Everyone then decides which topic they want to discuss and they head off to a space to start the

discussion followed by whoever else wants to contribute to the topic. Everyone is free to participate in any of the topics on the agenda and they are also free to move from one discussion to another. This freedom to move around is referred to as the "Law of Two Feet" by the originator of the tool, Harrison Owen (1980)[25]. Someone at each discussion is nominated to take notes or people can decide to record their own notes. It is up to the group to capture what they want recorded for input to a decision making process.

The process ends when everyone is about ready to come back into the large group and share what they have uncovered or identified what they want to know more about or what action they want to take. Groups may decide to use what they have discovered as the basis for a follow on workshop or as the basis for a report or recommendations to decision makers. The organiser's role is to collect all notes, collate them and produce a report for distribution to all participants and decision makers.

When to use

Open Space is a technique to use when a community needs to vent and expecting them to sit through a traditional meeting where they are talked at will only increase their sense of outrage and disempowerment[26]. Use Open Space for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups, people with disabilities and Aboriginal communities when adequate resources are available to provide the additional supports these groups will need for equitable participation.

When not to use

Open Space is not suitable where there are known lobby groups who may push their agenda items forward on the participants gathered or where an organisation has determined what the outcome of the session should be and they want to manage the session or there is no commitment from an organisation to take on board any of the recommendations that might come out of the session.

Resources

The following is a list of basic resources that are needed for Open Space:

- a large venue with enough space for a large group to gather and at least 6 breakout rooms or spaces for discussion groups; consider holding the group sessions outdoors if weather is permitting
- a facilitator skilled in setting the scene for the session and guiding people through the agenda setting process and the summary session
- people to provide support to the participants such as more butchers paper, finding a space for the conversation, dealing with an overzealous participant
- paper and textas, flip charts, sheets of butchers paper, sticky notes and whiteboards

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[25] http://www.openspaceworld.org/
[26] Aboriginal communities, decision making and the IAP2 model, SA IAP2 Network Group, 2009

- simple food and drink that people can access as they need it

- pre-session information distributed to the public so people understand what the process will be like and how Open Space works

- collation of meeting notes and distribution to participants

- support resources such as language[27] or sign language interpreter or hearing equipment[28]

- additional resources for people who need support to participate

- an evaluation form for participants and one for the organising team

Open space case study – Engaging Aboriginal Communities

Over the period from 2004 to 2012 the IAP2 South Australian network supported by local government staff held four professional development sessions each year. A request that came out of the annual topic selection meeting two years in a row was to run a session on how to engage with Aboriginal communities. After a number of failed attempts due mainly to a lack of cultural awareness on both sides, the organising group made a decision to host an Open Space session at Warriparinga in the City of Marion. The decision to go with Open Space came out of a number of conversations the group had with Aboriginal people about community engagement. The common view expressed was, "we are tired of having community consultation being done to us". Using Open Space meant we could ask, "How do you want to do this?"

The session attracted considerable interest with 72 people registering and 52 people attending on the day (even though the temperature was in the high 30's). The session started off with a shared lunch while attendees learned about cultural safety and watched the DVD "Nukkan Kungun Yunnan (see, listen, speak) Ngarrindieri's Being Heard", which is about (among other things) the affect of the drought on Lake Alexandrina communities.

Everyone was asked what they wanted to talk about and within a few minutes there were 7 topics on the board including:

- How to start/sustain the dialogue?

- How can we create a space where we can meet?

- Death by Consultation!

- Developing sustainable programs – not short term.

- Media portrayal of the Gang of 49.

- Best Practice.

- How to Empower?

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[27] An introduction to working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, Queensland Government, www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au
[28] A guide to engaging people with a disability, Queensland Government, www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au

Facilitators for each topic emerged from among the attendees and people spread themselves out around the wonderful building and grounds of Warriparinga to share in conversations lasting an hour and forty minutes. The overall feedback from the session was that Open Space freed people up to engage in topics that were of interest to them[29].

Source: IAP2 SA Network 2012.

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[29] A full report of the session is available at www.

Focus groups

Focus Groups are a technique used to explore public issues/attitudes/preferences/trends and to surface new information. Focus Groups involve conversations with groups of between 10 to 20 people structured to achieve a definitive outcome or action/s on a specific topic. Focus Groups work best when participants are provided with specific information on a topic. This provides a reference for a facilitator to explore, probe and ask questions that encourage participants to listen effectively and focus their responses to reflect what is being discovered by the group.

Keeping a group focused on a topic for between 1 – 2 hours can be achieved by using an approach such as interview questions designed to achieve set objectives or a Focused Conversation[30] which leads participants through a series of questions to a decision point. The input from the Focus Group can be recorded on a laptop and viewed on a screen by everyone. This allows the facilitator to take the participants through a visual summary of the content they have generated together before proceeding to another stage of the conversation with the Focus Group; and it allows the participants to review what they have said and make any corrections or changes to what is being recorded to ensure it reflects their input accurately. This process is highly transparent and allows quick preparation of a report for participants and decision makers.

When to use

The Focus Group is a technique to use when it is important to gather community views but there is not enough time to do one-on-one interviews. A Focus Group can deliver the same results as a survey in less time and for less cost. They are very useful where there are a number of complex issues that need specific attention to resolve them.

When not to use

The Focus Group technique is not suitable where the participation rate is low because validating the results from a small sample will be difficult. Conducting a number of Focus Groups in different locations and with different participants may provide enough data to cross reference and verify a result.

Resources

- hard copy and PowerPoint reference material on the topic
- population data to inform inclusive representation on the Focus Group
- a Focus Group Expression of Interest form to distribute to communities

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[30] The Art of the Focused Conversation by the Institute of Cultural Affairs, 2000.

- a meeting room to seat 10 to 20 people comfortably at tables in a u-shape setting

- laptop, data projector, screen and whiteboard

- pens, paper, sticky notes

- catering requirements based on the duration of the session

- a skilled facilitator

- participation fee (optional), travel vouchers

- additional resources for people who need support to participate

- an evaluation form for participants and one for the organising team

Focus group case study – After-hours crisis service for young people

A NSW government agency convened a series of focus groups to develop a model for an integrative after hours crisis service that was being planned for young people. An independent facilitator was commissioned to meet with separate groups of young people and service providers. The young people were paid $20 to attend. The service providers attended as part of their work. The facilitator led groups of 10-15 participants through a series of pre-prepared questions:

What do you know about the issues?

What's happening now?

What of that is good?

What is not so good?

What should happen?

The responses were noted and a report was written for the commissioning government department. In the findings it was noted that the young people involved thought very creatively, and brought a fresh range of ideas to the table. Because young people were involved, particular care was taken to situate the focus groups in an appropriate environment—in this case a youth centre - or a service with which young people were familiar. Refreshments were provided. There were fourteen focus groups in all - 8 with adults (service providers) and 6 with young people (the service users). Each focus group cost between $500 and $1000 (including facilitator's fees, report, participants' fees, refreshments).

Source: Lyn Carson & Kath Gelber (2001) Ideas for Community Consultation: A discussion on principles and procedures for making consultation work, A report prepared for the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning

Charrette/enquiry by design

A Charrette or Enquiry by Design technique is generally used in urban design and planning which may include land use, landscaping, architecture and transportation design. The technique is designed around a number of workshops to raise awareness of the principles of best practice and sustainable urban design, and to explore and demonstrate how they can be applied to develop solutions for designs[31].

The Greater Adelaide 30 Year Plan has brought urban planning right out into the open making people more aware of the impact that future property development may have on them and making councils more aware of the need to include communities in the design of their living spaces. A number of Transport Orientated Developments (TOD's) and high density developments are planned for Greater Adelaide and people need to understand what these development approaches are about and how they may be able to contribute to the final design of them . The Charrette or Enquiry by Design process does not make any assumptions about the level of knowledge that people in the community have about planning and design. It does aim to tap into the skills, knowledge and experience of local people. The first stage of the process includes an information session on:

• Raising the awareness of the principles of best practice in sustainable urban design

• Exploring and demonstrating how they can be applied, and

• Using an iterative and interactive process to develop and build ideas, solutions and outcomes in planning and design.

This technique is resource intensive taking at least 8 weeks for planning and organisation, up to four days for the workshops or a number of weeks depending on how much re-design work is involved. It requires a support team including facilitators, note takers and experts in the room at all times to provide guidance and knowledge to participants.

When to use

This technique has its origins in collaborative problem solving so it is well suited for use in trying to resolve design problems that appear to be insurmountable such as traffic management issues where it is in the interest of everyone to participate in a design solution.

When not to use

This technique is not suitable for use when Councils have already decided on a design or they have not made a commitment to using the decisions from the Charrettee/Enquiry by Design.

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[31] Enquiry by Design Workshop Process: A Preparation Manual (2003)

Resources

- A project team to plan, organise and implement the Charrettee/Enquiry by Design workshops including promotion and registration of participants
- A large venue with breakout rooms that have plenty of room to spread out planning materials, maps and drawing sheets
- Ideally there would be access in the venue to computers with internet access and design software, laptops and data projectors
- Workshop materials including tables and chairs, pens, paper, whiteboards, flipcharts, display boards, maps, design information and PowerPoint presentations
- Catering throughout the workshops
- Project team including planners and designers, council staff, facilitators and note takers, technical support staff
- Transportation for workshop participants to view the project area
- additional resources for people who need support to participate
- an evaluation form for participants and one for the organising team

The Enquiry by Design Workshop Process: A Preparation Manual (2003)[32] provides a comprehensive guide to planning, organising and conducting a Charrettee/Enquiry by Design. Please refer to the manual for further information.

Charrette/enquiry by design case – Woodville Village Masterplan

A key component in the development of the draft Woodville Village Masterplan involved the wider community and stakeholders in a 6 day Design Charrette held on 17th - 22nd May at the City of Charles Sturt in Adelaide South Australia. It brought together a wide range of interested parties – including residents, property owners, traders, community and sporting groups – as well as State Government and Council staff.

Various sessions were held throughout the week during the day and night and on the weekend and provided an opportunity for people to provide their ideas and feedback on design options for revitalising the area. During the week of the Charrette, draft ideas were generated, reviewed by community and stakeholders, and then further refined.

The preliminary Masterplan for Woodville Village was then presented at an Open Day held on Saturday 22 May 2010 at the City of Charles Sturt Civic Centre for review and feedback.

Source: City of Charles Sturt Woodville Master Plan, 2010.

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[32] WA Department for Planning, http://www.planning.wa.gov.au/publications/832.asp
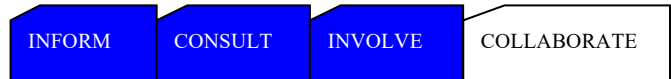
Citizen Jury ®

A Citizen Jury ® is a randomly selected and demographically representative panel of people (jury) who meet for four or five days to carefully examine an issue of public significance framed as a "charge" or "remit". The jury usually consists of 18–24 individuals, selected "at random" from a local or national population, with the selection process open to outside scrutiny. The process can take between 4-5 months to plan and from 1 -5 days or longer to conduct. Jurors are paid a fee for their time. They hear from a variety of expert witnesses and are able to deliberate together on the issue. On the final day of their moderated hearings, members of the Citizen Jury present their recommendations in a report to decision-makers and the public. Citizen Jury process can be enhanced through extensive communication with the public, including a dynamic web presence and significant media contacts[33].

The characteristic of a Citizen Jury are:

- *representative*: Jurors are carefully selected to be representative of the public at large. No other process takes such care to accurately reflect the community.
- *informed*: Witnesses provide information to the jury on the key aspects of the issue. Witnesses present a range of perspectives and opinions. The jury engages the witnesses in a dialogue to guarantee that all questions are answered.
- *impartial*: Witness testimony is carefully balanced to ensure fair treatment to all sides of the issue.
- *deliberative*: The jury deliberates in a variety of formats and is given a sufficient amount of time to ensure that all of the jurors' opinions are considered.[34]

When to use

Citizen Jury is a technique to use when communities need to learn about an issue, deliberate on it together and develop well-informed, common-ground solutions to difficult public issues. The Citizens Jury process also allows decision-makers and the communities to discover what people really think once they have heard witnesses and taken a close look at a topic[35].

When not to use

The Citizen Jury technique does not replace the decision making powers of a Council. The jury has the power to make recommendations for decision making in a report to Council. Raising an expectation that the jury will make the final decision will erode trust in the organisation and the process. Who is going to make the final decision must be decided and agreed upon before the process begins.

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[33] Citizen Jury Handbook, Jefferson Centre, 2004
[34] Citizen Jury Handbook, Jefferson Centre, 2004
[35] Citizen Jury Handbook, Jefferson Centre, 2004, http://jefferson-center.org/what-we-do/citizen-juries/

Resources

- Moderators skilled in the Citizen Jury process
- A funding sponsor for the process which can range from $3000 to $200,000 depending on the issue and the extent of the area included in the process, eg. a region of South Australia
- A project team and an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the community who are not aligned to or have an interest in issue
- Meeting space for the project team, Advisory Committee, the jury and public sessions
- Information packs for Jurors, Witnesses (public) and Advisory Committee
- Pens, paper, data projector/laptop/screen/whiteboard
- catering requirements over a number of days
- additional resources for people who need support to participate
- an evaluation form for participants and one for the organising team

The Citizen Jury Handbook developed by the Jefferson Centre provides a comprehensive guide to planning, organising and conducting a Citizen Jury. The process is copyrighted in the US; however there is no copyright restriction in Australia. Please refer to the Handbook for further information.

Citizen Jury case study – 1) Vibrant and Safe Nightlife in Adelaide

In October 2013 South Australia's first Citizen's Jury was asked to come up with policy recommendations to make Adelaide's nightlife safer and more vibrant. The Citizens Jury considered numerous submissions, heard from many local and interstate experts, and shared their own knowledge, experience and research in analysing and recommending how to ensure Adelaide's nightlife is vibrant and safe. Over five full Saturdays at three weekly intervals the jurors were assisted with the process of deliberating by skilful facilitators from the New Democracy Foundation.

The general consensus that the Citizens' Jury reached is that Adelaide nightlife is already vibrant and safe when compared with similar cities interstate and overseas. Therefore there commendations are mostly concerned with how to make Adelaide nightlife more vibrant and safer than the current situation.

Source: Better Together SA http://yoursay.sa.gov.au/initiatives/citizens-jury

Issues forum

An Issue Forum is a technique used to facilitate deliberative dialogue between people on a particular issue. This technique has been developed extensively by the National Issue Forum Institute (NIF) in the US. The process is designed around democratic forums used to consider public issues. It is based on the simple notion that people need to come together to reason, talk and deliberate about issues, interests and opportunities to help them determine a common public direction in decision making.

When people gather at an Issues Forum, they may deliberate (discuss) for up to three hours with a trained, impartial moderator. The deliberations centre around a framework designed to present a number of options or broad strategies for dealing with the issue. The Forum design helps people see that even the most complex issues can be approached, understood, deliberated on, and addressed by people who take the time and interest needed consider a resolution of the issues.

Issue Forums provide a way for people of diverse views and experiences to seek a shared understanding of the problem and to search for common ground leading to a democratic resolution. Forums are led by trained, neutral moderators who use a discussion guide that frames the issue from the viewpoints of all stakeholders and presents three or four broad options for resolution of the issue. Forum participants work through the issue by considering each option; examining what appeals to them or concerns them, and also what the costs, consequences, and trade-offs may be for each option. At the conclusion of the Forum participants are asked to reflect on;

- whether they have changed their point of view on an issue
- whether they felt there was a shared sense of direction among participants
- what trade-offs they were willing to make or not make
- how they felt about the consequences of actions proposed
- what they still needed to talk about
- what option they recommend for resolution of an issue, and
- whether they need to meet again

A report is written and a copy is distributed to the participants and to Council for consideration.

When to use

Issue Forums are a technique to use when there are diverse viewpoints on an issue and people need support to engage in a conversation that uncovers all the factors contributing to the issue. This technique helps people to realise the choices they want to make have consequences and they may need to make trade-offs to get what they want. This process demonstrates to communities that councils cannot meet the needs of everyone and some trades-offs may have to be made.

When not to use

The Issue Forum technique is not useful when a Council wants a quick fix to an issue. Time is needed to prepare for and conduct a Forum. The views of all stakeholders need to be gathered for inclusion in the Issue Forum Guide and this can involve the use of considerable resources.

Resources

- data gathering tools such as hardcopy or on-line survey, face-to-face interviews
- skilled moderators and support staff including note takers
- moderators guide and training program
- drafting of Issue Guide and printing of copies for distribution to target audience and for participants in the Issue Forum
- post Forum questionnaire
- large meeting space with tables and chairs
- pens, paper, data projector/laptop/screen/whiteboard
- catering requirements
- collation and reporting of results
- additional resources for people who need support to participate
- an evaluation form for participants and one for the organising team

Issue Forum case study – Soccer in the suburbs

Pennington oval has been the home ground for the Western Toros Soccer Club for a number of years. Over this period of time a number of issues emerged for the club, the local residents and Council. These issues were having impacts on the wellbeing of local residents, on the management and function of the club, and on Council's administration of the reserve license. Council initiated a process to support resolution of these issues for the benefit of all concerned.

The process included separate meetings with Ward Councillors, club administrators and a group of residents to listen to their experiences of living with the issues. The meetings were led by a trained mediator. Following the meetings, the information gathered was developed by the mediator into an issue discussion guide in preparation for a joint meeting between the residents, the club and council staff to explore three possible approaches to the resolution of the issues.

The key question in the issue guide was, "How can we reach agreement on the use of Pennington Oval?" To facilitate a way forward, three approaches were provided for discussion and consideration:

1. Approach 1 - Focus on working relationships
2. Approach 2- Create a culture of accountability
3. Approach 3 - Wait for things to change

A number of the issues raised were resolved during the joint meeting held in December 2013. A key issue about temporary fencing remained unresolved at the end of that meeting, however as proposed in Approach 3 – Wait for things to change; things did change when the club shifted their adult games to another oval and the temporary fencing was not longer required.

Source: City of Charles Sturt, 2013.
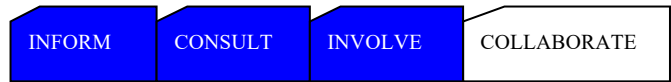
Representative community committee

Representatives from the community are invited by Council to contribute to the decision making process through participation in a committee. This community engagement technique can be extremely productive if careful consideration is given to the purpose of the committee and the recruitment, selection and induction of the representatives.

The function of a committee is governed by the Terms of Reference and some committees use a set of Standing Orders as their rules of procedure. The name of a committee can be used to describe their function such as a Policy Steering Committee or a Coastland Advisory Committee. If the name of the committee and the Terms of Reference are not well considered it may set up unrealistic expectations for the committee and result in it being a detractor rather than a contributor to council decision making. A Terms of Reference needs to include the;

- purpose of the committee
- Term of committee
- composition and size of the membership
- roles and responsibilities of the committee members
- rules of operation/procedure
- management of the committee records and
- lines of communication

Committees that are not well planned and resourced may lose sight of their purpose and take on roles and responsibilities that are outside their core function and continue on well past their original term date. It is important to provide training and development for committee members if they are to successfully fulfil their roles.

The structure of a committee generally includes a chairperson, a secretary and general committee members.

When to use

Representative Community Committees are a technique to use when councils want to include members of the community in part of the decision making process. It may be a situation where Council wants to draw on the knowledge of particular members of the community for a specific project or where Council has tried to engage the broader community, however they have been unsuccessful and they call for Expressions of Interest from members of the community.

When not to use

Representative Community Committees are not useful when the purpose and function of the committee is unclear or the committee is only being set up to appease a complaint from the community.

Resources

- recruitment, selection, induction and on-going training and development
- support from council staff and use of resources such as internet access, email contacts for the people they are representing
- a committee meeting room
- access to external consultants, government agencies and departments
- information
- additional resources for people who need support to participate
- an appraisal form for the committee to measure their performance

The Guide for Committees developed by the Latrobe City Council provides a comprehensive guide for committees. Please follow the link http://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au and refer to the guide for further information.

Representative Community committee case study – Youth Committee

Holdfast Bay Youth Committee (HBYC) is an informal youth committee where young people can choose to be involved as much or as little as they like.

They can become a voice for Youth and help influence decisions made by Council that affect young people in their community. They can contribute to important community development projects affecting young people; inform Council on issues that are important to young people; develop youth initiatives and plan and organise youth activities and events; and direct decisions that affect young people in the community.

Any young person aged 12 - 25 that lives, studies or works in Holdfast Bay can get involved.

Source: City of Holdfast Bay https://www.holdfast.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=3722

On-Line Community Engagement

Online Community Engagement refers to interactions between members of the community and organisations through Web 2.0 tools or as most of us know it, the internet. Using on line engagement tools to supplement traditional engagement practices opens up greater opportunities for participation. Over the past few years the way people communicate has changed considerably and we are still learning how best to use on-line technology to engage people in ways that contribute effectively to decision making. The rate of change has been so fast and the options for on-line communication so numerous that governments are just starting to come to terms with how and what to use in community engagement.

Examples of on-line engagement tools

"Online engagement, (Dellow and Anne Bartlett-Bragg, 2010) just like traditional methods of engagement, is also a process. In fact, in many cases we should not draw a distinction between online and traditional engagement by government - the two are often complementary or run in parallel together. However, there are also some instances where online engagement provides the chance for engagement to take place in new and

innovative ways that would not otherwise be cost effective or practical to achieve using traditional methods. But, even in these cases the process of engagement remains fundamentally the same".[36]

The process for selecting techniques in the Handbook applies to on-line engagement. Sections on tools and tips in the **Project 8: Online Engagement Guidance and Web 2.0 Toolkit for Australian Government Agencies** and the **On Line Community Engagement Guidelines, Department of Public Works Queensland Government** [37] provide further information on planning for on-line engagement and the selection of on line techniques.

When to use

On-line community engagement techniques can be used to increase participation from sections of the population that do not generally respond to traditional methods of engagement. On-line engagement removes some of the constraints of engaging with people such as access, time, distance and funding.

When not to use

On-line is not suitable for use when demographic statistics indicate low rates of internet access among a target audience. On-line tools used in isolation may exclude people from participating in an engagement process. There are still people who prefer the more traditional face-to-face interactions and may become disengaged if they cannot access hard copies of information or dial through directly to a council officer.

Resources

- computers and internet access
- staff with IT skills and time to manage on-line tools
- technical support
- budget for technology and staff hours

Please refer to Project 8: Online Engagement Guidance and Web 2.0 Toolkit for Australian Government Agencies and the On Line Community Engagement Guidelines, Department of Public Works Queensland Government for further information.

On-line community engagement case study

The on-line engagement tools used by the City of Holdfast Bay and the Adelaide City Council are great examples of how to use technology to engage people who traditionally would not participate in council decision making processes because of their age, job and family demands, their preferred style of communication and their stage in life.

Here is the link to the City of Holdfast Bay "Your View" site http://yourviewholdfast.com **;** and

the Adelaide City Council's site is http://yoursay.adelaidecitycouncil.com

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[36] Project 8: Online Engagement Guidance and Web 2.0 Toolkit for Australian Government Agencies
[37] On Line Community Engagement Guidelines, Department of Public Works Queensland Government, http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/policy-guidelines/guidelines/documents/online-community-engagement-guideline.pdf

Engaging Aboriginal Communities

Since the development of the LGA Community Engagement Handbook in 2007 and throughout the delivery of training in the use of the Handbook, Council staff have been asking for guidance with engaging Aboriginal communities. In 2009 the IAP2 SA Network Group hosted an Open Space session to gather feedback on the application of the IAP2 model to engagement with Aboriginal communities. The desire for early involvement in engagement processes was expressed by the Aboriginal people who participated in the session. The planning process outlined in the Handbook (which is based on the IAP2 model) promotes early involvement through assessment of the role of people in the engagement process; clarification of their expectations and identification of their issues and concerns at the beginning of the process to ensure sustainable outcomes are achieved.

Extensive consultation and work has been undertaken with Aboriginal people to develop a number of valuable resources guides for engagement with Aboriginal communities. Two of those guides have been selected for reference in the Handbook because they provide a compilation of information from the collection of resources and practical "practice tips" to support working better with Aboriginal communities. The resources are:

- NSW Department of Community Services, Working with Aboriginal People and Communities: A Practice Resource, 2009. The information and practice tips in this resource are generalised and do not reflect the opinions of all Aboriginal people in NSW or other states in Australia.
  http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/working_with_aboriginal.pdf

- Engaging Queenslanders: Introduction to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, 2005. This resource is part of a suite of engagement resource documents prepared by the Queensland Government. The title "Engaging Queenslanders" does not imply the document applies only to people living in Queensland.
  http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/guides-factsheets/documents/engaging-queenslanders-atsi-communities.pdf

Considering the effort and consultation that went in to the development of these resources it would be inappropriate and impractical to edit or select sections (only) of these resources for inclusion in this Handbook. The work has been done very well by the NSW Department of Community Services and the Queensland Government Department of Communities and they have no objection to this material being reproduced, but reserve the right to have the material remain unaltered.

Please follow the web links above to the complete resources for guidance on engagement with Aboriginal communities.

Engaging People with Disabilities

In 1993 the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 came into effect to provide uniform protection against unfair or unfavourable treatment for people with a disability in Australia. All organisations have a responsibility "*to respond to the requirements of the Act in a comprehensive manner. They must ensure that all their services, facilities, programs and consultation processes are accessible to all people*"[38].

A Handbook developed by Access Audits Australia provides an informative resource for the development and implementation of a Disability Action Plan for organisations with reference to equitable access to community engagement for people with a disability.

The Access Audits Handbook covers the legal requirements of the act in relation to consultation and makes recommendations to consider the following issues:

- People with physical disabilities
- People with intellectual disabilities
- People with acquired brain injury (ABI)
- People with psychiatric disabilities
- People who are blind or have a vision impairment
- People who are deaf or have a hearing impairment

In planning for engagement the following topics are recommended for consideration in the Handbook:
- promoting positive attitudes
- use of language
- dissemination of information
- printed material
- signage
- information in alternative formats
- alternative communication systems
- accessible premises

The Handbook provides comprehensive information on the issues and topics listed above. It is published by Access Audits Australia www.accessauditsaustralia.com.au

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[38] Manton & Connor, Good Access is Good Business, *How to develop more accessible consultations*, 2003.

Placemaking

Placemaking is an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighbourhood, city, or region. It inspires people to collectively re-imagine and re-invent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximise shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

With community-based participation at its center, an effective Placemaking process capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well being.

Case study - Robertson Street Reserve rejuvination project

Robertson Street Reserve in the City of Onkaparinga is one of three substantial reserves located in the suburb of Reynella. The reserve was once home to the Reynella South Tennis Club which relocated from the reserve in the early 1990s, leaving the clubhouse vacant. Robertson Street Reserve also accommodated an old playground, eight run-down tennis courts, public toilets, barbecue, shelter, paths and a deteriorated car park.

Over time, the buildings became a hotspot for graffiti, vandalism and related anti-social behaviour. We began to hear about community concern and received a number of requests to address these issues. In response to our communities' concerns Council resolved at its meeting on April 3, 2007 to remove the old tennis courts (bar two), restore the area to reserve land and to repair the two courts for community use[39].

Our community engagement process was designed to meet the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 1999* and reflect our Engagement Framework which is based on IAP2 core values. We used a wide variety of techniques to maximise community participation opportunities and the engagement methods ranged from inform, to consult through to involve, collaborate and empower.

In addition, we integrated community development and community capacity building principles into our engagement approach for the project to establish a network of local stakeholders, facilitate individual skill

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[39] http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/

development and generate pathways for future initiatives. This enabled those who are affected to influence the decisions and have greater ownership and pride in project outcomes.

The Robertson Street Reserve Rejuvenation Project took an intergenerational and whole of community approach which is inclusive of all demographics. By collaborating with community groups and service providers inclusive of youth, children, families and ageing we built on positive resources that each stakeholder has, promoted greater understanding and respect while achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. To strengthen project outcomes we invited stakeholders to identify elements of the rejuvenation project that were meaningful and important to them rather than to focus on resourcing gaps and limitations.

There has been a significant increase in the communities' participation at Robertson Street Reserve following the rejuvenation project and ongoing community connectedness is evident.

For the full report on the project click here.

Source: City of Onkaparinga Robertson Street Reserve Rejuvenation Project

The Community Engagement Project – Where to from here

The second phase of the Community Engagement Project involved the development of the Handbook as a model framework for Councils to adapt and incorporate into current practices and systems to suit their level of resources, geographic locations, and local circumstances. The third phase involves a revision of the contents of the original Handbook and the addition of a section on community engagement techniques.

Evaluating our process

We would like to find out if we have been successful in achieving our aims as set out on page ii - "Getting the basics right relies on effective planning" and what you think of the new techniques section. We would also welcome feedback about how councils might use the Handbook to assist them in developing and implementing an integrated whole of council community engagement framework.

Councils and other interested parties are therefore invited and encouraged to provide feedback and contribute to the continuous improvement of the Handbook via a feedback form available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/engage

We look forward to hearing from you and to your ongoing involvement and contribution to leading practice in community engagement within the Local Government sector.

Training and Development

As a further and important step in the Local Government Community Engagement Project, training in the use of the Handbook is offered through the LGA Training and Education Program. The training provides participants with an understanding of:

- what is meant by community engagement;
- the spectrum (range) of community engagement;
- legislative issues in relation to community engagement;
- planning, implementing and evaluating community engagement; and
- a range of techniques to share and gather information, and to bring people together.

Training in the IAP2 Public Participation Foundations Program is available through the LGA Training and Education Program. The IAP2 International Certificate is issued to participants on completion of the program.

For further information about training options, contact LGA Education & Training Service, 08 8224 2035 or email: training@lga.sa.gov.au

March 2008

Community Engagement Handbook

A Model Framework for leading practice
In Local Government in South Australia

Appendices

Community Engagement Table of Techniques[40]

(*these techniques are examples only & not representative of all possible approaches*)

Consider techniques for **Inform** level	Always Think It Through	What Can Go Right	What Can Go Wrong
Printed Materials • Fact Sheets • Newsletter • Media Advertising – "Advertiser", local Messenger • Brochures • Issue Papers	• Keep it short & simple • Make it visually interesting and engaging but not too busy or slick • Proof-read all documents • Engage at least 5 randomly selected staff members to trial material & provide feedback before distribution to the public • Use language that is inclusive and jargon free • Always nclude opportunities for comment and include reply paid forms or envelopes to encourage two-way communication • Explain public role and how comments have affected project decisions • Offer interpretation services	• Can reach a large target audience • Public look for information in regular format eg. Newsletter, Media column • Allows for technical & legal reviews • Written comments returned in reply paid format • Documentation of public involement facilitated • Mailing list development	• Distribution planning inadequate • Materials do not reach the mark • Materials not read • Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts • Information misinterpreted
Displays • Council Offices • Libraries • Community Centres, • Shopping centre • Schools • Childcare centres	• Establish regular sites if possible to build on community culture • Develop a distribution list • Make sure personnel at locations know what materials are about & where they are located & who to contact for further information • Consider electronic displays, eg. Touch screens, TV video loop presentations • Make sure materials are removed when past their use by date	• Information is accessible to the public at relatively little cost • Public use the distribution locations to look for materials • Public visit Council facilities & may learn more about service provision • Public ask for further information at Council distribution sites	• Distribution sites are overcrowed with information & the materials get lost among the collection of materials • There is no active promotion of the materials • Upkeep of informtion at sites is not well managed
Website Information directly into the household	• Needs to be visible & easy to navigate • Keep information updated	• Capable of reaching a large audience at low cost • Popular information resource	• People without access disadvantaged • Technical difficulties • Hard to navigate

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[40] Adapted from the IAP2 Toolbox, 2006 & Maroochy Shire Council Toolbox, 2003

Consider techniques for **Consult** level	**Always Think It Through**	**What Can Go Right**	**What Can Go Wrong**
Printed Materials, Displays, Website	Refer to Table 1	Refer to Table 1	Refer to Table 1
Briefings • Council Staff • Elected Members • Technicians • Consultants • Key Stakeholders • Community Groups (including marginalised groups)	• Keep it short & simple • Use clear, jargon free, inclusive language • Use easy to read diagrams and visuals that are consistent with the verbal & written content	• Control of information/presentation • Opportunities to clarify misinformation • Reach a wider variety of people • Build community capacity • Evaluate & readjust approach	• Some groups may be left out of briefings • Inaccurate nformation may be passed on to community • Expectations may be raised • Information may be used inappropriately
Mailed Surveys/ Questionnaires/Response Sheets • Blanket distribution • Random distribution • Selected distribution	• Surveys/Questionnaires should be developed using specific guidelines and trialled before distribution • Collection and method of analysis to be considered & clarified • Level of engagement & parameters need to be clear	• Can gather information from people other than those with special interest • Gather information from people who might not attend meetings • Can gather specific information • Statistically tested results have more credibility	• Response rate can be poor • Communities over surveyed • Can be labour intensive • Questions may be misinterpreted • Results not trusted • Results not fed back to communities effectively
Technical Assistance Attendance at: • Briefings • Meetings • Workshops	• Technical resource persons must be perceived as credible by communities • Ensure technical resource persons have access to information about the communities attitudes	• Build credibility & address public concerns about equity • Facts in dispute can be debated & consensus reached	• Resource availability may be limited • Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities & may lack empathy with community concerns
Open House • Communities engage at their own pace in a comfortable environment • Drop in to individually to view plans, ask questions, give opinions have an informal chat & a coffee, tea etc.	• Be there when you say you are going to be • Consider the demographics of the area & time sessions accordingly • Greet people at the door & explain the format, provide comments sheet • Give people a task eg. "good/ bad" dots to place on the displays to record their preferences	• Facilitates a wide variety of people • Break down percieved barriers • Fosters communication • More convenient for people • Engages people more effectively • Minimise aggressive approach to Council staff	• Special interest groups may boycott or disrupt • Groups may use "dots" to lobby for special interests • Staff resource intensive • May not be accessible to people who rely on public transport
Feedback Register Resident pool for feedback	• Check the register content is relative to your purpose	• Gather input from a broad range of people	• Register maintenance can be resource intensive

Consider techniques for **Involve** level	Always Think It Through	What Can Go Right	What Can Go Wrong
Printed Materials, Displays, Website, Briefings, Information Contact, Technical Assistance, Open House	Refer to Tables 1 &2	Refer to Tables 1 &2	Refer to Tables 1 &2
Focus Groups Use to test message with randomly selected people or to gain input to assist planning for engagement	• Clear tasks • Relevant representation • Skilled facilitation	• Provides opportunity to test material • Verify prior assumptions • Raise upexpected additional benefits	• Participants may feel restricted by the approach • May be percieved as exclusive • May be costly
Interviews • Face to Face • Telephone	• Be clear & open about the intent • Consider questions carefully to gather relevant information • Ensure effective information recording methods • Be inclusive • Be equitable	• Gather clear understanding of public concerns & issues • Individuals feel inclined to provide input based on personalised format • Able to reach more people by varying timeframe for interviews	• Can be very time consuming • Participants can take their issues out on the interviewer • Participants are tired of being intervewed on a range of issues & will not engage willingly
Workshops Commence with presentation & allow for interaction in small groups with feedback to larger group to bring all the information together at the end of the workshop	• Know how you plan to use public input before the workshop • How you are going to manage the group – rules for engagement • Use trained facilitators & give them clear instructions to ensure the aims of the workshop are achieved • How are you going to feedback outcomes of workshop to participants	• Participants can use the oppoutunity to raise their concerns, needs, issues • Foster equity and credibility • Opportunity to hear the "silent" voices • Special interest groups get to listen to other voices • Unexpected additional benefits • Relational benefits	• Small numbers of participants • Resistance to breaking up into small groups by some participants • Special Interest groups monopolise the workshop • Participants alter the agenda • Facilitators not impartial or not skilled enough to deal with some behaviours • Information session format used rather than workshop format • Feedback not recorded effectively
Field Trips Tour of project site or comparable site for stakeholders, elected members, community groups, media	• Set up booking system to manage demand effectively • Make accessible to diverse groups • Provide itenery/tour guide • Plan question/answer session • Plan refreshment break & provide water during the trip • Consider safety	• Opportunity to develop rapport with stakeholders • Increase knowledge of issues & process for all involved • Unexpected additional benefits	• Number of participants can be limited by resource availability • Intention can be misinterpreted • Project site may reveal unintended conditions • Aggreieved participant may take the opportunity to monopolise captured audience

Consider techniques for **Collaborate** level	Always Think It Through	What Can Go Right	What Can Go Wrong
Design Charrettes Sessions where participants become involved in the design of a projects features	• Plan how the "Design-in" will take place • Provide clear informtion & guidelines for participants • Provide clear parameters • Provide technical support • Provide opportunities to foster creative ideas	• Can create effective partnerships & working relationships with communities & individuals • Can develop sense of trust for all concerned • Can identify issues & concerns in early stages of projects • Can result in improved outcomes	• Participants bring unrelated agenda to the session/s • Not enough time allowed for sessions • Small representation of community • None of what is discussed in the session/s is incorporated into the final design • Future expectations can not be met
Citizen Juries Group of citizens selected to learn about an issue & then examine the data by questioning decision-makers, technicians, and interested parties – all of who are witnesses to the process. The Jury makes recommendations based on their evaluation of the discussions	• Ensure the sessions are managed by a skilled facilitator • Be clear about how the results will be used • Ensure a cross-section from the community • Consider current levels of expertise of participants	• Great opportunity to develop deep undertanding of an issue • Positions of interest can shift • Limitations & possibilities can be identified • Can dispel mininformation • Can build credibility • Can provide unexpected benefits	• Group selection can be mistrusted • Participants may not show up on the day • Sessions can loose focus • Cost can be extensive
Deliberative Polling Selecting people from communities to measure informed opinions. Essential elements required to ensure a democratic deliberative process are, *influence, inclusion and deliberation,* Carson, Hartz-Karp, 2005.	• Ensure a skilled facilitator is used • Commit to full process • Consider resources required & check against budget & hidden costs • Aim for a cross-section of participants from communities • Plan to develop capacity in communities	• Participants can be exposed to views & arguments from different backgrounds • Special interest lobbying can be difussed • Can develop capacity in comunities • Can provide unexpected benefits	• Mistrust of the organisers & unfamiliar process can hamper participation • People do not have the time required to commit to the process • Timeframes are unrealistic • Agenda too ambitious or not specific enough
Mediation/Negotiation/Dialogue Designed to create shared meanings through effective listening and reflective questioning	• Establish firm guidelines • Ensure the role of the mediator/negotiator & participants are clear • Seek commitment to the process	• Helps participants towards an understanding of others viewpoint • Forward thinking approach sets new directions • Win/Win outcomes • Promotes accountability on both sides	• Can be difficult to idenfity who the parties are & who & what they represent • Time & resource intensive • Knowledge and skill base required to facilitate mediation/negotiation not acknowledged

The Role Of Council Members In Community Engagement Processes

One of the most important roles for an elected member in any level of Government is to participate in making policy and decisions on behalf of their community.

Community engagement will support Council Members in this role if an effective framework is in place to assist them to understand the nature of the decision to be made, to identify who may have an interest in the topic under consideration, and to capture and report on the diverse views and aspirations of the whole community.

In most areas population and demographic changes occur, and issues emerge from time to time about which Council Members have very little or no prior knowledge. Even if Council Members have lived and worked in the area for some time, it is not reasonable to expect them to be in a position to understand all of the views and aspirations of their constituents on the myriad of matters that come before them as decision makers on behalf of the community.

Community expectations about decision-making processes have also changed over time. The days of citizens electing Governments at any level and leaving them to make decisions on their behalf during their term of office without being engaged in the process are long gone.

Increasingly, citizens expect to have some control over matters that affect their living environment, and to see governments actively telling them about what plans they have, and listening and responding to concerns about matters which impact on the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of their local community.

Facilitating informed decision-making

Council Members have a role in *"facilitating communication between the community and the council"* (Local Government Act 1999 (SA) S59(b), and as a member of the elected Council body *"to act as a representative, informed and responsible decision-maker in the interests of its community"* (S6(a).

The dynamic nature of these roles needs to be carefully considered and handled by Council Members as they embark on formal community engagement processes.

For example, there may have been lengthy or ongoing debate during which a Council Member has publicly stated a position, or there may have been a series of previous and related decisions taken in relation to other aspects of a particular topic or project.

This situation may impact on community perceptions of "it's a done deal anyway" and lead to a lack of confidence in the community engagement process.

These difficulties can largely be avoided if Councils **adopt a planned approach to community engagement** as set out in this Handbook. Through this approach:

- decisions already taken by Council can be openly stated;

- the decision to be made by Council which will be informed by community input will be confirmed, fostering a shared understanding amongst Council Members, Council staff and the community; and

- Council Members' roles in the community engagement process can be clearly defined.

Some issues to consider regarding Council Member roles in the community engagement process follow.

- It is prudent that Council Members not take an active "hands on" role in the community engagement process, but rather maintain a neutral position and be clearly seen as listening to what their community has to say.

- However, in circumstances where a Council Member has stated a position it may be appropriate for a statement to be openly made that this is the case. This thereby leaves it in the hands of the community to have input into swaying the strength of, or conviction to maintaining that stated position. In these cases, the argument for Council Members not having a hands on role during the community engagement process is strengthened, to avoid community perception of a biased process.

As alluded to previously, it is important to **maintain the integrity of an objective and unbiased community engagement process**. Whilst it is difficult to make hard and fast rules about how to achieve this, some useful tips follow.

- During the community engagement planning phase, consider nominating suitably experienced staff, engaging specialist consultants, or inviting prominent citizens or community leaders to chair sessions or to facilitate workshops with key stakeholder groups to identify the main issues and gauge their engagement expectations.

- In smaller Councils or where there may be no history of controversy, it may be acceptable for Council Members to have more prominent roles in community engagement processes. Care needs to be taken however, that Council Members maintain the integrity of an objective and unbiased community engagement process as previously discussed.

- It may be appropriate for a Mayor or Deputy Mayor to "chair" a process by playing a "master of ceremonies" role, but take care that this does not extend to a hands-on, facilitator role.

- The presence of Council Members during the information gathering phases, for example at Community Forums, demonstrates an interest in hearing what the community has to say, but they must clearly be seen as listening. Where they have particular information or facts to contribute, care should be taken by Council Members to provide information in an objective and non-defensive way.

The above discussion can equally apply to the role of State or Federal Members of Parliament if they have been invited as participants or interested parties in local community engagement initiatives.

Clearly, Council Members will ultimately need to consider the outcome of any community engagement process within the context of strategic planning directions for the whole Council area, resource and budgetary constraints, and broader regional or State policies where relevant.

Having made a final decision, **community confidence will be enhanced by providing feedback to those who participated** about how their input was taken into account in the decision making process. Council Members have an important role in this regard, for example, a Mayor or Ward Councillor may convey messages verbally, in writing or through the media, which adds strength to the message that "we have listened and taken your views into account in our decision making".

Stakeholder List template- *adjust this template to suit your needs*

Organisation/Association	Name	Phone Contact	Address/email	Comments
Council				
Staff				
Community Groups				
Specific Interest Groups				
General Community				
Consultants/Developers				
Government agencies				
Non-government agencies				
Other				

Stakeholder and Community Identification Tool *(Source: Adelaide City Council, 2015)*

- It may sometimes be difficult to identify the stakeholders and community with whom you need to consult and identifying groups who are hard to reach can also be particularly difficult.
- This is a tool to help you identify your target groups and provide some suggestions about who you may like or need to include in your consultation.
- Here you will find various categories and examples of groups to consider when developing and analysing your stakeholder and community engagement list.
- This is a comprehensive yet not exhaustive list. It will give you an indication of the type, diversity and extent of groups you may encounter and information about a very useful website.

TABLE 1: Suggestions of target groups

DIRECT INTEREST IN YOUR PROJECT (ie have a direct interest in a project outcome)		• **Council M**embers of Committees of Council • Council staff • Project partners working with you • People who live, work, play and do business in close proximity to your project • Community groups / agencies or networks - specific to your projects • People or groups who will be affected by or interested in the final decisions • People who use or access the service / infrastructure relevant to you project.
GENERAL INTEREST IN YOUR PROJECT (ie general interest in a project issue)	• Council staff working on the project • People who live and work in the broader area • Residents and Ratepayer Associations • Precinct Groups • Community leaders • Local Community Groups or associations
OTHER INTEREST IN YOUR PROJECT (ie those who do not fit easily depending on the project)	• Federal and State Authorities • Government Agencies • Environmental Groups • Local community groups (schools, church, religious, health services, neighbourhood watch, sport and recreation clubs, service clubs, seniors groups, youth groups, community centres) • Tourists • Media
HARD TO REACH GROUPS • **Consideration should be given to hard to reach groups and potential barriers which may make some stakeholders difficult to access.**	• People with disabilities (eg Accessibility Advisory Committee) • Property owners (non-residential) • Cultural Groups or religious groups • Indigenous Groups / individuals / organisations (eg Reconciliation Advisory Committee) • Youth • New arrivals / residents • People with language barriers (English as a second language) • Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups / individuals • People with low literacy levels • Primary carers (childcare / elderly)

SAcommunity – a useful website - http://sacommunity.org/

SAcommunity is a database of South Australian community services. It includes information about government, non-government, community based and some private sector organisations that provide services for the South Australian community in the areas of health, welfare, housing, education, community participation, information, legal services, arts and recreation.

SAcommunity includes organisations that:
- Provide services that help people living in South Australia to meet their basic needs and rights, or provide opportunities to participate in society
- provide services at state, regional or local level
- operate on a charitable or not-for-profit basis, or are subsidised by government, or provide services on behalf of government, or operate in the private sector providing services that are similar to those helping services provided by charitable, not-for-profit, government subsidised and government services

By searching on this site you can find out about:
- help available from government, non-government and community services throughout SA
- how you can connect with and get involved in the community
- subjects or services; eg Aboriginal Housing or Community Art Centres; and
- Advanced searches that can be narrowed to;

Acronyms	Addresses	Also Known As	Organisation Name
Branch Address	Comment	Contact	• Parent Body
Eligibility	Former Name	Hours	• Services
Meetings			• Subjects
			• Subsidiary
			• Venue Hire

Some tips for navigating the site:
- Keep it simple. If you're looking for a particular organisation, just enter the name, or part of its name. If you're looking for a particular service, program or place, start with the name. Simple is good.
- Describe what you need using as few terms as possible. If necessary, add words to make your search more specific.
- Choose descriptive words to increase your chance of getting relevant results. Words that describe general concepts like 'health' or 'community' are not as useful as more specific terms such as 'diabetes' or 'community centre'.
- If you want an exact match to a search string that consists of more than one word, use single quotes eg 'Disability SA'.
- Search is not case sensitive.

If you have performed a search that returned no results, this may indicate either that the organisation or content you are looking for is not currently included in the directory, or that an alternative search strategy is needed.

How to use the lists included in this document

As previously suggested, deciding on groups to consult with and identifying groups who are hard to reach can be really difficult. Reviewing the categories and lists included here may help you identify the community and stakeholders that are relevant to your consultation.

Stakeholders and community are separated into the following broad categories. Sub-categories can be developed from this initial categorisation and some organisations, agencies and groups will fit in various categories.

• Internal Stakeholders	• Schools
• Committees Of Council	• Boarding Colleges
• Neighbouring Councils	• Tertiary Institutions
• Precinct, Community Groups And Libraries	• Multicultural Groups
• Community Groups And Associations	• Indigenous Groups
• Not For Profit Groups	• Disability Groups
• Business Groups And Professional Bodies	• Aid Groups
• Multicultural Business And Industry Groups	• Festival And Events
• Youth	• Sporting Groups
	• Businesses

The full Stakeholder and Community Identification Tool developed by Adelaide City Council is available here (insert link).

Stakeholder and Community Assessment
(ie who do we need to engage?)

Who are our stakeholders and community?

A stakeholder or community is defined as people who may be affected directly or indirectly by a decision or issue under consideration, or have a specific interest in the decision to be made. Adelaide City Council, unlike other metropolitan Councils, needs to engage with a very broad range of people who uniquely make up a capital city and have an interest in the City of Adelaide.

Why is it important?

The stakeholder and community identification / assessment process is critical for the success of your engagement. It is important that you know the following about your stakeholders and communities:

- who they are,

- what drives them,

- what is their role throughout the engagement process,

- what are their priorities,

- who oversees them and who do they oversee,

- who are they accountable to and how and who are sufficiently secure in their positions to talk freely (such as business people, leaders of voluntary organisations, clergy, agency staff, different skill and experience levels).

- How do your community and stakeholders make decisions?

- What is their style of decision making, who makes the decisions, and are they part of a team or loners?

The first step in your stakeholder analysis is to brainstorm who all of your stakeholders are. As part of this, think of all the people who are affected by your work, who have influence or power over it, or have an interest in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion.

Source: Adelaide City Council

High influence, low interest (Latents)

High influence, high interest (Promoters)

Low influence, low interest (Apathetics)

Low influence, high interest (Defenders)
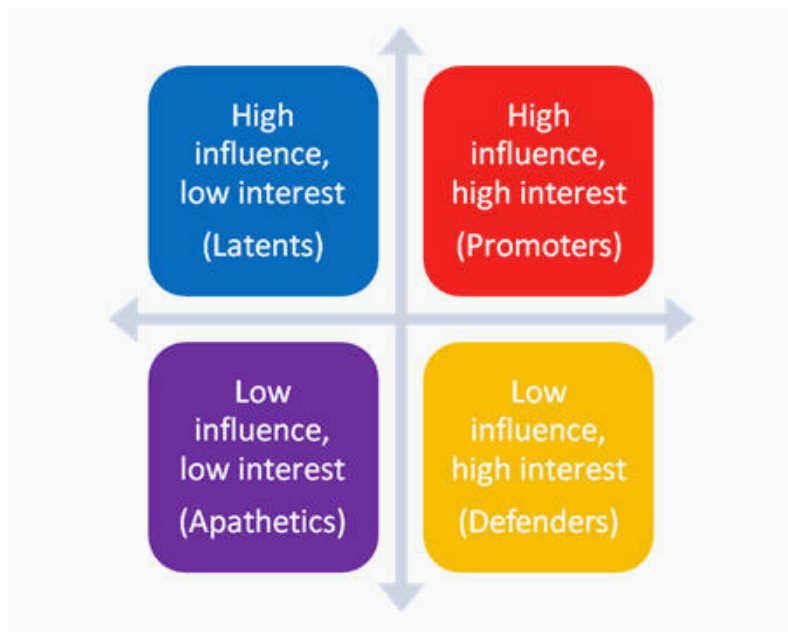
The table identifies stakeholders or stakeholder groups who may be impacted by the decision and those who will influence the outcomes of the engagement process. The level of impact / influence will help to determine the level of stakeholder engagement and communication required.			
Stakeholder	**Interest / Impact / Influence**	**Expectations**	**Level** (*High/ Med/ Low)*
Internal			
Councillors (internal)	*High interest, impact and influence.*	*Engagement outcomes will inform Council decision making*	*High level of engagement and communication*
External			
ADD as many rows as necessary to each section			

Public Consultation Policy
Model Policy

This *Public Consultation Model Policy* has been prepared by the Local Government Association of SA (LGA) for the guidance of and use by member Councils. The LGA is the statutory peak body for Local Government in South Australia, representing all 68 Councils in the State. Inquiries may be directed to the LGA on 08 8224 2000.

 This model policy was reviewed and substantially amended in February 2016, prompted by changes to section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* by the *Local Government (Accountability and Governance) Amendment Act 2015*.

Public Consultation Policy

Strategic Reference	
File reference	
Responsibility	
Revision Number	
Effective date	
Last revised date	
Minutes reference	
Next review date	
Applicable Legislation	Local Government Act 1999 s50
Related Policies	
Related Procedures	

Introduction

The council is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision making, which is informed by effective communication and consultation between the council and the community.

In carrying out its consultation process, the council applies the following principles:

- Members of the community have a right to be informed about issues affecting their area and their lives and to influence council's decisions about these

- Community interest will vary depending on the issue and the number of people affected, and council's level of consultation will reflect this

- Community involvement in Council decision making should result in greater confidence in the Council and responsive decision making

- Council decision making will be open, transparent and accountable.

Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Council meets its legislative obligations in regard to public consultation by:

- Using appropriate and cost effective methods which are relevant to the specific circumstances of each consultation topic
- Informing and involving the local community, key stakeholders and interested parties
- Using feedback to enhance decision making.

Scope

This policy applies to Council Members sitting as the elected body, council employees, contractors, agents and consultants acting on behalf of Council.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation of the Public Consultation Policy, establishing the consultation level, reporting outcomes of the consultations to the council, reviewing the value of the policy, and determining elements within that process where Council has delegated responsibility.

Policy Statement

The preparation and adoption of this policy fulfils the council's obligations under section 50(1) of the *Local Government Act 1999*. Section 50 provides that:

- The council must set out the steps that the council will follow in cases where the Local Government Act requires consultation on a matter, and
- The council may set out the steps that council will follow in other cases involving the council's decision-making.

In addition, under the Local Government Act the council has the following obligations where it is required by law to follow its public consultation policy.

- Council must provide interested persons with a reasonable opportunity to make submissions regarding relevant matters
- Council must publish a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area and on the council's website, describing the matter under consideration and invite interested persons to make submissions within a period (which must be at least 21 days) stated in the notice
- Council must consider any submission received from the public during the prescribed consultation period.

Council may, from time to time, alter this policy or substitute a new policy. In the instance that any significant changes are being proposed to the public, the council must submit the proposal to a public consultation process.

Other sections of the Local Government Act also refer to consultation requirements, and in some instances set out what a Council must do. See **Specified consultation requirements** below.

Where there are legislative requirements for consultation under other legislation applicable to the council, such as the Development Act 1993, these specific processes take precedence over this policy, should there be any inconsistency.

Specified consultation requirements

Under the Local Government Act, Council is required to undertake particular types or levels of consultation (as a minimum) in relation to the following:

- Determining the manner, places and times of its principal office (section 45)
- Adopting or varying a public consultation policy (section 50)
- Altering the Code of Practice relating to the principles, policies and procedures that Council will apply to enable public access to Council and Committee Meetings, their minutes and release of documents (section 92)
- Adopting Strategic Management Plans (section 122)
- Excluding land from classification as community land (section 193)
- Revoking the classification as community land (section 194)
- Adopting, amending or revoking a management plan for community land (section 197)
- Amending or revoking a management plan for community land (section 198)
- Alienating of community land where the management plan does not allow it (section 202)
- Alienating roads (section 223)
- Planting vegetation where it will have a significant impact on residents, the proprietors or nearby residents (section 232)
- Proposing to remove trees and road construction projects
- Carrying out representation reviews (section 12(5))
- Considering a change of status of Council or name change (section 13)
- Carrying out commercial activities - Prudential Arrangements (section 48)
- Making Bylaws (section 249)
- Making Orders (section 259)

For details of the specific requirements under these sections, refer to the specified sections of the Local Government Act.

Other consultation and engagement methods may include:

- Publication in a regular newsletter
- Letters to residents and other stakeholders
- Other direct mail publications or letterbox drops, as appropriate
- Advertising in media outlets as deemed appropriate
- Media releases to appropriate media outlets and community groups
- Community forums and stakeholder meetings
- Direct consultation with community representative groups
- Active and passive use of Council's website and social media
- Use of a community email database
- Customer Surveys
- Fixed displays, e.g. community notice boards
- Community group representations to Council workshops

Further information

This policy will be available for inspection at the Council offices listed below during ordinary business hours and available to be downloaded, free of charge, from the council's website: www.xxxx.sa.gov.au

Local Government Act 1999 (SA)
Public Consultation – Schedule Of Requirements

Topic	Section	Legislative Requirement
Definition of Public Consultation	Interpretation	Reference to Chapter 4, Part 5 only

Representation Reviews.
• Review and reporting to the Electoral Commissioner
	12	<u>Representation Options Paper</u>
		• <u>Public notice:</u>
		   • <u>of the preparation of the representation options paper; and</u>
		   • <u>inviting written submissions within a minimum period of 6 weeks.</u>
		• <u>Copy of notice to be published in newspaper circulating within its area.</u>
		
		<u>Report</u>
		• <u>Public notice:</u>
		   • <u>informing public of the preparation and availability of the report; and</u>
		   • <u>inviting written submissions within a minimum 3 week period.</u>
		• <u>Copy of notice to be published in newspaper circulating within its area.</u>
		• Provide opportunity for person who makes written submission on report to appear personally or by representative before Council or a Council committee to be heard on submissions
		• Council must then finalise its report and refer to the Electoral Commissioner.

Status of a Council/ Change of Name • Change from a municipal council to a district council, or change from a district council to a municipal council • Alter the name of the council, the area of the council, or the name of a ward.	13	• Public notice of the proposal inviting written submissions within a minimum period of 6 weeks, and publication of the notice in a newspaper circulating within its area • Provide opportunity for person who makes written submission to appear personally or by representative before Council or a Council committee to be heard on submissions

Topic	Section	Legislative Requirement
Principal Office – Opening hours	45	Consult in accordance with Council's public consultation policy about the manner, places and times at which its offices will be open to the public for the transaction of business, and about any significant changes to these arrangements.
Commercial Activities – Prudential Requirements	48 (2) (d) 48 (5), (6)	Report addressing prudential issues to include • the level of consultation with the local community, including contact with persons who may be affected by the project and representations made by them • the means by which the community can influence or contribute to the project or its outcomes.

Public Consultation Policies	50	Requirements for preparation, adoption and alteration to Council's public consultation policy.
		• Policy must set out steps that Council will follow in cases where the Act requires the Council to follow its public consultation policy
		• Policy may also set out steps to follow in other cases involving council decision making
		• Steps may vary according to the classes of decisions within the scope of the policy, but must provide persons with a reasonable opportunity to make submissions in relevant circumstances
		• Section 50 (4) sets out minimum steps that must be provided for in a public consultation policy as follows:
		  • publish notice describing the matter under consideration in a newspaper circulating within the area, and inviting submissions within stated period (at least 21 days)
		  • consideration by the Council of submissions made in response.
		• Section 50 (6) requires the Council before it adopts, substitutes and/or alters a public consultation policy, to:
		  • prepare a document that sets out its proposal; and
		  • publish in a newspaper circulating throughout the State and a newspaper circulating within the area of Council a notice of the proposal inviting submissions within a minimum period of 1 month; and
		  • consider any submissions received, unless the alteration is of minor significance.

Topic	Section	Legislative Requirement
		Council's public consultation policy is to • be made available for inspection without charge at the principal office during ordinary office hours, and for purchase on payment of a fixed fee by Council.
Code of Practice – Access to meetings and documents	92 (5)	Before a council adopts, alters or substitutes a code of practice under S 92 it must follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy.
Strategic Management Plans	122 (6)	Council must adopt a process or processes to ensure that members of the public are given a reasonable opportunity to be involved in the development and review of its strategic management plans.

Annual Business Plan	123(3)	Before Council adopts an annual business plan it must follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy which must provide for as a minimum:
		• publication of a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area of Council informing the public of the draft annual business plan and inviting persons to –
		  • attend a public meeting on the matter to be held at least 21 days after the publication of the notice; or
		  • attend a meeting of Council to be held on a date stated in the notice at which members of the public may ask questions and make submissions for at least one hour; or
		  • make written submissions within a minimum period of 21 days stated in the notice; and
		• Council to make arrangements for the public meeting or Council meeting and Council to consider written submissions or submissions made at public meeting or Council meeting;
		• draft annual business plan must be available at the public meeting or Council meeting above and for inspection (without charge) and purchase (on payment of a fee fixed by Council) at the principal office of the Council at least 7 days before that meeting.

Change to Basis of Rating Report	151(6)	• Before Council changes the basis of rating of any land or changes the basis on which land is valued for the purposes of rating or changes the imposition of rates on land it must prepare a report on the proposed change and follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy which must as a minimum provide for: • publication of a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area of Council describing

Topic	Section	Legislative Requirement
		the proposed change and informing the public of the preparation of the report and inviting persons to attend a public meeting in relation to the matter at least 21 days after publication of the notice or to make written submissions within a minimum period of 21 days; and • Council to organise the public meeting and Council to consider submissions made at that meeting or in writing. • Copies of the report must be available at the public meeting and for inspection (without charge) and purchase (on payment of a fee fixed by Council) at the principal office of the Council at least 21 days before the end of the public consultation period.
Rating – Differential Rates	156(14a)	• Before Council changes declaring differential rates on the basis of a differentiating factor under Sections 156(1)(a), (b)(c) to another factor it must prepare a report on the proposed change and follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy which must as a minimum provide for: • publication of a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area describing the proposed change and informing public of the preparation of the report and inviting persons to attend a public meeting in relation to the matter at least 21 days after publication of the notice or to make written submissions within a minimum period of 21 days; and • Council to organise the public meeting and Council to consider submissions made at that meeting or in writing. • Copies of the report must be available at the public meeting and for inspection (without charge) and purchase (on payment of a fee fixed by Council) at the principal office of the Council at least 21 days before the end of the public consultation period.

Topic	Section	Legislative Requirement
Community Land Classification: All local government land (except a road) acquired by or brought under the care, control and management of Council is taken to have been classified as community land unless Council resolves before it becomes local government land to exclude it from classification.	S193(4)	Council must give notice in the Gazette of a resolution to exclude land from classification as community land under S193(4) of the Act.
Revocation of classification of land as community land	S 194 (2)	Council must • follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy before revoking the classification of land as community land • submit a proposal with a report on all submissions made as part of the public consultation process to the Minister.
Management Plans - Public Consultation	S 197 (1)	Before Council adopts a management plan for community land it must • make copies of the proposed plan available for inspection or purchase at the Council's principle office • follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy • give public notice of its adoption of a management plan.
Amendment or revocation of management plans NB: A Council cannot dispose of community land until revocation of its classification as community land**.**	S198	Public consultation, as Council would be required to do for a new management plan, is to be carried out prior to adopting a proposal for amendment to, or revocation of, a management plan. Public consultation is not required if the amendment has no impact or no significant impact on the interests of the community.
Alienation by lease or licence NB: Specific provisions relate to the Adelaide Park Lands – under the Parklands Act 2005.	S202	Council must follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy, before granting a lease or licence relating to community land. Exceptions apply in circumstances where; • the grant of the lease or licence is authorised in an approved management plan for the land, and the term of the proposed lease or licence is five years or less; or • the regulations provide for an exemption from compliance with a public consultation policy.

Topic	Section	Legislative Requirement
Authorisations/Permits • Where road would be fenced enclosed or portioned so as to impede passage of traffic to a material degree • Use or activity for which public consultation required under regulations	S223	Council must follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy before granting the authorisation or permit.
Roads – Trees	S232	Before planting or authorising planting of vegetation that may have a significant impact on residents, the proprietors of nearby businesses or advertisers in the area, council must follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy.
Passing by-laws NB: No specific reference to Council's Public Consultation Policy, but minimum standards apply	S249	At least 21 days before resolving to make a by-law, Council must • make copies of the proposed by-law (and any code, standard or other document proposed to be applied or incorporated by the by-law) available for public inspection without charge during ordinary office hours at the principal office of the Council • inform the public of the proposed by-law and set out the terms of the by-law or describe in general terms the nature and effect of the by-law, through a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area • give reasonable consideration to a written or other acceptable submission made on a proposed by-law • Publish a notice of the making of a by-law in a newspaper circulating in the Council area.
Power to Make Orders Councils must take reasonable steps to prepare and adopt policies relating to power to make orders.	S259 (2)	Council must • Prepare a draft of a policy • By notice in a newspaper circulating in the Council area, advise the place(s) where the draft is available for inspection (without charge) or purchase (on payment of a fee fixed by Council), and invite written representations on the draft with a period specified by the Council (at least four weeks) • consider any submission made in response to the invitation. The requirements of S259 (2) also apply prior to Council adopting an amendment to a policy, unless Council determines that the amendment is of only minor significance.

Community Engagement Evaluation template

Criteria	Indicators	Performance	Outcome	Recommendations

INSERT LOGO HERE

Community Engagement Plan Template

Title:_____

Date:_____

Project Officer: _____

Manager: _____

Reference #:_____

Approved: Yes ☐   No ☐

Date:_____Signature: _____

Community Engagement Plan

Background Information (*provide a brief context for the plan in this section. Use hyperlinks to relevant reports, papers, articles that the reader can accessed if more information is required*)

Decision Maker/s (*record who will make decisions throughout the process and who will make the final decision*)

Define Decision/Purpose/Problem/Opportunity (*record the statement in this section including any notes or rational that is relevant*)

Engagement Constraints/Parameters

Geographic Boundaries

Legislative

Timelines

Budgetary

Negotiable

Non-negotiable

STAKEHOLDER LIST - *adjust this list to suit your needs*

Individual/Organisation/Association	Contact Name	Phone Contact	Address/email location	Comments
Council				
Community Groups				
Specific Interest Groups				
General Community				
Government agencies				
Non-government agencies				
Other				

Stakeholder Issue and Responses Assessment Sheet (worksheet only)

Stakeholder Individual or Group	Issue	Councils Evaluation of the level of impact N = None L = Low M = Moderate H = High U = Unknown	Stakeholder level of concern N = None L = Low M = Moderate H = High U = Unknown	Response

Adapted from IAP2 Risk Assessment

L = Likelihood: – Low – Medium - High
C = Consequence: – Low – Medium - High
RR = Risk Rating: - Low – Medium - High

#	Area of Risk	Risk Analysis	Risk Rating	Mitigation Strategies	Risk Mitigation Outcome
1					

Engagement Plan Summary Table
Stage 1 – Start-up

Stakeholder/s	Engagement Level/s	Participation Objectives & Strategic Communication Objectives	Engagement Technique/s	Due Date	Evaluation
Example: General Community	Inform	To inform the public about the engagement.	Public Notice, website, direct mail, media release	XX/XX/2015	

Stage 2 - Gather Information

Stakeholder	Engagement Level/s	Participation Objectives & Strategic Communication Objectives	Engagement Technique/s	Due Date	Evaluation
Example: Reference Group	Involve	To meet with the Reference Group to assess what information is relevant to the process	Workshop, on-site tour, on-line feedback site	XX/XX/2015	

Stage 3 – Review information and develop options

Stakeholder	Engagement Level/s	Participation Objectives & Strategic Communication Objectives	Engagement Technique/s	Due Date	Evaluation
Example: General Community	Inform/Consult	To provide an update on the process	Project update, survey, workshop, website	XX/XX/2015	

Stage 4 - Evaluate Options

Stakeholder	Engagement Level/s	Participation Objectives & Strategic Communication Objectives	Engagement Technique/s	Due Date	Evaluation
Example: General Community	Consult	To seek community feedback on the options	Information session, workshop, Options Paper, Comment form, website	XX/XX/2015	

Stage 5 - Make a decision

Stakeholder	Engagement Level/s	Participation Objectives & Strategic Communication Objectives	Engagement Technique/s	Due Date	Evaluation
General Community	Inform	To provide notice of when a report is going to Council	Public Notice, website, report, media release, information session, project update, presentations to groups	XX/XX/XXXX	

Action Plan template (the operational tasks listed are not exhaustive, please vary the list to suit your needs – if you prefer, use the plan as a checklist – it is recommended the community engagement co-ordinator for the project completes this list and uses the "Task Breakdown" sheet to assign responsibility and timelines for specific tasks)

Community Engagement Title:	
Coordinator:	
Start Date:	**Finish Date:**
Records Reference:	
Brief Description:	

Start up	**check**
Confirm the method of engagement and techniques selected	
Confirm and/or adjust the timeline for the engagement	
Complete the task breakdown sheets	
Identify what staff/departments/authorities etc you need to work with	
Communications	
Set communication objectives and draft key messages	
Draft communication documents	
Review the documents with the project team and key stakeholders if possible	
Proofread documents and gain sign off	
Organise production of documents (word processing, printing)	
Review stakeholder contact database and update as necessary	
Organise distribution of documents (mailing, display sites, web site, media outlets, newsletters)	
Monitor the supply of communication documents to distribution sites	
Provide copies of documents to Customer Service and Records staff	
Evaluate the communication tasks and make any necessary improvements	
Community engagement	
Organise community interactions depending on techniques chosen	
Set up internal contacts to maintain the flow of information	
Coordinate documentation distribution with engagement timeframes	
Book meeting spaces as required	
Contact key stakeholders and maintain dialogue	

Prepare running sheets for community activities	
Workshop selected engagement techniques if necessary	
Prepare for collation of feedback from communities	
Evaluate the engagement tasks and make any necessary improvements	
Recording	
Collate and analyse feedback	
Respond to enquiries from stakeholders and record any new information	
Evaluate the recording tasks and make any necessary improvements	
Community Feedback and Council Report	
Provide community feedback for review and response from the project team	
Draft Council Report for review as per Council protocol	
Gain sign-off on final reports	
Distribute feedback to all interested parties	
Submit Council Report for resolution	
Develop Implementation Plan for Council Resolution	
Evaluate the feedback and reporting tasks and make any necessary improvements	
Final Evaluation	
Effectiveness of the community engagement process assessed	
Document key areas of improvement for each phase and feedback any recommendations for improvement of future engagements	

Task Breakdown Sheet template

Task	Action/Responsibilities/Resources	Deadline	Comments	Completed
Example only: Reference Group expression of interest notice to be prepared for distribution	Notice to be prepared by Community Engagement Coordinator from information provided by Infrastructure and Governance staff 600 sheets of Council masthead required	12/09/08	Check if printing can be done in-house or will it need to be out-sourced	11/09/08
	Preparation of information for council's website	12/09/08	Request hyperlinks to Expression of Interest notice	11/09/08

INSERT LOGO HERE

Community Engagement Final Evaluation

Insert title and date

Name of Organisation

Author's name

Project Consultants: Margaret Heylen (Project Manager) and Barbara Chappell (Author)

Community Engagement Evaluation template

(turn on the show/hide feature ¶ to read the hidden text)

1. Background Information

2. Evaluation summary of each phase

Phase One

Evaluation Measure	Outcome
▪ The community engagement plan was designed to deliver a sustainable outcome?	
▪ The plan was effective in dealing with stakeholder expectations?	
▪ What was learned from the process that needed to be dealt with before proceeding?	

Phase Two

▪ The community engagement objectives were met and designed to achieve outcomes as described in the purpose statement?	
▪ The key issues and interests of stakeholders were identified?	
▪ Appropriate responses were developed to address the issues and interests?	
▪ Suitable techniques were selected to engage stakeholders?	
▪ What was learned from this phase that needed to be dealt with before proceeding?	

Phase Three

▪ The Action Plan supported the implementation of the community engagement strategy?	
▪ The Action Plan was co-ordinated effectively?	
▪ 50% of the target audience registered an interest in being part of the engagement process?	
▪ 50% of the target audience attended the engagement activities?	
▪ The activities were effective?	
▪ The activities were promoted effectively?	
▪ What was learned from this phase that needed to be dealt with before proceeding?	

Phase Four

▪ Data management criteria were used to determine the collation and analysis of information?	
▪ The compiling and distribution of the Feedback Report was completed within the agreed timeframe?	
▪ The Council report represented a balance of economic, technical, environmental and social issues?	
▪ The implementation of Councils decision was completed within an agreed timeframe?	
▪ What was learned from this phase that needed to be dealt with before closing off on the engagement process?	

3. **Main achievements**

4. **Main improvements**

5. **Main recommendations**

Local Government Association of South Australia

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