Community engagement & communications toolkit
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to use the toolkit</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a project plan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement plan template</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications tools</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement tools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group engagement tools</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing the loop</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 1b – IAP2 Community Engagement Spectrum  45
The engagement toolkit

The right tool for the right job

Welcome to the Bega Valley Shire Council Community Engagement and Communications Toolkit.

This is the section for staff to refer to in developing project specific community engagement plans. It provides a detailed list of communications (information delivery) and community engagement (information exchange) tools for staff to use in developing their plans.

Details are also provided showing staff how to follow a seven step process in developing and implementing a project plan, along with a simple checklist to guide the process.

The toolkit been developed in conjunction with the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government along with feedback from the community and Council staff.
How to use the toolkit

All you need for building project engagement plans

Build your project engagement plan using the following sections of this toolkit.

- Read the ‘developing your project engagement plan’ section which will provide you with details of how to fill in the project template on page 6. The project template is also stored on the staff intranet for downloading and printing.

- For more information on the community engagement process please refer to section one of the Community Engagement and Communications Toolkit.

- Consider the communications tools available for delivering the project message to the community. These are detailed in the ‘techniques for information sharing’ section starting on page 13.

- Consider the community engagement tools listed in the ‘engagement techniques’ section starting on page 21.
# Developing your project engagement plan

The following process separated into seven steps is recommended for a project of any size, large or small. An engagement plan checklist for staff is included at the end of this section.

**Step one: Decide whether community engagement is required**

Answering the questions in the matrix below will help in assessing the need for community engagement for the project:

## Increasing likelihood and level of engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does legislation require Council to engage with the community about the issue?</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent will the quality of the outcome depend on the level of input from residents in the planning or design stage (e.g. the end-users of a service or facility being planned)?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent will the quality of the outcome depend on residents being motivated or committed to Council’s decision or direction?</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent will the quality of the outcome depend on the cooperation and collaboration of individuals or organisations in the community?</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does Council have any discretion or power to act on the community’s expressed wishes about the issue (is it an issue outside Council’s jurisdiction or is it a Council program/service about which a higher level of government has already dictated the parameters such as funding, priorities and delivery model)?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How complex is the issue, decision or project, and therefore how important is it to hear from a range of stakeholders and get input from a range of experts?</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How significant will the impact of the project be on the community in terms of social, environmental and economic impacts.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How significant is the financial impact on Council from the issue, decision or project?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How politically sensitive is the issue? (If Council does not engage the community, what level of adverse media coverage or complaints are likely to emerge?)</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step two: Define the objectives and scope of the engagement

It is important to be clear about Council’s objectives from the community engagement process and to define what is and what is not within the scope of the issue being engaged about.

To clarify the objectives and scope of the engagement, we first need to ask two questions:

- What is the issue at stake that Council is ultimately considering?
- What part of this issue does the Council wish to engage the community about?

This requires Council to be clear about the issue at stake as well as what is negotiable or non-negotiable as far as involvement of the community is concerned. For example: the issue at stake might be setting the priorities for spending Council’s allocated budget for landscaping and beautification, and the part of this issue that Council wants to engage the community about is the preferred locations and types of landscaping or beautification to be carried out. The budget has already been allocated, so what is outside of scope (non-negotiable) is whether Council should have allocated more or less of its overall budget to this purpose or to other areas.

If the issue at stake is flood mitigation measures Council might put in place, Council needs to be clear whether the engagement with the community is about getting feedback on the range of possible measures or is simply about identifying the impacts on the community of a measure (e.g. a new levee bank) that Council has already decided to implement.

If the issue at stake is the contents of Council’s community plan, the scope of the community engagement might be as narrow as seeking feedback on community priorities for service delivery in the next 12 months or as broad as generating a wide range of views.

At this point, it is worthwhile spelling out the focus questions that Council is seeking to have answered during the community engagement. For example, in consulting about a new community hall, Council’s focus questions might be about the seating of the hall, the activities it can accommodate, and the facilities that community groups will require. The importance of clarifying focus questions up front is that they will:

- Guide the Council in working out who needs to be engaged
- Assist in writing up the report back to Council.

A major constraint for many Councils is that so much of their funding and their program and service delivery methods are set by higher levels of government, leaving them very little discretion over how they do things locally. Before conducting community engagement about a program or service that the State/Territory or Commonwealth has funded it is important to work out how much scope there is to change the program or service in response to community views. It is advisable for Councils to discuss the proposed community engagement with the funding body to clarify the appropriate scope of engagement.

Tip: Don’t promise the world!

For any community engagement, it is very important to be clear about the constraints, such as who makes the final decision, what can realistically be changed and what resources are available. It is better to promise something small that can be delivered from the community engagement exercise than something large that can’t be delivered.
Having identified the issue at stake and what is in and out of scope for the engagement, the Council needs to decide what level of engagement is required. The level of community engagement by a local government can be anywhere along the following spectrum:

- **Information**
- **Consultation**
- **Active Participation**

Deciding the level of community engagement for a particular issue or project will depend on Council’s assessment of the factors, related to the level of impact, complexity and sensitivity of the issue:

If the assessment was ‘Low’ for most of the criteria in the table on page 74 but Council still wanted to do some form of community engagement, the appropriate level of engagement might be ‘Inform’, which simply involves letting the community know about the decision or direction Council is taking.

If the assessment was ‘High’ for issues such as the need for the input of residents, the importance of residents being motivated and committed to the Council’s decision, the extent to which the decision is complex and requires expert input and diverse perspectives, the potential impact on the community and the level of political sensitivity, then the Council should choose a higher level of engagement involving ‘Active Participation’ of residents.

*Source: adapted from the Community Engagement Handbook – Local Government Association of South Australia, 2008.*

**Step three: Identify who will be engaged**

This step involves identifying the people both within and outside Council who will be engaged during the community engagement process. This requires working out which people have a stake in the issue – in other words, the various ‘stakeholders’.

**Stakeholders within the Council:**
- Councillors
- Committees
- General Manager and Group Managers
- Council staff.

**Stakeholders outside the Council:**
- General community
- Seniors
- Young people/children
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (including Traditional Owners)
- Culturally and linguistically diverse groups
- State and Federal government agencies
• Members of Parliament
• Private enterprise
• Industry groups / chambers
• Peak bodies
• Community organisations
• Unincorporated associations / clubs
• Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Interest or stake in the issue</th>
<th>Value that stakeholder can bring to the issue</th>
<th>Information that stakeholder will need</th>
<th>Best methods to engage the stakeholder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. Young people</td>
<td>Regular users of the public spaces that are the topic of the community engagement process (Council is consulting on priorities for spending its landscaping and beautification budget).</td>
<td>Suggestions about making the spaces appealing to youth. Strategies to protect spaces from vandalism.</td>
<td>Maps of public spaces and options for Council landscaping works under consideration (2 page leaflet) Advice on how to provide feedback or suggestions.</td>
<td>Facebook discussion page Youth worker to conduct face to face survey at the skate bowl and basketball court.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step four: Choose the right engagement tools**

The tools that Council chooses will depend on factors such as:

- **the stakeholders** Council wants to engage – different tools will be better for different audiences
- how wide the **scope** of the engagement is – for example, if Council has already decided much of the issue and there are many parts of the decision that are non-negotiable, then a more specific tool such as a survey on a defined range of options will be better than an open-ended workshop discussion
- **the subject matter** of the engagement – for example, visual tools such as posters or models will be better to engage residents about designs for a new community hall than a radio advertisement
- **the risks** in the process – for example, for a highly contentious issue, smaller workshops may be better than a large-scale public meeting to manage potential conflict between participants
- **the time, cost and expertise constraints** – the tools used will have to be able to deliver the engagement outcomes within a timeframe and using the budget and staff/consultant resources and expertise available.
For some projects, it will be necessary to use several tools for engagement, especially if there are diverse stakeholder groups that the Council wishes to engage.

**Step five: Engage**

This step involves implementing the tools and methods of engagement that have been chosen for the project. Implementation of engagement should be carefully planned using standard action planning methods that would be used for any project delivered by Council. For example, the practical issues to be planned before carrying out any community engagement exercise include:

- What tasks need to be done? (task list)
- Who will do each task? (responsibility)
- When will they be done by? (timeframe)
- What funds and other resources do we need? (resources)
- How will we know if they have been done successfully? (performance indicators and targets)

It is important to keep good records about the community engagement (e.g. dates of meetings/activities, how many attended etc.) because this will need to be included in the report to Council.

**Step six: Report back to Council**

There is no point doing community engagement for the sake of it – to be meaningful the engagement has to have an impact on Council’s decision-making. Therefore, this step is about analysing, collating and summarising all the feedback and outcomes from the community engagement process and ensuring it is taken into account by the decision-makers in Council, whether that be senior staff or the elected Council.

**Step seven: Report back to the stakeholders and community**

Part of good community engagement is letting the participants know how their contribution was taken into account when Council made the final decision, as well as advising what final decision was taken. This part of the process is often overlooked, but is crucial to 'keeping the faith' of the community and ensuring that people feel valued, which will in turn make people more likely to participate in future community engagement.

Reporting back to the participants is often called 'closing the loop' because, as the following diagram illustrates, it is part of an ongoing engagement loop by a Council with its stakeholders.
Stakeholders in an engagement process include people within Council as well as the community, so internal stakeholders should be included in the reporting.

Methods for reporting back to the stakeholders on an engagement activity could include:

- A written report circulated to stakeholders or available on Council’s website
- An event or celebration around the completion of a project
- An update in the Village Newsletter or Community Link
- A media article in the local newspaper about the results of the community engagement process
- A community meeting where Council delivers a presentation on the engagement outcomes
- Short updates provided by Council at meetings of local community organisations
- An update on local radio about the outcomes
- A poster or leaflets summarising the outcomes available at Council’s office or posted on a public noticeboard.

*Don’t forget, people who participate in a Council’s community engagement activities do so voluntarily in their own time, so it is always important to say thanks!*
# Engagement plan template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determine complexity (complex issues require greater engagement)</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of engagement</strong> (refer to level of complexity and IAP2 level of engagement spectrum in Appendix 1b)</td>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>Involve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who to engage</strong></td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tools to use</strong> (a combination of online and offline tools has the biggest reach)</td>
<td>Online 1.</td>
<td>Offline 1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engage</strong> (tick when complete)</td>
<td>Where will the engagement be held?</td>
<td>Bookings made?</td>
<td>Supporting materials prepared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report to Council</strong> (tick when complete)</td>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Summarise</td>
<td>Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report to community</strong> (tick when complete)</td>
<td>Inform stakeholders of project outcome</td>
<td>Is more engagement needed?</td>
<td>Close the loop or engage more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Techniques for information sharing**

The following techniques are intended for use when Council wants to provide information to the community, usually when Council is:

- announcing a project with accompanying engagement processes
- seeking to educate the community
- wanting to provide an update on the progress of an engagement activity or process.

**Targeted written and email correspondence**

Personally addressed letter or email informing residents or organisations of a project, issue, service or action.

**The Purpose**

- To respond to written correspondence from a resident or organisation.
- To advise a resident or organisation of a project, issue, service, action or other information.

**Content**

- Address the basic ‘who, what, where, when, why’ as appropriate. For example: who is the issue or matter affecting or who is involved?
- What is the decision, issue or what does the recipient need to do?
- Where will meetings be held or where will information be available?
- When is an activity taking place or when is a meeting being held?
- Why is Council changing policy or why is Council providing advice?
- How can the recipient become involved further?
- Provide staff contact details where appropriate (i.e. name and phone number). There should generally be an opportunity for a personal or written response from the resident or organisation.
- Include the appropriate sign-off for the correspondence, e.g. Mayor, General Manager or Branch Manager.

**Distribution**

- Include supporting information/attachments where appropriate.
- Forward the signed letter by mail or email. Where a letter is faxed, an original should also be forwarded.
- Register a copy of the letter/email on Council records.
Brochure or Leaflet

Leaflet designed to provide information on a particular topic or project

The Purpose
- To present more complex or detailed information in an easy-to-read format.
- To create or promote a desired image for an activity, event or service.

Content
- Determine the main messages of the publication.
- Develop topic headings and key points.
- Provide all essential information e.g. ‘who, what, where, when, why and how’. For example:
  - who the information is relevant to
  - what is happening, e.g. details of an activity or service
  - where the activity or service will be held
  - when the activity or service will take place
  - why the activity or service will be beneficial
  - how people can participate in the activity or service or obtain further information
- Include contact details where appropriate.

Design
- It is recommended that communications staff are used to design the brochure/leaflet. This will ensure that corporate branding guidelines are met. Two weeks’ notice is required.
- Complete Customer Relations Brief Outline available on the intranet.
- Prepare some thoughts on the ‘layout’ and size of the brochure/leaflet.
- Design heading styles and positioning.
- Provide the Communications team with written and visual content.

Distribution
- Before printing and distribution, obtain approval from your Branch Manager and in some cases the Executive Director depending on relevant protocols.
- Determine the number of brochures/leaflets required.
- Arrange printing of the brochure/leaflet either through Council resources or externally for more ‘up market’ material, e.g. ‘glossy’ brochure.
- Arrange distribution/postage.
- Register final copy on Council records – ECM.
• Circulate a copy of the brochure/leaflet to all Councillors and senior management for their information (with an attached memo).
Letterbox drop

The distribution of information via letter boxes

The Purpose

- To inform residents of an issue, project, action or other matter generally occurring within a localised area.

Content

- Prepare the material (letter, leaflet, feedback form etc.).
- Include details of who, what, where, when, why, how (refer written correspondence and brochure or leaflet).

Distribution

- Determine the appropriate spread of distribution and legislated requirements.
- Arrange the distribution via appropriate section.
Adverts & public notices

Notice of an event, project or meeting in a local newspaper or a targeted publication such as a school newsletter

The Purpose
• To inform the community about an event, meeting, project or other matter.

Organisation
Material for public notices is to be drafted by the team responsible for the project. For adverts the Communications team can assist with design and adhering to the Council’s style guide. Newspapers also have limited design personnel.

Content
Prepare the information taking into consideration:
• Who the information is relevant to.
• What is happening, e.g. details of an activity or service.
• Where the activity or service will be held.
• When the activity or service will take place.
• Why the activity or service will be beneficial.
• How people can participate in the activity or service or obtain further information.
Media releases

News stories in the local paper or other media

The Purpose

- To advise the broad community of an activity, issue, action, service or project.
- To raise the profile of an issue and generate debate or interest.

Content

- Write the story, including information on who, what, where, when, why and how as appropriate (as for ‘written correspondence’).
- Write in a creative and interesting, although easy-to-read style. Aim to generate interest but ‘keep it simple’.
- Check that you have included accurate facts and quotations and that they are consistent with Council policy.
- Liaise with the Communications team to arrange a photo shoot or send quality high resolution photos to increase the ‘human interest’ appeal of the story.
- Include a contact name and telephone number.

Feedback

- Enable feedback from the community by including contact details or a process for submissions or input.
- Provide links to online content that asks for community participation.

Distribution

- Once approved by your Group Manager, send the media release to the Communications team for general distribution.
Information displays

The display of information at a prominent public location

The Purpose

- To inform the community of a proposal, action or service through the effective presentation of material, e.g. plans, concept designs, posters, videos, and products.
- For advising the community of upcoming works at a public site.
- For advising the community of progress on a specific project.

Content

- Determine and collect all information that should be included in the display, e.g. plans, documents, photographs, videos, symbols/logos and products.

Presentation

- Determine the best way to present the information, e.g. on a board, as a mobile display (bus/motor vehicle/trailer), within a building or marquees etc.
- Book presentation space if required, e.g. display area in libraries, shopping centres.
Bulk email

Bulk messaging sent to community members and stakeholders informing them of a project, issue, service or action, using an existing database

The Purpose

- To inform community members of a project, issue, service or action or to invite community feedback or involvement.
- To provide feedback and updates on projects, services or issues.

Content

Address the basic ‘who, what, where, when, why’ as appropriate. For example:

- Who is the issue or matter affecting or who is involved?
- What is the decision, issue or what does the recipient need to do?
- Where will meetings be held or where will information be available?
- When is an activity taking place or when is a meeting being held?
- Why is Council changing policy or why is Council providing advice?
- How can the recipient become involved further?
- Provide staff contact details where appropriate (i.e. name and phone number). There should generally be an opportunity for a personal or written response from the resident or organisation.
- Include the appropriate sign-off for the correspondence.
Online distribution

The display of information on Council’s website and social media sites

The Purpose
- To inform the community of a proposal, action or service through the effective presentation of interactive and static content.
- To enable information sharing for the purpose of engaging the community.

Content
- Determine and collect all information that should be included.
- Ensure the content is accurate and brief.
- Strong focus on visual and interactive elements.

Uploading
- For Council website material send content to your group administration coordinator for uploading.
- For social media material send brief content and image to the Communications team for uploading.
Engagement techniques

These techniques are intended for use when Council is seeking ideas and input from the community on a particular issue or project.

Public information post

The formal exhibition of a plan or document at key locations for a set period of time

The Purpose

- To enable broad community feedback on a proposal, draft plan or issue.

Preparation

- Prepare the appropriate materials, including concept design, sketches, draft plans, fact sheets, project information and relevant photographs.
- Determine the locations for exhibition.
- Book space e.g. Sapphire Marketplace, other shopping centres, libraries, community centres.
- Arrange materials.
- Prepare the display (refer to information Displays).
- Determine how you are going to record community feedback (both written and verbal).

Promotion

- Advertise the activity through local newspapers and other methods, e.g. letter box drop, newsletters, radio, posters, schools and website.
Interviewing stakeholders

Informal or semi-formal discussions with one stakeholder or a small group

The Purpose
- To enable discussion of an issue or project that relates to the person/people concerned.
- To provide or obtain information at a more personal level.

Organisation
For a meeting that is organised in advance:
- Arrange the meeting through telephone contact or letter, clearly outlining the purpose of the meeting.
- If required, follow up to confirm the meeting details and its purpose.

Content
- Prepare for the meeting, outlining information that is sought or is to be presented, and the key questions to ask.
- Consider the preparation of a detailed interview schedule for some projects.
Feedback form

A structured form providing feedback in response to a publicly available proposal, draft plan or issue

The Purpose
- To enable broad community feedback on a proposal, draft plan or issue.

Preparation
- Prepare the feedback form.
- Prepare the display materials, including concept design, sketches and draft plans.
- Determine the locations for exhibition.
- Book display space e.g. Sapphire Marketplace, other shopping centres, libraries.
- Prepare the display (refer to information displays).

Promotion
- This will depend on the type of feedback sought. Some forms will simply be distributed at the end of a workshop or forum, others will be linked to a display which is broadly advertised.
Suggestion box

Provision of a feedback mechanism for customers to lodge ideas and suggestions

The Purpose
- To enable programs and services to be improved, in response to community ideas and feedback.

Setup
- Purchase or design a box that is large enough to be seen and will hold responses.
- Clearly indicate the box is for ‘suggestions’, and the name of the project.
- Locate the suggestion box in a prominent location.
- Provide blank paper or comment forms and pens for people to record their suggestions.

Ideas for Recording and Collating Input:
- A sheet with some questions or spaces for comments could prompt more creative responses.
- Record the suggestions made each week on a notice board and/or through newsletters and other correspondence.
- Consider how you can pass the suggestions onto management, i.e. through a report.
Inviting submissions

Seeking written presentation of views on a proposal, concept or activity, at the public exhibition stage

The Purpose
- To formally advise people of a proposed direction and seek their views.
- To provide the opportunity for the community to provide formal input in determining whether a proposal, concept or activity is appropriate.

Organisation
- Determine the most appropriate approach to seeking written submissions. For example, forwarding a letter inviting a submission will be most appropriate for local issues or directions i.e. the redesign of a local park.
- For items that are more contentious or significant, it may be advisable to communicate with targeted communities (that are most affected) and also undertake a media promotion seeking submissions from the broader community.
- For a letter inviting a submission, design the letter and arrange the printing and distribution.
- For an email inviting a submission, design the email and arrange for bulk distribution via a bulk email service. Refer to the Communications team.
- For a media promotion inviting a submission, design the notice and arrange for its publication via the Communications team.
- Prior to forwarding the letter or notice, obtain approval from your Group Manager where required.

Content
For a letter/email or media promotion inviting a submission, include all details of the proposal, concept or action, including:
- what is proposed and when it will be implemented
- how and where people can obtain more detailed information, e.g. reports
- how people can respond and who to
- what sort of information should be included in the submission, e.g. specific details of concerns, who is impacted and why, any issues regarding the process etc.
- copies of any concept designs/plans.
Surveys

A structured tool to gather data and information or gauge community opinion

The Purpose

- To obtain information from a representative sample within the community.
- To enable a considered response to an issue or item (allowing time and providing adequate background information).

Survey Design

Determine the broad objectives of the survey before developing the specific survey questions. For example:

- Why is the survey being undertaken?
- What information is sought?
- Who should the survey target?
- How will the information be used?

Pilot Survey

- Seek feedback on the draft survey from other Council staff who have undertaken community engagement activities and people in the target group if possible.
- Modify the survey as appropriate.

Distribution

Determine the best method of distribution. A combination of methods also allows access to the same survey in a variety of formats.

- Mail-out
- Telephone
- Online
- Interview (street, shopping centre, facility etc.)
- Hand-out (linked to service, facility or workshop)
- For any survey, establish the survey database. Some options include: obtain name and address through one of Council’s databases or service user records.
- Link to mail-out to rates if appropriate.
Hotline or phone-in

A time-limited opportunity for the community to make contact or provide feedback in a semi-structured context

The Purpose

- To obtain comment or feedback on a topic, e.g. an issue, proposal, action or project.
- To give people the opportunity to discuss particular needs, opinions or concerns.

Setup

- Determine the telephone contact arrangements, e.g. establish a designated telephone number, or allocate the task to a market research agency.
- Provide staff training, e.g. how to respond to or generate comments. A consistent set of information needs to be provided to the public from each staff member involved in the phone-in.
- Develop Frequently asked Questions (FaQs) and Possibly asked Questions (PaQs) to assist staff with conveying this consistent message.
- Determine the period of the hotline/phone-in.
- Develop a question prompt sheet and a system to record responses.

Promotion

- Promote the hotline/phone-in. Contact the Communications team for assistance.
- For broad community phone-ins, advertise thoroughly via local newspapers, posters, mail-outs, email and community newsletters.
- Advertise details on what the topic is about, why people should be involved, who they are ringing, when to ring, what number to ring.
Council website

Using Council’s website to communicate and encourage engagement on activities, projects, events etc.

The Purpose

- To inform the community of a proposal, action or service through the effective use of the Council website.
- To use the incoming Your Say function on the new Council website to encourage project specific community engagement.

Content

- Determine and collect all information that should be included in the webpage, e.g. plans, documents, photographs, videos, symbols/logos and products.
- Make content easily accessible to all users and compliant with the international Web Content Accessibility Guideline to AA standard.

Presentation

- Determine the best way to present the information to encourage engagement, e.g. downloadable attachments, interactive elements and consider the different mediums available (visual, audio video etc).
Social media

The use of social media to inform the community of a specific topic, project, issue or event and to encourage conversation

The Purpose
- To promote and market events, projects and programs.
- To provide updates on significant ongoing projects.
- To respond to community issues with up-to-date Council information on the issue.
- To provide up-to-the-minute advice and guidance in a time of disaster or crisis.
- To provide an online talking space regarding Council information.

Content
Address the basic ‘who, what, where, when,’ as appropriate. For example:
- Who is the issue or matter affecting or who is involved?
- What is the decision, issue or what does the recipient need to do?
- Where will meetings be held or information be available?
- When is an activity taking place or a meeting being held?

Distribution
- Contact the Communications team to make the post.
File sharing

The distribution or provision of access to a range of electronically stored documents including text-based documents, video, photos and images

**The Purpose**
- To provide access to electronic copies of project-specific documents to ensure consistency of information and avoid misinformation.

**Preparation**
- Gather all relevant electronic documents in one location. The project webpage is often the best place for making electronic documents available.
- Ensure all documents are made available in un-editable files.
- Ensure all documents meet Council’s Style Guide.

**Feedback**
- Give participants the opportunity to be further involved in future meetings and other engagement processes.
- Take contact details of all those who wish to be involved in the project / issue. Ensure that contact details are in the correct format for inclusion on the contact register.
Group engagement tools

These techniques are intended for use when Council is seeking to engage the community – particularly when:

- The issue is complex
- There is a great disparity of views or a number of possible options/outcomes
- There is the opportunity for the community to learn from each other by participating in group processes.

Public meetings and information sessions
An informal or formal community gathering to provide information and conversation

The Purpose
- To inform the general public of a proposal, action or issue.
- To seek feedback from the community
- To gain a deeper understanding of the project or issue.

Preparation
- Determine the venue and timing.
- Develop an invitation list.
- Prepare materials, including displays, summary information etc.
- Promote the information session.

Meeting Approach
- Setup the room to create a relaxed environment – round tables work well rather than lecture-style seating.
- Have displays/stands setup for people to view.
- Staff should be on hand to answer queries.
Focus group sessions

Semi-structured interviews with a small group of invited representative participants

The Purpose
- To obtain the opinion of a representative group of people on a topic, to assist in planning for an extended target group or the wider community.

Preparation
- Determine the number of focus group sessions to hold.
- Select and invite the participants.
- Select and book the venue.
- Send any background information to the participants so they have the ability to be prepared.
- The number of people should be eight to ten to enable quality involvement by all participants.
- There should be a mix of age, gender etc that represents the community’s overall demographic.

Session Approach
- Prepare questions and the session approach, including the materials required.
- Set the ‘ground rules’ at the beginning of the session, e.g. all thoughts/comments are valid, consensus is not expected etc.
- A focus group session requires the ability to generate open comments and interpret values and ideas.
- The involvement of a specialist facilitator might be appropriate in some circumstances.

Feedback
- Determine what data you want from the focus group session and the best way to record that.
Attend an existing group meeting

Linking to an existing meeting or arranging a special meeting with a community group is a positive way to engage the community on their terms.

The Purpose

- To gain an understanding of the needs, issues and ideas of various groups in the community.
- To obtain input in planning from the broad community and achieve representative engagement.
- To further create networks and links across the community.

Preparation

- Make contact with a key representative of the group, e.g. principal of a school, coordinator of an activity, president of a club etc., to arrange the meeting.
- Prepare notes, displays, information as appropriate. It may be advisable to send some information in advance to prepare meeting participants.
Workshop session

Structured approach to involving meeting participants in working through an issue and developing solutions

The Purpose
- To generate discussion and broader thinking regarding an issue or topic.
- To genuinely involve people in identifying and solving issues.

Preparation
- Determine the general size, focus and desired outcome and objectives of the workshop. Consider whether you wish to use the workshop to involve the wider community or to obtain the ideas and input of a particular group.
- Determine the venue, time, length of session and program (activities to achieve your objectives).
- Promote the workshop.
- Prepare notes, displays and other material.

Workshop Approach
- Setup the room to be conducive to small or larger group discussion.
- Provide relevant material at each table, e.g. maps, plans, summary reports, workshop guidelines.
- Setup displays and whiteboards, data projector and/ or butchers paper for recording group comments.
- Facilitate/ guide the discussions with specific questions or topics.
- arrange a scribe and facilitator within each small group where possible.

Feedback
- Give participants the opportunity to be further involved in planning through further meetings or comment on an output.
- Take contact details of all those who wish to be involved in the project / issue. Ensure that contact details are in the correct format for inclusion on the contact register.
- Seek feedback on the workshop approach through a feedback form.
- Forward a summary of the workshop findings to participants.

Review
- Workshops can be reviewed in terms of how the community responds and participates, feeding into future workshop development.
Community forum

The use of speakers to provide information and facilitate informed discussion on a topic

**The Purpose**
- To generate interest regarding a topic and enable community participation in discussion.

**Preparation**
- Define the topic of the forum.
- Arrange speakers with experience or expertise on topical items. Contact potential speakers by telephone and then confirm arrangements in writing. Include all relevant details in the written correspondence, including the purpose of the forum, the speakers’ role, the time allowed for the presentation etc.
- Develop a framework for questions and discussion, in engagement with the speakers.
- Arrange the venue and materials, e.g. displays.
- Promote the forum.

**Forum Approach**
- Determine the best approach, taking into consideration the type of speakers, the venue and the target audience.

**Feedback**
- Give participants the opportunity to be further involved in planning through further meetings or comment on an output.
- Take contact details of all those who wish to be involved in the project / issue. Ensure that contact details are in the correct format for inclusion on the contact register.
- Seek feedback on the workshop approach through a feedback form.
- Forward a summary of the workshop findings to participants.

**Review**
- Workshops can be reviewed in terms of how the community responds and participates, feeding into future workshop development.
Community summit

A large-scale representative community event to educate and inform participants to make considered input into Council decision making

The Purpose

- To provide a robust forum to debate and discuss strategic topics to gain informed and representative community input into Council decision making.

Preparation

- Define the topic.
- Develop an agenda based on outcomes required.
- Determine format for event and length of time required.
- Arrange for specialist facilitator(s), speakers and required resources.
- Develop a framework for questions and discussion, in engagement with the speakers.
- Arrange the venue and materials, e.g. displays.
- Organise resources to invite attendees and facilitate table discussion.
- Promote the conference or summit with adequate lead in time.
- Collect demographic details from interested participants to enable representative profiling of attendees.
- Target promotion to interest groups (e.g. personal invitation), in addition to broad promotion, for greater participation.
- Ensure that a broad range of representative participants are involved.
- There should be opportunities for formal and informal discussion between the participants on facilitated tables.

Feedback

- Give participants the opportunity to be further involved in planning through further meetings or comment on an output.
- Take contact details of all those who wish to be involved in the project / issue. Ensure that contact details are in the correct format for inclusion on the contact register.
- Seek feedback on the workshop approach through a feedback form.
- Forward a summary of the workshop findings to participants.

Review

- Workshops can be reviewed in terms of how the community responds and participates, feeding into future workshop development.
Site meeting

Tour or site visit with members of the community or key groups

The Purpose
- To enable informed discussion of needs or proposals relating to a specific site.
- For participants to gain first-hand experience of the site and surrounds.

Preparation
- Prepare a tour outline and determine the desired outcomes.
- Determine time and meeting place.
- Promote the tour to interested parties, including the broad community if appropriate.
- Prepare display material and other information such as handouts.

Meeting Approach
- Present the proposal and/or issues at the commencement of the tour (particularly for larger community group gatherings).
- Facilitate discussion and the recording of ideas and comments, at various key points on the tour.
- A small user or interest group tour can be more informal, although it should have a focused agenda to guide discussions.
- A larger community group gathering requires more structure and could include a walk around the site and opportunities for discussion and questions at various places on the site.

Feedback
- Give participants the opportunity to be further involved in planning through further meetings or comment on an output.
- Take contact details of all those who wish to be involved in the project/issue. Ensure that contact details are in the correct format for inclusion on the contact register.
- Seek feedback on the workshop approach through a feedback form.
- Forward a summary of the workshop findings to participants.
Advisory group

An Advisory Group established by Council to advise on specific issues, projects and policy that involve joint responsibility with stakeholders

The Purpose

- To involve community and stakeholder representatives in providing ongoing advice on complex or significant issues/matters and input to decision making in a joint relationship with stakeholders outside of the local area.

Committee Initiation

- Determine the role of the group.
- Develop charter and terms of reference for the group.
- Determine the membership selection process and criteria.
- Prepare a report to Council for approval of the group establishment including the draft charter and guidelines.
- Advertise for expressions of interest for the group where appropriate.
- Check that any statutory requirements are included in the terms of reference.

Group Operation

- Meet in accordance with the charter and guidelines
- Determine responsibilities and outcomes.
- Establish working parties to undertake specific projects and tasks accordingly.
- Report on outcomes and recommendations.
Community art

Using community art as part of the engagement process and a tool to encourage people to express their ideas, views and values

**The Purpose**
- To make an engagement process more interesting and creative.
- To enable the expression of people’s values and ideas that may otherwise be difficult to verbalise.

**Preparation**
- Determine the participants/target group.
- Determine the medium to use, e.g. painting, drawing, mosaic, patchwork. Consider the characteristics and interest of the target group in doing so.
- Obtain materials, e.g. paints, canvas, tools.
- Engage a facilitator/artist if required.
- Promote the activity to the target group and broader community.
- Consider linking to existing groups such as a youth group, senior citizens group or children in a school, so that people are comfortable to discuss ideas and values with each other.
- Talk to potential participants (in advance) about the art medium to use and the desired products.

**Activity Approach**
- Consider which art form is most appropriate e.g. photography, oral history, mural.
- Hold the activity at a venue that is conducive to art creation, e.g. art workshop, outdoors.
- Participants should be encouraged to provide explanatory notes to support their art work.
- Set a broad framework for the presentation of ideas, e.g. how to incorporate ideas within art works.

**Feedback**
- Give people the opportunity to be further involved and comment on final proposals if desired.
- Use a public place to present the art work, and seek general community feedback on its meaning.
Joint venture

A formal arrangement with community members or groups to plan for and implement a project or service

The Purpose
- To achieve initiatives in partnership with the community or other stakeholders, e.g. bushland regeneration program.
- To involve the community in decision making and strategic directions through projects.
- To formalise a financial or resource contribution from the community or other stakeholders.

Develop the Venture
- Identify opportunities for joint ventures based on needs and issues to be addressed.
- Determine the benefits to Council and the community.
- In engagement with potential ‘partners’, define the specific project and roles.
- Determine the formal arrangements, e.g. timeframes and agreed arrangements, recognition of contributions.

Venture Operations
- Establish and formalise the framework for the venture (who will do or contribute what and when).
- Develop formal communication processes.
- Provide administrative support for projects and programs.
Closing the loop

These techniques are intended for use when Council wants to provide information to the community, usually when Council is:

- Providing an update on the progress of an engagement activity or process
- Informing the community of the outcome of an engagement activity or process.

Written report

A document prepared to capture the engagement processes and the outcomes from the consultation

The Purpose

- To share the outcomes of the project with participants in the consultation process.
- To formally advise Council of the outcomes of an engagement process.

Preparation

- Determine the structure of the report.
Event or celebration

An event held to celebrate the conclusion of a project, including site tours, experiential activities and special guests

The Purpose
- To share with the general public the successful completion of a major project.
- To thank the community for their support.

Preparation
- Determine the venue and timing.
- Prepare targeted invitations.
- Prepare materials, including displays, schedule of activities, summary information etc.
- Consider whether media coverage would be advantageous and prepare media release accordingly.
- Promote the event.
- Include notices in local newspapers, and also consider other methods, e.g. school newsletters, posters in community centres, libraries and shopping centres, radio announcements.
- There is likely to be more interest generated in the event if there is a ‘hook’ for the audience – entertainment, food, give-aways etc.

Feedback
- Prepare a summary of the highlights of the event for inclusion in Council’s online sites, Village Newsletter and Community Link. Include photographs if possible.
Civic reception

A formal function held by Council and hosted by the Mayor and Councillors

The Purpose

- To celebrate a formal event.
- To thank the community for their support.
- To mark an important civic occasion.

Preparation

- Determine the venue and timing (ensure the Mayor is available).
- Prepare materials, including displays, run sheet of address, summary information etc.
- Prepare Mayor’s speech/address if required.
- Prepare an invitation list.
- Develop and distribute invitations.
- Liaise with the Executive Office to arrange a media release and coverage of the event.
- Consider the timing of your event – weekend or weekday? During the day or evening?

Feedback

- Prepare a summary of the highlights of the event for inclusion in Council’s online sites, Village Newsletter and Community Link. Include photographs if possible.
Multimedia reporting tools

A range of multimedia tools can be used to capture the progress and story of a project. These can be used to showcase a project and the engagement strategies used.

**Mediums**

A multimedia production can be developed as part of the final report on a project. This can include production of a DVD, interviews or PowerPoint montage.

**The Purpose**

- To showcase the project or Council.
- To create a thorough and permanent record of a project.
- To use as an evaluative, reflective tool/case study.

**Preparation**

- Determine whether your project will use this approach prior to commencement to allow for adequate planning.
- Develop a detailed brief for production companies to respond to.
- Seek several quotations and consider these in relation to price competitiveness, experience and responsiveness.
- Identify key milestones, stakeholders that you would like filmed and obtain necessary permissions.
Appendix 1b

IAP2 level of community engagement spectrum

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

**Inform**
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or decisions.

**Consult**
To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

**Involve**
To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

**Collaborate**
To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

**Empower**
To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

**Promise to the public**
- We will keep you informed.
- We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
- We will implement what you decide.

**Example techniques**
- Fact sheets
- Web sites
- Open houses
- Public comments
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Public meetings
- Workshops
- Deliberative polling
- Citizen advisory committees
- Consensus-building
- Participatory decision-making
- Citizen juries
- Ballots
- Delegated decision